

NO SURRENDER: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, NEOLIBERALISM AND ROCK AND
ROLL'S MELANCHOLIC FANTASY OF SOVEREIGN REBELLION

by

Kaitlin N. Graves

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, FL

August 2017

Copyright 2017 by Kaitlin N. Graves

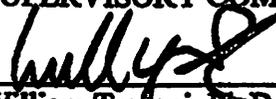
**NO SURRENDER: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, NEOLIBERALISM AND ROCK AND
ROLL'S MELANCHOLIC FANTASY OF SOVEREIGN REBELLION**

by

Kaitlin Graves

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. William Trapani, School of Communication and Multimedia Studies, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

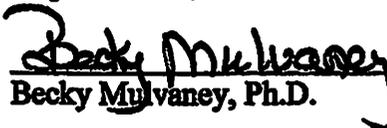
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:



William Trapani, Ph.D.
Thesis Advisor



Stephen Heidt, Ph.D.



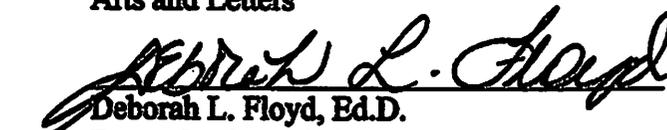
Becky Mulvaney, Ph.D.



David C. Williams, Ph.D.
Director, School of Communication and
Multimedia Studies



Michael Horswell, Ph.D.
Dean, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of
Arts and Letters



Deborah L. Floyd, Ed.D.
Dean, Graduate College

August 7, 2017
Date *d*

ABSTRACT

Author: Kaitlin Graves
Title: No Surrender: Bruce Springsteen, Neoliberalism and Rock and Roll's Fantasy of Sovereign Rebellion
Institution: Florida Atlantic University
Thesis Advisor: Dr. William Trapani
Degree: Master of Arts
Year: 2017

This thesis builds from press accounts of Bruce Springsteen's South by Southwest keynote address, taken by many to be a renewed call to arms of the classic mantras of the rock ethos in the age of a declining recording industry. In tracing the ways the speech circulated I argue that its discourse was rearticulated toward quite different (and concerning) ends. Throughout, I aim to show the apparatuses of power that sustains the rock liberation fantasy. I read the coverage of Springsteen's address as a therapeutic discourse meant to soothe the anxiety over the closure of agency in the age of neoliberalism. The general problematic for the thesis, then, addresses an anxiety over the collapse of freedom and as such works to offer broad reflections on the nature of radical agency in our increasingly neoliberal present.

DEDICATION

For my mother, Deborah Graves, who had a heart so big it couldn't fit this world.

NO SURRENDER: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, NEOLIBERALISM AND ROCK AND
ROLL'S MELANCHOLIC FANTASY OF SOVEREIGN REBELLION

Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	35
Analysis.....	59
Conclusion	81

1. INTRODUCTION

Overview

In 2016 as part of his wildly successful revamped “River Tour” Bruce Springsteen played three sold-out performances at the L.A. Sports Arena. Despite the commercial success of the shows at the time of this writing the venue is slated to be shut down because there are so few rock bands capable of filling arenas. Reflecting on the irony of the “Boss” of rock music appearing for an extended stay just as the theater faces its closure *Los Angeles Times* writer Mikael Wood noted,

As one of rock’s most historically attuned performers, Springsteen is a natural choice to close down the Sports Arena, having first played there in 1980 in support of the of that year’s “The River” album. Since then, he’s revisited the venue or the neighboring Memorial Coliseum dozens of times - enough to give the dilapidated arena his own nickname, ‘the Dump that Jumps’. Still, you have to wonder, whether it says something about the imperiled state of arena rock that Springsteen, 66, keeps closing these joints down (Wood, *As Bruce Springsteen closes out another rock arena*)

Wood’s observation highlights a stunning state of affairs for a music genre that long dominated radio airwaves. Indeed, with the near total dominance of pop, rap, and hip hop as well as the growth of alternate forms of entertainment and ways of accessing music (such as streaming services or digital platforms) rock and roll music, and the

classic and AOR (album oriented rock) music based radio stations that long kept it afloat, appears in jeopardy.

