Chapter 4

MUSICAL GENRE AS SIMULACRUM

Jean Baudrillard

sim·**u**·la·crum (n.) the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal.
(n. pl. sim·u·**la**·cra)

Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" in Simulacra and Simulation (1981), translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-): Economist of Signs

Jean Baudrillard was born in Reims, France in 1929, the grandson of peasants and son of civil servants. According to interviews his role as the first in his family to pursue an advanced education led to a rupture with his parents and his inherited cultural identity. He studied languages, philosophy, sociology and other disciplines and, after early work as a critic and translator of German literature in the early 1960s, became a vocal opponent of American and French involvement in the Vietnam and Algerian wars, allying himself with the French Left. Under the influence of Lefebvre, Barthes and others, Baudrillard lived an intensely intellectual and "revolutionary" life, beginning as a professor at the new Nanterre University in 1966 and, though he was later to break with this stream, he contributed to the Paris uprising of May 1968 and remained intellectually close to the French situationists in their profound distrust of 'culture', and in a tirade against the 'art of the spectacle' that would only grow in the two decades that followed. Baudrillard left Nanterre in 1987, and has remained active in both publishing and teaching. He currently serves on the faculty of the European Graduate School of Media and

Communications Studies, an innovative university program based in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, but also functioning in New York, Dresden, Paris, Los Angeles and online.

Critiquing in the 1960s both classical Marxism for its focus on objects and Capitalism for its preoccupation with signs, his early works already addressed semiology as a vital component of politics and society. In the 1970s he proposed production and simulation as the organizing principles of modern and postmodern societies respectively, offered "symbolic exchange" as an alternative seeking to recast classical Marxism into a form recognizing the more symbolic forms of exchange that both preceded and followed modern, production-based societies. But it was not to be until the 1980s that he trained his eye (and his already well-discharged weaponry) on the culture of the media, and on a postmodern society which had broken as radically with modern times as had modern times with premodern times; he posited a "hyperreal" society organized on the logic of simulation, and facing implosion of meaning, culture, and the social.

"The Mass", Simulation and Implosion

To Baudrillard, postmodern societies are organized according to the interplay of images and signs: these *simulations* stand in for the "real", radically reshaping each individual's perception of, place, and role in society. As Douglas Kellner recounts,

> We are now, Baudrillard claims, in a new era of simulation in which social reproduction (information processing, communication, knowledge industries, etc.) replaces production as the organizing principle of society. In this era, labour is no longer a force of production, but is itself a "sign among signs". Labour is not primarily productive in this situation, but is a sign of one's social position, way of life, and mode of servitude… political economy is no longer the foundation, the social determinant, or even a structural "reality" in which other phenomena can be interpreted and explained. Instead

> we live in a "hyperreality" of simulations in which images, spectacles, and the play of signs replace the logic of production and class conflict as key constituents of contemporary societies.[84]

To express this in musical terms, consider the status accorded to high society classical music described two generations earlier by Adorno when he addressed a consumer-driven musical America: "The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert."[85] Or consider the strongly market-driven importance to contemporary high school students that popular music and musical tastes play in defining social groups and even individual identity. Baudrillard's particular spin on an old phenomenon was that the need for such significations has evolved from, or at least been encouraged by, the collapse of an economically-based class system as a societal determinant.

In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), Baudrillard introduced the concept of Simulacra (the 'signs' which refer to and often replace the Real in the process of simulation) and identified three "orders" which were to recur as a theme throughout the next decade of his work, and in that of many others to this day:

1) **First Order Simulacrum** ("craft"), dating from the Renaissance: an image which is a clear (to those able to distinguish) counterfeit of the Real, intended to replace or stand in for it;
2) **Second Order Simulacrum** ("industrial"), dating from the industrial revolution: any one of a series of copies which can be produced subject to market forces. The quality of copy is better than in the 1st order, and the proliferation of copies make them the norm rather than the singular exception: yet whether one can (or cares) to distinguish between the Real and the copy the former is understood to exist and be accessible somehow.

[84] Kellner, Douglas, Introduction to *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*. Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1994.
[85] Adorno, Theodor W. "On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening" (1938), translated by Susan H. Gillespie in *Essays on Music: Theodor W. Adorno*, ed. Leppert, R. Berkely/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002, p.295

3) **Third Order Simulacrum** ("communication"), that of the postmodern age: The copy precedes and determines the Real. There is no longer any distinction between reality and its representation; there is only the simulacrum, which has destroyed the Real.