These trends have led many to pronounce that “rock is dead” and that it is merely a matter of time before it will become impossible to find the type of guitar-driven, rebellious, counter-culture music and lifestyle that was so popular and commercially successful throughout the latter part of the 20th century. Indeed, running throughout Woods’ elegy is the implication that rock is not only dead but that it is being kept alive, temporarily, only through the super-heroic work of some of its most famous elder statesmen. There is, Wood asserts, no future for rock if only because the last great performers of rock are veterans of the industry that have been engaged in the profession for decades. There is, following this logic, just not as much value placed on the live concert performance as there once was in the heydays of rock and roll because there are so few rockers left. Woods underscores the nostalgic undertones of the last hurrah of rock by noting,

Yet Springsteen’s road show - along with plenty of others on which veteran acts are performing classic records from start to finish - seem designed for a smaller, self-selecting audience composed of folks with specific memories to stir. Along with that comes a kind of implicit surrender, as though the artists have given up trying to express something that might grab listeners more concerned with right now. Will Springsteen get fists pumping if he revs up “Wrecking Ball” this week at the Sports Arena? Of course - That’s what the man does, even when he’s not saying goodbye. But even the hardest-core Boss fans will have to wonder

whether something more is under threat. (Wood, *As Bruce Springsteen closes out another rock arena*)

That threat, following Woods' argument, is that rock music has entered a period of irreversible decline and pathway to extinction. Far from being a hysterical outlier, Woods' sentiment echoes numerous others who have argued that "rock is dead" and that the spirit associated with rock and its general values have been taken over by a music industry either in decline or so driven by pop music and commercial necessity that there's no space for the more wild excesses offered by rock. Associated with this mantra is not only then a lamentation over the collapse of rock music but a lamentation that the culture and values associated with rock and rock culture are vanishing.

To be sure the rock's death knell has been rung many times before. As far back as 1986 perhaps the leading scholar of communication studies and rock music Lawrence Grossberg declared that

I might point to the increasingly common rhetoric of the 'death of rock and roll' and to the changing tastes at both the upper and lower chronological boundaries of the potential rock and roll audience. Although these have occurred before, they are so widespread within the culture today that it seems reasonable to take them as indicating significant shifts. As evidence of the objective crisis, I can point to the decreasing sales of records (despite the industry's claims that the recession is over, the number of gold and platinum albums has significantly declined) and the decreasing attendance at live venues (Grossberg, *Is There Rock After Punk*, 111).

I take the recurrence, and especially the recent proliferation, of these discourses as symptomatic of a larger cultural dread over the evaporation and closure of freedom

associated with the onset of neoliberalism and its demands to conform and to be a “productive” and measured member of society (arguably the very antithesis of a rock culture built on the principles of rebellion and indulgence). Indeed, rock has long been figured as the antidote to commerce and to an overly controlling lifestyle. The fantasy of rock has promised a standing strong against the control of neoliberal order. Rock promises its listeners a rebellious, loud, uncouth, raucous and vulgar lifestyle that they can join and, through their numbers, shake the system. The liberatory promise of rock suggests an escape from the oppressive restrictions of an otherwise dreary existence.

Rock and roll was, after all, born in America; fueled by the American environment of personal satisfaction, individualism, and the insatiable quest for freedom. It is, in a very real sense, the soundtrack of the (runaway) American dream and its sonic influence permeates the very fabric of the country and its sense of self. Rock, then, is neither incidental nor superfluous but is essential to the American experience. It is no accident, for example, that political candidates consistently use rock music at their rallies, indeed often without the artist’s license as if the music were the candidates and not the musicians.

If rock is there for us at our most energetic and hopeful moments where we look toward our future, it resonates as well in our worst times where we look back on the past. Throughout the 2016 presidential election, for example, conservatives engaged in a series of internal but highly public finger-wagging over Donald Trump and what to do about his candidacy. As part of that very visible fracturing one particular discursive thread stood out because it was both unexpected and unexpectedly vicious. Among several of the intellectual leaders of the so-called “republican establishment” it became fashionable to

turn against the white working class Americans that for decades had been praised as vital to victories by Reagan and the first and second Bushes but were now being labeled as too ignorant to see the damage they were doing to the republican brand and to the party's chances for winning the election. In one particularly ugly node of this debate some authors suggested that if the GOP were to ever evolve and to compete in the 21st Century those small white towns that clung to their victim status and their Bruce Springsteen romanticization of a life of labor and struggle would have to die off.