Inspired by and quoting a rare reference to music in Baudrillard's work, "pornography is the quadrophonics of sex,[86]" Mike Gane offers quadraphonic sound as an example of the hyperreality of the third order simulacrum:

> …in an air-conditioned room, music in four dimensions, ambient space, a technically perfect reconstitution of music by Bach and Mozart, which in this form has never previously existed, is realised. Such music was never intended for this total ambience, which deprives the listener of all critical perception and the music of all charm. There is a confusion of the real with the multiplication of dimensions. It is an obsession with technical perfectability, thus instead of improvement of the quality of music, these systems constitute its definitive degradation. It is the pornography of music, just as pornography "is the quadraphonics of sex".[87]

Later, in his 1981 collection *Simulacra and Simulation*, he introduced the related four successive phases of the image (or sign) in simulation, which are often confused with the orders of simulacra,[88] but which I take to refer more directly to aspects of the same sign:

1) **First Phase of Simulation:** is the reflection of a profound reality
2) **Second Phase of Simulation:** masks and denatures a profound reality
3) **Third Phase of Simulation:** masks the *absence* of a profound reality
4) **Fourth Phase of Simulation:** has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.[89]

---

[86] Baudrillard, Jean: *Seduction* (1979) in translation. (London: Macmillan, 1990).
[87] Gane, Mike. *Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory*. (London: Routledge, 1991), p.152.
[88] Particularly since Baudrillard added a fourth "viral/fractal" order of simulacra in *La transparence du mal* (1990)
[89] Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra" in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1994, p.6

In this connection, consider the image of the musical recording as a simulacrum for live music (whether actually a recording of live music or not is not important):

1) **First Phase simulation:** imagine a good recording of an artist's good, live performance: it is not the performance itself, but it reflects it at a later time and (usually) in a different place.
2) **Second Phase simulation:** a poor recording of an artist's good performance (or, one supposes a good recording of an artist's poor performance) misrepresents, perhaps by misfortune or by design, the performance and/or the artist's work.
3) **Third Phase simulation:** a highly spliced and processed studio recording which portrays a performance that never existed, and perhaps could never exist, but nonetheless poses as one to be compared with and enjoyed as a live recording.
4) **Fourth Phase simulation:** an electronically generated recording which never presumes to have been played by human hands, but for which any need for it to have been is also gone, or was never there.

Crucial also to Baudrillard's postmodernity are the notions of "the mass" (the immense and growing expanse of class-leveled, capitalist, sign-chasing humanity, strongly echoing Adorno's view), and "implosion", the rapid collapse of meaning, culture and the social in upon themselves under the aching weight of mass information, and consumption. The implosion of meaning and "mass" are inextricably linked for Baudrillard, who, as a post-Marxist defined the latter in terms more cognoscente, but no less helpless, than did Marx. Writing of the deeply-entrenched binary structures (good/bad, rich/poor, self/other, etc.) which impute meaning to much of language, he wrote:

> There is no longer any polarity between the one and the other in the mass [the people]. This is what causes that vacuum and inwardly collapsing effect in all those systems which survive on the distinction of poles [good/bad, true/false, alive/dead, up/down, and especially left/right (in a political sense)]. This is what makes the circulation of meaning in the mass impossible: it is instantaneously dispersed, like atoms in a void.[90]

[90] Baudrillard, Jean. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, translated by Paul Foss, John Johnston, and Paul Patton. (New York: Semiotexte), 1983, p.6

In reference to this passage, University of Texas critical theory Ph.D candidate Alan Taylor elaborated further on Baudrillard's position on "the mass" on his 'Implosion Home Page':

> Baudrillard's argument can be said to respond directly to the Marxism he once embraced. Whereas Marx argued that "the mass" was dominated by a "false" ideology that perpetuated its enslavement, Baudrillard suggests that "the mass" already knows that all ideologies are "false." "The mass" wants to be dominated by one false ideology after another. It absorbs ideologies and spectacles ... the Gulf War, the O.J. [Simpson] trial, Rush Limbaugh ... Spectacle after spectacle, ideology after ideology, all "meaning" is dispersed and rendered meaningless in "the mass," not because "the mass" resists bourgeois ideology, but because it consumes it frantically.[91]

Implosion for Baudrillard manifests because of us all, the sentient *yet* unthinking postmodern society guided by signs at the mercy of capitalism. Baudrillard bemoans the era of simulation, its product, "the mass" and its current and impending consequence, "implosion" in pronouncing the end of reality, a project he pursued most notoriously in his 1991 refutation of the occurrence of the Gulf War, pronouncing its coverage in the media as a third order simulacrum with no referent. Hinting therein at American propagandism, Baudrillard was touching on another important theme, to which he had alluded back in 1983, pointing out the potential for signs to be manipulated by third parties to the simulated and the 'simulatee'.