National Review writer Kevin Williamson joined the fray by squarely targeting those Americans who, according to Williamson, are fueled by xenophobia, opiates and their rock and roll fantasies. As he put it:

The truth about these dysfunctional, downscale communities is that they deserve to die. Economically, they are negative assets. Morally, they are indefensible. Forget all your cheap theatrical Bruce Springsteen crap. Forget your sanctimony about struggling Rust Belt factory towns and your conspiracy theories about the wily Orientals stealing our jobs...The white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles. Donald Trump's speeches make them feel good. So does OxyContin. What they need isn't analgesics, literal or political. They need real opportunity, which means that they need real change, which means that they need U-Haul (Williamson)

That these attacks came from conservatives and that they were directed against their own base was unprecedented. For my own purposes, however, I am less interested in internecine political party squabbling than in the way Williamson's (and others') portrayal so prominently centered the Springsteen narrative at the heart of their screed.

Never mind that Springsteen has been a long-standing supporter of Democrats and had played prominent roles in the Kerry, Obama and Clinton “get out the vote” efforts. Never mind that Springsteen made those allegiances even clearer by publicly complaining that his 1984 smash hit “Born in the USA” had been misunderstood and misappropriated by a string of republican politicians including Bob Dole, Pat Buchanan, Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump.

At stake is not the question of where Springsteen himself aligns but instead the rhetorical curiosity that perhaps the most prominent living rock and roll legend – one that has for decades spun tales of hard work, community, enduring through strife and finding joy in the micropolitics of daily life rather than in the halls of power – would become such a central figure in the internal debate over republican politics and the future of the republican party. My aim in highlighting this oddity is less to ask after republican alignments than it is to underscore the way rock music itself (as principally represented by Springsteen) has come to signify a type of dead-end. How, I want to ask, has the genre perhaps most identified with rebellion, independence from institutional control and advancement of the self (all putatively “conservative” values) instead been reconfigured as if it were the soundtrack of the retrograde clinging to their glory days and failing to appreciate the true spirit of the American people? Or, put more simply: how has a certain version of rock been co-opted and put to the service of undermining the very cause of personal liberty and expressive freedom that lies at the heart of its lineage?

To be sure rock has never been in control of its own signification. From its earliest emergence it has been castigated, demonized, and feared by some just as, no doubt, it has been over-catheted and supra-invested with affect and personal and

political liberation by others. It's worth noting – for example – that the day before the election, and in the paper owned by Trump's son-in-law, rock came under fire for having failed to substantially offer meaningful social challenge to various perilous politics. Tim Sommer writes:

Rock 'n' roll, which makes such frequent and dramatic use of rabble-rousing sloganeering, has been virtually a complete washout when it comes to meaningful political action or instruction...it has succeeded in inspiring people to run to Hot Topic, and failed in inspiring them to storm the Bastille. Artists don't mind spouting their political opinions in interview... but the idea of doing anything that might cross a fence and target people on the "other" side, or most pertinently actually risk confrontation, seems to be absolutely anathema (Sommer)

In Sommer's account, too, Springsteen figures prominently and comes under particular scrutiny. Sommer continues:

What if Bruce Springsteen had gotten into a van and trailed Donald Trump to every campaign stop over the last four weeks (or even the last two). Imagine if every time Donald Trump set up to speak, Bruce got out of his van, strolled to a street corner or park a few blocks away, strapped on an acoustic guitar, and began to sing. It wouldn't have been that hard of a thing for Springsteen to do...Imagine the greatest and most popular populist singer in American history drawing attention away from our greatest populist pretender; Springsteen and his opposition would have become the story; *they* would have stolen the headlines (Sommer, *How Rock 'n' Roll Failed Us Again This Presidential Election*).