> The era of simulation is inaugurated by the liquidation of all referentials – worse, with their resurrection in the system of signs, a material more malleable than meaning…[92]

[91] Taylor, Alan, IMPLOSION Home Page. [online document] (accessed [18 July 2005]). http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/collab/what.html.

[92] Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra" in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, p.2

Musical Genre as Simulacrum

Any theoretical application of Baudrillard's notions of simulation and implosion to a phenomenon such as musical genre (which he never addressed specifically) must be made within two important contexts: 1) the totality of his theories about society, which he applied broadly to history, events, films, the Centre Pompidou at Beaubourg in Paris, advertising, markets and commodities, holograms, science fiction and even animals;[93] and 2) his career-long focus on the shift from modern thought, life and society to their postmodern successors – a shift which coincides directly with the late 20th-century shift in the scope and meaning of the term 'musical genre' referred to earlier. Musical genre, in its newly-reimagined form, resides throughout western urban life and society, but is perhaps most directly viewed in its totality through the music industry's offerings to the public via the media, music journals, Internet download sites, and the many stores pedaling music and writings about it. That the media figure so strongly in the production and perception of musical genre suggests strongly the latter's openness to a Baudrillardian critique.

In 1983, Baudrillard wrote about the onset of implosion under the crushing weight of saturation with meaning in terms of a "law of confusion of categories".

> The Law that is imposed on us is the law of confusion of categories. Everything is sexual. Everything is political. Everything is aesthetic. All at once… Each category is generalized to the greatest possible extent, so that it eventually loses all specificity and is reabsorbed by all other categories.[94]

[93] A selection of essay topics from *Simulacra and Simulation*.

[94] Baudrillard, Jean. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, translated by Paul Foss, John Johnston, and Paul Patton. (New York: Semiotexte, 1983).

While initially it might seem that over-specificity rather than over-generality cripples the genre system's ability to impute meaning to groupings of music, the difficulty is not that each of the thousands of genre categories carries *too much* meaning, but rather *too little* to convey music's sound or culture. Moreover, hundreds of genre categories, related by name (such as in sub-genres like classic rock, folk rock, easy rock, soft rock) and unrelated by name (like grime, grunge and garage) share much in common (beats, chord structures, lyrical character and subject, etc.). This gives rise to the invisibility and inaccessibility of much music fractured across the genre system (especially when it has landed in genre categories without visibility or financial backing): a problem for artists and producers thus locked away from their potential support base.

Flipping from the perspective of producer to that of the consumer: while few will ever encounter Wikipedia's shocking 1500 genre categories on their way to buy, tune in to, download, hear live or even think about music, many enquiries and decisions must be made *without hearing the music*, and so must be based on an elaborate system of signs including advertising, album/song/band name, performer/composer image, heresay, inherited knowledge or belief, third-party recommendation, etc. None of these can ultimately tell us what we want to know: how does the music sound and will I like it; rather it must be extracted from the regular daily bombardment of so-called "meaning" and constructed into a reality it can never be.

> Everywhere one seeks to produce meaning, to make the world signify, to render it visible. We are not, however, in danger of lacking meaning; quite to the contrary, we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us. As more and more things have fallen into the abyss of meaning, they have retained less and less of the charm of appearances.[95]

[95] Baudrillard, Jean. *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1988), translated by Bernard & Caroline Schutze, ed. Sylvère Lotringer. New York: Semiotexte, 1988.

With an opening statement "we live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning," Baudrillard in *The Implosion of Meaning in the Media* argues that information is directly destructive of meaning and signification. He writes:

> Rather than producing meaning, [information] exhausts itself in the staging of meaning… A circular arrangement through which one stages the desire of the audience, the antitheatre of communication… It is useless to ask if it is the loss of communication that produces this escalation of the simulacrum, or whether it is the simulacrum that is there first for dissuasive ends… Useless to ask which is the first term, there is none, it is a circular process – that of simulation, that of the hyperreal… More real than real, that is how the real is abolished.[96]

The media, conveying information in various ways designed to stimulate the interests and desires of "the mass," offer a simulacrum of the third order – a sign referencing audience interest and desire that does not exist inherently, but is rather constructed for them. Proposing the carefully devised and packaged music of mega-pop stars for this reading of musical genre would be the obvious choice here… but consider another: the popular "Roots" or "Old Time" stream of country music. Born in response to the slick, highly-produced and trumped up version of Country music developed by Nashville, it applies simpler instrumental and vocal colours to the new creations of contemporary, often highly-trained urban artists, and encodes them with the turn-of-the-century authenticity of rural self-taught musicians that Nashville once discovered and adapted for nationwide consumption. While the simulacrum of authenticity stands in opposition to Nashville's decadence, its referent is forgotten, either gone, or living on in the obscurity of the hills. Crucially, for Baudrillard (unlike many Marxist and post-Marxist critics) "the mass" (a term

[96] Baudrillard, Jean. "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media" in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, pp.80-81

in which he includes himself) knows full well of the contemporality and skill of its artists, and their lack of actual authenticity… It simply doesn't care, or at least doesn't oppose the simulacrum:

> A sort of inverse simulation in the masses, in each one of us, corresponds to this simulation of meaning and of communication in which this system encloses us. To this tautology of the system the masses respond with ambivalence, to deterrence they respond with disaffection, or with an always enigmatic belief. Myth exists, but one must guard against thinking that people believe in it: this is the trap of critical thinking that can only be exercised if it presupposes the naïveté and stupidity of the masses.[97]

Contemporary Christian Music in Service and Simulation

Baudrillard's simulacra present another opportunity to view a musical genre through the lens of postmodern thought: the Simulation represented by Contemporary Christian Music to mainline churches in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. To clarify the subject matter: this is not an examination of CCM as the 20th century musical and religious phenomenon it was and remains… it is an examination of that phenomenon's influence on more traditional mainline churches and denominations.

Contemporary Christian Music (known within church circles as Contemporary Worship Music, CWM, when used in public worship), a descendent of earlier gospel forms, emerged in California in the late 1960s, and is normally tied to the "Jesus Movement", a large-scale reconnection with Christianity among young people. John Frame places it as a counter-countercultural reaction:

[97] Baudrillard, Jean. "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media" in Simulacra and Simulation (1981), translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, p.81.

> About that time, many young people from the sixties' counterculture professed to believe in Jesus. Convinced of the barrenness of a lifestyle based on drugs, free sex, and radical politics, "hippies" became "Jesus people." Doubtless there were many among them who looked on Jesus as just another "trip." But many became genuine disciples of the Lord.[98]

In the birth of CCM Kavanaugh also cites the rapid rise of Rock 'n Roll, coded strongly as youthful and rebellious, through the 1950s:

> The popularity of secular rock had already begun with Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley and dozens of other artists who appeared in the years following World War II. But in the 1960s, the unprecedented popularity of The Beatles accelerated the acceptance of many similar groups. The antiwar, antiestablishment offered abundant material and a willing market. By 1965 rock music was a billion-dollar industry that could not be ignored by the world. Nevertheless, most of it could not be understood, accepted, or appreciated by the Christian Church, whether Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox.[99]

Church attendance had declined through the 1960s, particularly among youth, and with a few exceptions such as Los Angeles' Calvary Chapels, the rise of CCM took place outside of the sanctuary, in the personal and corporate spirituality of youth. As it has made a practice over centuries, the church opposed the development. Don Cusic writes:

> The church, accustomed to 200-year-old hymns, often considered the music to be of the Devil, and those involved with street-level Christianity to be cultish and suspect, while the secular culture simply did not want to hear about Jesus through their loudspeakers. Because the major gospel record companies and Christian radio stations generally sided with the conservative churches and Christian bookstores, the result was a stifling of Christian music by the Christian culture itself.[100]

---

[98] Frame, John E. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1997), p.5
[99] Kavanaugh, Patrick. The *Music of Angels: A Listener's Guide to Sacred Music from Chant to Christian Rock*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999. p.241
[100] Cusic, Don. *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel and Christian Music* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corp., 2002), p.281

One dimension of the Jesus movement and the rise of CCM often overlooked in the literature is that it was perhaps the firstly widely-embraced model for a western Christian faith that did not require an institutional church (a view still more widely-held today), and in this light neither the church's hostile and fearful response to CCM in the 1960s, and the swiftly turning tide to accept it in the 1970s, comes as a surprise. As the artists of CCM became known as true devoted Christians rather than "post-hippies"; as the church recognized CCM's potential to reach young people who were fleeing the church in their millions; and as it also presented itself to parents as a safe, acceptable alternative to more subversive forms of music and lifestyle, the stage was set for the meteoric growth CCM experienced in the 1970s.