While some might challenge whether rock could ever be up to the challenge of providing a counterweight to neoliberalism or whether, instead, such freedom is merely illusory nevertheless the rock culture is/was figured as providing the type of spark/inspiration conducive to a subject's more radical endeavors. As Grossberg notes,

Rock and roll has, repeatedly and continuously, been attacked, banned, ridiculed, and relegated to an insignificant cultural status. The fact that so much effort has been brought to bear in the attempt to silence it makes it reasonable to assume that some struggle is going on, some opposition is being voiced. And despite the changing social sites and discourses of the attack, it is consistently as a way of behaving that rock and roll is seen as dangerous (Grossberg, *Is there Rock After Punk*, 114).

Against this backdrop (the ascent of neoliberalism and the collapse of rock culture) I read the recent resurgence of classic and nostalgic rock as a rhetorical recuperation of those presuppositions of freedom associated with the heyday of rock cultures. In particular I read the discourses praising Bruce Springsteen's SXSW speech as a type of pedagogical missive for those seeking to seam together the rock ethos in a commercially viable way. Put differently, I read the coverage of Springsteen's address as a type of therapeutic discourse meant to soothe the anxiety over the closure of agency in the age of neoliberalism. The general problematic for the thesis then addresses a type of anxiety over the collapse of freedom.

In converting Springsteen's drive to a publicly accessible and deployable fantasy the nostalgic embrace of rock functions not merely as a melancholic reaction and refusal to move on from an era that may never return but, read rhetorically, it is best understood

as a discourse in the service of a neoliberal order bound on making its subjects measure and subject themselves to discipline even in the most unlikely of places. So, if the “rock is dead thesis” comes across as a type of threat, the “long live rock” thesis – for example when journalists praise someone like Bruce Springsteen for his authenticity - recuperates the symbolic order and thereby allows people to reinvest in the rock culture as a site of identity.

Compared to other forms of popular culture, music (and in particular rock music) has received significantly less scholarly attention. While visual artifacts, theatrical performance, commemorative culture, sports and literature have all received their share of rhetorical attention music has fared far worse. Indeed, theorization and analysis of things “auditory” has, in general, taken a secondary (or worse) status in contemporary scholarship. Where they have been attended to it is with a general approach that places music on the side of the poetic and, as a result, as something that is putatively more liberatory than the staid prison house of ideology thought to circulate through discourses of political or personal identity. This - the placement of music as a freeing force - is as true of more “traditional” accounts of music (and again especially of rock music) as it is of the nascent field of sound studies (even as the latter often seeks to divest itself entirely from calculations of political freedom precisely so as to avoid the type of reductionist analysis often found there).

Purpose

In this project I attempt to take the measure of current rhetorical theorization of rock music especially as it relates to the question of rock’s potential for fostering anti-hegemonic impulses. Rather than undertake that endeavor in some of the more

conventional ways adopted by academics flying under the banner of cultural studies or English variants of rhetoric, I intend to read the support structure of that discursive fantasy (again: that rock music challenges the status quo) not in the lyrics of rock music or even in the concert experience but instead in the way the “narrative” of rock as a liberatory force is circulated in both popular and academic presses. Put differently and in more specific methodological terms, I intend to examine the affective fantasy structure which invites subjects (including academics) to see rock as a source of radical agency but tracing the ways in which such discourses are fostered and travel (aka circulated) in industry and academic press. In this way I wed the psychoanalytic protocols of Lacanian analyses of desire with a Foucauldian impulse to detail the network of power through which such a narrative might circulate.

While I have reservations about the radical potential of rock, the aim of the project then is less to debunk the fantasy so much as it is to detail its support structure as a way of (inevitably) traversing its so that we are no longer beholden to its often naïve conceptions of power and the romanticization of the agents that “speak” that fantasy”.

To accomplish this the thesis primarily works from an analysis of press accounts of Bruce Springsteen’s well-publicized and discussed South by Southwest keynote address which was taken by many to be a renewed call to arms (in the age of a declining recording industry) of the classic mantras of the rock ethos. By tracing the ways in which the speech “traveled” I hope to show not only the apparatuses of power that sustain the rock liberation fantasy but to engage a broader reflection on the nature of a radical agency worthy of that name.

Rather than analyze Bruce Springsteen and his discourse *sui generis* and on its own terms for some localizable insight into the man or his personal success and influence, across the span of this thesis I consider Bruce Springsteen more broadly as a paradigmatic figure, indeed perhaps *the* paradigmatic figure, of rock. Put differently, while others may choose to do so I am less interested in hermeneutic analyses of Springsteen, his lyrics or what he might mean to his fans than I am in reading him as representative of rock culture and its ethos. When I read Springsteen's SXSW speech I therefore do so less for how it speaks some insight into the man himself but instead how the speech attempts to voice the spirit of rock. Similarly, where I then study the way in which that speech is circulated, reported and commented upon my aim is less to understand how "Springsteen" is portrayed but instead to examine how it reveals a network through which rock's sensibility is manufactured and transmitted. Finally, then, when I use Springsteen as a lever for considering how academics approach their study of rock culture and the productive resistance it may (or may not) offer, I do so less because I am interested in how Springsteen and his songs may (or may not) inspire alternate modes of being, but instead to chart of scholars understand rock, resistance and their possible relation.

Justification

Why Bruce Springsteen? Why him above all other possible contenders that others might suggest as no doubt equally significant to the production of rock and its sensibility? What is it about Bruce Springsteen that suggests him as the ideal candidate for singularly carrying the weight of an analysis of rock culture more broadly? To be both playful and yet sincere at once: because he is the Boss. Indeed, in their introductory essay of the

inaugural volume of the journal of the same name, the editors make a compelling case that no other musician so fully characterizes, to so many and for so long, the nature of rock as has Springsteen. As they argue,

Given his enduring global popularity, his diverse oeuvre, as well as his self-conscious engagement with the American past and the American storytelling and songwriting traditions, Springsteen represents a key cultural figure of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. (Cohen et al, 2014, 5)

It is precisely this longevity, reach, and connection to an array of social issues that makes Springsteen so useful for my purposes. Indeed, Springsteen's breadth – his elasticity through time and across topic is exactly what makes him such a central figure in both the production of rock culture and, subsequently, in its analysis. Nor, it would seem, am I the only author who believes Springsteen so vital to the constitution of rock. Indeed, across a four year period Denise Green analyzed and indexed over 280 works of scholarship on Springsteen ranging (in order of their frequency) from essays on the criminal justice system, social justice, economics, working class affairs, gender, space and place, and the expression of philosophy and religion. In short, as I further demonstrate over the remainder of this section, no other modern artist signifies rock and roll in of its dimensions as does Bruce Springsteen.

Serving as verification as to what makes a Springsteen a viable candidate as the figure of rock is his longevity. As an artist Springsteen has demonstrated his ability to serve as the figure of rock and as well as exemplify why rock matters. He has been respected and appreciated by numerous generations; he is not faddish but has remained a constant in rock for decades. The success of his eighteen studio albums across the span

of forty-one years is manifested by Springsteen's longevity. Along the way Bruce has managed to earn the respect of fellow musicians and has remained central in the development of artists and the music industry. All this is evident with Springsteen's accumulation of twenty Grammys, an Oscar, a Golden Globe and induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. His diverse body of work has been covered by numerous artists. Springsteen's own covers of other artists' material from the Crystals' "Then He Kissed Me" to current hits such as Lorde's hit "Royals" adds to his versatility and longevity as a musician. Furthermore, Bruce exhibits ethos and pathos most celebrities surrender in their rise to fame; he has not had controversies like many musicians have. He is known to for his blue collared roots lyrics and ability to emphasize and embody such characters within his songs. Above all, Springsteen illustrates why rock musicians deserve to be studied not merely for fifteen seconds of fame, but for their impact and force.

Concert performances are the peak of Springsteen's popularity and legacy. His marathon shows have remained his calling card to this day – his 2012 Finland appearance clocked in at a legendary four hours and six minutes. Springsteen's success as a rock agent not surprisingly has resulted in him being one of the top grossing acts while on tour. In addition, a 2011 audience poll voted Springsteen and the E Street Band the greatest live act of all time. In 2013, *Rollingstone* magazine crowned the band first place in their "50 Greatest Live Acts Right Now" with diverse judges including musicians Lars Ulrich of Metallica and Brittany Howard of the Alabama Shakes. The acclaim of Springsteen's energetic performances has culminated in a lasting and enduring worldwide fan base. The Springsteen concert experience garners appeal because it is grounded in audience interaction and allows fans the chance to get close to the performers. Unlike

many performers like U2 or Pink Floyd, Springsteen does not use the spectacle of synchronized and choreographed light spectacles or pyrotechnics, rather, his shows produce spectacle with the band's energetic performance.