In the same manner in which cities tend to take on an overall architectural character representing their periods of most significant growth, so to did the genre of CCM come into its own in a version of 1970s soft rock that of necessity fell somewhere between its youthful, gritty, anti-establishment roots and the huge population (including an already-growing population of senior citizens, the middle-aged parents of the "baby boom" generation, congregations, church authorities and others initially hostile to it) that it was now to serve and satisfy. Frame points out this (to this day, persistent) genreal model, while cautioning against over-generality:

> The tunes and musical arrangements tend to reflect a popular style somewhat like the "soft rock" of the early 1970s. It is this style which serves to define CWM in the minds of many, but it would be an exaggeration to say that CWM totally lacks stylistic variety. Even the "soft rock" style permits variation in tempo, major or minor mode, volume, melodic interest, harmonic possibilities, etc. at least as much as more traditional styles of church music.[101]

[101] Frame, John E. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1997), p.7

Another important boost to the movement came in the rise of Christian fundamentalism in the United States, tied by Cusic to the Presidential election of 1976:

> Within Christianity, the fundamentalist counterculture entered the mainstream in 1976 when Jimmy Carter, a "born-again" evangelical, was elected President. This brought an immense amount of media coverage to the evangelical movement in the United States. In a 1976 survey, the Gallup pole found that one out of every three Americans considered themselves a "born-again" Christian; that same year, for the first time since World War II, church attendance increased rather than decreased… America underwent a spiritual awakening, and Christianity that was fundamental in its beliefs, active in its faith, and in touch with the contemporary culture became acceptable.[102]

Of further importance to CCM's growth spurt from 1965 into the 1970s is a movement known as *liturgical renewal*, touched off principally by Pope John XXIII's Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which on an awe-inspiring global level overturned the 16th century Tridentine latin mass and introduced the vernacular mass, a new emphasis and priority for congregational singing, and a general openness to the contemporary world in the lives of millions of Christians. Though it affected directly only Roman Catholics (and has still made only limited gains in Orthodox Catholic circles) it could not fail to have repercussions in the mainline Protestant world, creating what Robert Webber describes as "an ecumenical consensus on worship.[103]" Meanwhile, an entirely different liturgical movement (usually and problematically called *contemporary worship*) based on recovering the subjective and experiential side of worship emerged in the Pentecostal, charismatic and praise and worship traditions, drawing congregations into new forms of involvement such as uplifted hands, circles of prayer and times

---

[102] Cusic, Don. *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel and Christian Music* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corp., 2002), p.280-1

[103] These effects have been felt much more strongly in the Protestant world than in that of Orthodox Catholicism.

of testimony; and offered them new levels of experience through such charismatic rites as the laying on of hands for healing. In musical terms this movement confirmed the piano, guitar, and drums, electronic amplification, effects and tone production (synthesisers) as a new instrumental standard, and evolved a new genre of worship music, the "praise chorus" which became the core sung content of worship services.

As new churches and denominations formed, and Christian artists, record labels, bookstores, television and radio ministries and other manifestations multiplied, traditional mainline churches that had dismissed and attacked CCM when it emerged found themselves in the midst of reforming their worship, and were forced to take another look. Some who took that look tried to adopt the form which was increasingly being practised in newer, thriving and growing churches – nearly all who did met with bitter and even schismatic opposition from those both used to, and otherwise drawn to, more traditional forms of church music.