Blue collar narratives are the centrality of Springsteen's catalogue and philanthropic work. The lyrics of the songs "Born in the USA," "River," "Born to Run," "Factory," "The Rising" and "Working on a Dream" embody work class predicaments of being held back and escaping to a place of your own. "The deepest motivation comes out of the house that I grew up in and the circumstances that were set up there, which is mirrored around the United States with the level of unemployment we have right now" "Springsteen writes songs about the damaged, the dispossessed, the poor, the prisoner. He writes about people at the margins, people struggling to survive. He writes about the moment when the margins don't hold and an otherwise ordinary life breaks: "the thin line between stability and that moment when time stops and everything goes to black, when the things that connect you to your world- your job, your family, friends, your faith, the love and grace in your heart-fail you"" (Sawyers 11).

Rock and Roll earned its reputation by its rebellion against the system and cultural norms. Bruce Springsteen serves as the figure that embodies the essence of rock ethos. From the beginning of his career he has clashing with the traditional system to make a place of his own. Lesser known instances of such revolt occurred when Springsteen graffiti'd his own billboard and tore down posters promoting his album and shows because he was uncomfortable with the glaring hype. More well-known incidents included Springsteen clashing with former president Ronald Reagan over the use of his music without permission in addition to misinterpreting the lyrics to "Born in the USA".

Springsteen was also vocal about his distaste and opposing views with George W. Bush which ultimately led to Springsteen's participation in the 2004 Vote for Change tour to elect a democrat into office. Throughout the course of his career he has managed to be a figure that goes against the system and territorialize his own space.

It is hardly surprising, then, that perhaps the preeminent scholar of music and rock cultures from communication studies, Lawrence Grossberg, has himself identified Bruce Springsteen had emblematic of rock and its ethos. As Grossberg puts it:

More than perhaps any rock and roll performer, Springsteen's career defines the limits and possibilities of rock and roll, and his peculiar commitment to the genre is captured in his relation to his history as well as to that of rock and roll. Neither is ever allowed to disappear into the past or to dissolve into an innocent nostalgia. History is always being recontextualized and reinterpreted in the music he is playing at the moment. Moreover, despite the changes in his music (most important in his latest success is the fact that he has successfully adapted to the three-minute pop format), its constant features- Bruce's voice, Clarence's sax, the interplay between the powerful rhythm section and the idiosyncratic guitars- have consistently produced some of the best rock and roll of the past decade"

(Grossberg, *Rockin' with Reagan, or the Mainstreaming of Postmodernity*, 173).

He continues,

Bruce's desire to have it all, and his willingness to give whatever it takes to get it, constructs both his own romantic faith and his image of "authenticity." But the audience knows that his act is rehearsed and repeatable, while the authentic is not. Yet Bruce's power may lie precisely in having found a way to redefine

authenticity onto the television screen. He offers us images of our own affective existence constantly played off against his own commitment to struggle continuously to escape those debilitating dilemmas. The relationship between musician, music, fan, and history is constructed around an increasingly common celebration and production of energy in the midst of a global “black-out.” And isn’t that the heart of rock and roll, and the soul of youth?” (Grossberg, *Rockin’ with Reagan, or the Mainstreaming of Postmodernity*, 175).

Notwithstanding my own (considerable) appreciation of Springsteen and without necessarily taking away from the possibility that other active musicians might also serve in similar ways as representative figures of rock and roll (the Rolling Stones perhaps), I believe the point is clear: for a measure of rock and roll’s character and trajectory one could not do better but to consider how Springsteen is represented.