Robert Webber's account succinctly describes the main points of the two movements of worship renewal and indicates a convergence which has emerged in mainline churches at the end of the 20th century, which he says displays a "radical commitment to contemporary relevance":

> During the last decades of the 20th century, two distinct approaches to worship renewal have emerged. First, a Catholic and mainline renewal emphasised the recovery of a theology of worship, the fourfold biblical pattern, and a focus on God's transcendence. Second, the charismatic and praise and worship movement emphasised an experience of God during worship through an intimate encounter with God's presence. A convergence began about 1990 to blend these two streams: blended worship is characterised by synthesising substance and relevance, traditional and contemporary forms.[104]

[104] Webber, Robert. *Planning Blended Worship: The Creative Mixture of Old and New.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

My 14 years' experience as cathedral musician during the advent of so-called 'blended worship' to the Anglican Church of Canada's Toronto diocese, its most populous and diverse, brought me into useful and interesting exposure of the two forms which emerged in all of the mainline denominations: *inter-service* and *intra-service* (both my terms). Intra-service blending occurs when elements of reformed traditional and contemporary worship are incorporated into a single worship service. The more popular option, inter-service blending, is a single church offering separate 'contemporary' and 'traditional' services, the former usually taking place in an early time slot on Sunday mornings (ca. 9-9:30am) and being positioned towards younger people and families, and the latter continuing on in a later time slot (ca. 10:30-11:00am) largely unchanged for decades, and addressing older worshippers and other specifically drawn to it.

The inter-service option offered parishes the advantage of allowing adherents of traditional worship to continue to practice in the way (and usually at the exact time) they have always done, albeit with some reforms such as updated language and minor ritual changes, while offering a target class of younger worshipper a new, earlier, shorter and contemporary-styled service. The other feature of this form of blending was that church musicians unable or unwilling to lead contemporary worship could often be supplemented by extra staff or volunteers who were able and willing. To this class of blending also belongs the related practice of having just one consistent weekly service time, but setting some form of regular monthly pattern of (for example) traditional 1st and 3rd Sundays, contemporary 2nd and 4th Sundays – a mode of variation already known historically throughout the Anglican church in the regular alternation of the Holy Eucharist

with the office of Morning Prayer, and more recently on the more esoteric (but no less significant to many) practice of alternating the use of older language with its newer counterpart.

Intra-service blending, in which the unfamiliar (and to some, abhorrent) CWM was injected into an otherwise traditional worship paradigm, became the principal battleground for what became colloquially known as "Worship Wars."[105] Bitter debates raged over the appropriateness of the new content and the relevance of the old status quo, liturgical refugees fled their polluted services for more purely traditional ones (often in other churches), and where the intruding material and other reforms were defeated, more progressive-thinking worshippers defected to other churches and even other denominations.

While during my tenure as what some have referred to as 'diocesan musician' the Diocese of Toronto was experiencing overall growth, its few all-CWM parishes, its slightly larger number of intra-service blending parishes and its still larger number of inter-service blending parishes could have been described as flourishing. Historians tend to locate this apparent disconnect between reality and both the encoding of CWM and the expressed purpose for its adoption by many mainline churches in a context of the persistence of their traditions:

> Some… have integrated charismatic motifs into their worship. Groups with historic liturgical traditions, some Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, for example, have done the same in their services, but these more catholic traditions generally have bumped into

[105] It should be noted that in the Diocese of Toronto, as in other diocese and denominations, "Worship Wars" were (and continue to be) fought over a wide range of matters pertaining to liturgy including, but not limited to the introduction of CWM. Other flashpoints in the Diocese Toronto from 1991-2003 included old/modern language in scripture, hymn- and prayer-books, a priest's east- or west-facing celebration of the Eucharist, the 'exchange of the peace' among congregants, the introduction of non-CWM musical forms such as those of the Taizé and Iona Communities, architectural modifications to worship spaces, and general spiritual practice considered overt.

> their histories when they have sought to use praise choruses with a wholesale embrace. Lutherans bumped into Luther, Presbyterians into Calvin, Methodists into Wesley.[106]

Another view suggests convincingly that CWM can only really serve as the 'great attractor' it has been sought to be when allowed its full strength and context, implying that any partial or tokenistic 'blending' into another musical paradigm is doomed:

> Gospel and Christian music function better as magnets than hooks. When the music has sought to reach out to find an audience – to "hook" people, many of them unsuspecting souls who would be caught by "stealth evangelism" – it generally fails. But when the music is allowed to be itself, to stand self-assured and confident, then it is a magnet both for those who love the music already and those outside the field. Gospel and Christian music are powerful attractions when they are allowed to be who they are and do what they do. [107]

In truth, even in those Diocese of Toronto parishes in which CWM is found as the dominant musical form[108] it is always accompanied by traditionally Anglican service forms (and in particular the Holy Eucharist), as opposed to its more conventional setting in the realm of the subjective and the experiential. Where CWM is blended intra-service it is often beset by musicians and congregations having limited comfort and facility with it; and where it is blended inter-service, even where its musical leadership is sound and its following loyal, it remains most often relegated to early-morning and other non-primary churchgoing time slots, providing a systemic limitation to its attractive power, and at least a symbolic 'othering'.

---

[106] Westermeyer, Paul. *Te Deum: The Church and Music*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998, p.315

[107] Cusic, Don. *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel and Christian Music* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corp., 2002), p. 383

[108] Notable among these are Holy Trinity (Streetsville), Little Trinity (Regent Park) and Church of the Nativity (Malvern).

Westermeyer is philosophical about the lessons that may have been, or are being learned from the mainline churches' experiments with CWM, but also expresses a touch of fatalism over the century that produced it, and the divisive effect it has had in the ecclesiastical community:

> Sometimes this blending has led to healthy discussions about the culture and how to address it, part of a much larger debate about a bifurcated culture. Sometimes it has promoted if not ecumenical cooperation, at least gratefulness for various perspectives and practices. More often, however, the divisive history of the twentieth century was played out again, this time into competitions. Some leaders of the church took their clue from the culture, assumed the bottom line should be the control, and sought to sell their product to the most people as the "tool."… Churches wrote mission statements and tried to "position" themselves where they would get the largest market share, then lined up against one another with power plays."[109]

Whatever factor or factors might explain CWM's limited success in mainline denominations, it would seem that churches of today that have pursued it and other initiatives as 'selling points' for themselves have followed a Baudrillardian simulacrum of CWM's imagined youthful, thriving congregation of the future (eternally drawn by and to the derivative soft rock of the 1970s), taking the place of another 'reality', perhaps one of limited or no potential growth. Yet by Westermeyer there is another simulacrum: a hyperreal signification for "liturgy"[110] based on a capitalist economic model aimed fundamentally at attracting and converting people, replacing its founding identity as "the service of the people to their God". The foundational and entirely separate biblical Christian vocations of worship and evangelism are thus hoped to be fused into one convenient Sunday morning package.

[109] Westermeyer, Paul. *Te Deum: The Church and Music*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998, p.318
[110] From the Greek *leitourgi*, "public service", which itself comes from *leitourgos*, "public servant."

Where, if CWM forms these misconceptions as third order simulacra to the mainline churches who seek its magical attractive powers, lie the realities whose (lack of) existence is hidden? Baudrillard would perhaps argue not that mainline churches seeking a musical 'messiah' in CWM are not missing a reality in which they have limited or no potential for growth, but rather a reality in which the matter of whether they grow or not cannot in any sense be determined by music. Likewise, even if church growth could somehow empirically be related to music in any convincing way (which so far it has not been in the context of the mainline churches), the question of in what proportion liturgy succeeds by what it offers to God as worship and what it offers to God as evangelism is still harder to argue, and thus problematic to act upon.

How successfully, then, does musical genre locate itself within Baudrillard's imploding world of simulacra and simulation? As mentioned earlier, these notions have been widely applied by their author and others with much intuitive success, if with questionable rigour and/or provability, and it is not difficult to extend this corporate project of the past two decades, which has so many varied and successful applications, to musical genre. But one thing which I hope not to extend with it is the fatalism hanging over much of Baudrillard's thought, in which context we see a rare biblical paraphrase, of the evangelist Matthew's "He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword."

> I am a nihilist. I observe, I accept, I assume, I analyse the second revolution, that of the twentieth century, that of postmodernity, which is the immense process of the destruction of meaning, equal to the earlier [i.e. modernity's] destruction of appearances. He who strikes with meaning is killed by meaning…. Analysis is itself perhaps the decisive element of the immense process of the freezing over of meaning. The surplus of meaning that theories bring, their competition at the level of meaning is completely secondary in relation to their coalition in the glacial and four-tiered

> operation of dissection and transparency. One must be conscious that, no matter how the analysis proceeds, it proceeds towards the freezing over of meaning, it assists in the precession of simulacra and indifferent forms. The desert grows.[111]

Musical genre as signifier is meaning awaiting Baudrillard's 'implosion'. But if meaning is thereby only frozen over rather than destroyed, there may exist yet the hope of a thaw.

[111] Baudrillard, Jean. "On Nihlism" in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, pp.160-161.