Agency, Rebellion and the Neoliberal Order

For some time rhetorical studies has been invested in the project of identifying avenues of social change. Whether it was in describing characteristics of effective speeches, training in the art of oral delivery or, more recently, in tracing the various relays of social or institutional control to identify avenues of transformation available to subjects, the field has consistently shown an interest in serving as the catalyst to progressive social change. This work, in turn, has required increasingly sophisticated accounts of the range of action available to subjects - indeed, even the language of subjectivity itself is born from this very effort to more fully understand the constraints and contingency circumscribing possibility.

These concerns have generally been bundled under the rubric of assessing the subject's agency. Indeed, it is no understatement to say that the lion's share of the work done in rhetorical studies – and certainly all of it aligned with monikers associated with critical/cultural studies – has been driven by greater and greater interest in identifying the conditions of possibility afforded subjects and ways that they might best actualize those possibilities; or, in other words, agency. Even more there has been an increasingly determined effort to assess the possibility for radical agency – agency that is not merely for the micro-pleasure or survival of the subject but that might, when joined with others, work to effect genuine and lasting social change. These concerns over agency have led many to detail the broader socio-economic arrangements that subjects confront and through which they come into existence. For many scholars writing today this has meant detailing what collectively has been called “neoliberalism”.

Nicholas Rose is the major theorist of neoliberal culture and has spent a lifetime studying and identifying enterprise culture; by which he means the felt need to calculate and measure all we do. This need to measure comes from government and institutions. Calculation would engineer social projects which were done in order to protect outcomes, but as those programs roll back they rely more heavily on the individual. Our standard of democracy is that everyone has to limit themselves for group wellbeing, but neoliberalism reverses that and encourages everyone to maximize their liberty to their own advantage because it will benefit for the system. This means the “rationality” of the system depends on individuals. As Rose puts it,

No longer is there a conflict between the self-interest of the economic subject and the patriotic duty of the citizen: it now appears that one can best fulfill one's

obligations to one's nation by most effectively pursuing the enhancement of the economic well-being of oneself, one's family, one's firm, business or organization. Freedom, here, is redefined: it is no longer freedom from want, which might be provided by a cosseted life on benefits: it is the capacity for self-realization which can be obtained only through individual activity. Hence an economic politics which enjoins work on all citizens is one which provides mutual benefit for the individual and the collective: it enhances national economic health at the same time as it generates individual freedom (Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 145).

The neoliberal order is defined by this change (the reduction of government) and this change to individuality to make use of the subject's freedom "to become whole, become what you want, become yourself: the individual is to become, as it were, an entrepreneur of itself, seeking to maximize its own powers, its own happiness, its own quality of life, through enhancing its autonomy and then instrumentalizing its autonomous choices in the service of its life-style." (Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 158)

In order to maximize themselves individuals must train and surround themselves by experts, they must monitor and self-regulate themselves. Too often undisciplined or unmotivated at work, for example, the enterprising self requires competition, work incentives, professional and social training, and a 'fulfilling' job brimming with excitement in order to achieve its potential. Confronted with the banality of domestic life, to take another example, the enterprising self surrounds itself with life-coaches, personal trainers, financial and spiritual advisors, marriage and sex counselors all promising various 'life experiences' and challenges that rejuvenate and motivate.

Although each of these various domains of life operate by their own heuristic, were we to continue charting the self's challenges in the social, interpersonal, or spiritual arenas the same pattern would present itself: the self is often unaware of what it wants, it is too lazy or undisciplined to achieve it, or it does not have the fortitude to work through the obstacles and competition with others in order to achieve it. The subject can no longer turn to the state for their insights. They must look to culture and to cultural icons and they must "discover" how to be.

Huge new industries of doctors, life coaches, trainers, therapists, et cetera to help the self-become. Functional orders and a disciplined mind is key. It must be a calculating self and one that weights its possibilities and that is careful not to be frivolous. This calculation becomes the new order of the day. It is not that we only care about economics it is that all things become economical like how to best vacation, what food to eat, how to dress all become calculations. Rose again,

This would not be a return to the liberalism of the nineteenth century, or, finally, government by laissez faire. It was not a matter of freeing an existing set of market relations from their social shackles, but of organizing all features of one's national policy to enable a market to exist, and to provide what it needs to function. Social government must be restructured in the name of an economic logic, and economic government must create and sustain the central elements of economic well-being such as the enterprise form and competition. As this advanced liberal diagram develops, the relation of the social and the economic is rethought. All aspects of social behaviour are now reconceptualized along

economic lines as calculative actions undertaken through the universal human faculty of choice (Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 141).

What they choose is not as important as what they do. It is the calculation that matters. Which means the subject thinks differently about situation of circumstance. Despite the individual mattering the public still matters - or idea of looking to others to determine their selves; that each person must calculate but they see others as resources to do more.

Neoliberalism does not destroy community, but it changes its design and value. No longer just belonging, but what you can get from belonging. All acts matter, nothing in it is frivolous; even the most irrelevant community can matter. So for example being in a music culture means we desire recognition. We want to be seen as legitimate and recognized as being appropriate, but in order to “count” one must be part of a community and regulate themselves by their standards. As Rose argues, it is because there is no longer a direct pole or relation connecting the individual to the State that the subject must craft its recognizable value through various communities in different registers of the self’s life:

The political problem of citizenship is reposed: it is no longer a question of national character but of the way in which multiple identities receive equal recognition in a single constitutional form....Practices and styles of aestheticized life-choice that were previously the monopoly of cultural elites have been generalized in this new habitat of subjectification: that is to say, the belief that individuals can shape an autonomous identity for themselves through choices in taste, music, goods, styles and habitus. This embodies a shift away from emphasis upon morality - obedience to an externally imposed code of conduct and values in

the name of the collective good – and towards ethics - the active and practical shaping by individuals of the daily practices of their own lives in the name of their own pleasures, contentments or fulfilments (sic). (Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 179).

Neoliberalism is about saying the government is going to explain why it's good to own a home and have kids and be married, but it's not going to tell you what kind of husband and what to name your kids or the specifics of your house because that's up to you (biopower). Rose explores the way biopower is produced by having counting/measuring systems. The subjects know they will be measured so they are about the business of maximizing themselves- they control certain things like major in college, clubs social projects, and they cultivate relationships with faculty because they know the neoliberal system awards it. Subjects choose certain pathways as opposed to the desired exotic because it is safer and more rewardable by the system. Subjects choose the rational over the illogical. As we moved into a neoliberal world we found resistance in Rock music. Historically, the discourse of Rock has served as a safety valve and offered a place to rebel against the system. This in return produces the dialogue that if indeed rock is dead; we do not have the space to rebel against the neoliberal order.

While record sales across the board have been in decline for some time it has been clear that there has been a shift away from guitar based rock towards pop, country and rap music. Industry insiders began commenting as early as the 1970s that these shifts were more than just a blip. Classic rock legends like Led Zeppelin were once accused of killing the genre as well as disco in the 70s and more commonly today rap, internet streaming and downloads. The mantra questioning whether rock has died has been a

lasting discussion through decades but the blame often points to different culprits. In recent years this discourse has exploded to full genre wide dialogue with musicians of all parts of the rock spectrum as well as industry figures routinely quoted on the life (or life support) status of rock. My purpose is not to settle the question of whether rock is dead, but rather chart the emergence of a discourse that suggests that it is. Given my interest in the rhetorical value of the fantasy or rock is less relevant whether that fantasy is real and much more significant whether adherents to the fantasy believe it to be.

In 1979 Veteran rocker Neil Young wrote the lyrics “rock and roll will never die there’s more to the picture than meets the eye” in his song “Hey, Hey, My, My (Into the Black). He believes the music is much more than sounds, it’s a way of being and that itself is unable to be killed. Young has remained a vehement figure in the stance that Rock is indeed alive and well. Famed music critic Lester Bangs described the genre as “Rock 'n' roll is an attitude; it's not a musical form of a strict sort. It's a way of doing things, of approaching things. Writing can be rock 'n' roll, or a movie can be rock 'n' roll. It's a way of living your life.” (DeRogatis XV) To Young and Bangs “rock and roll” signifies more than music -- it’s positionality to life.

This discussion of “rock as dead” intensified when the lead singer and bassist of Kiss - known for dramatic pronouncements and some degree of theatrical tone - declared rock dead. Gene Simmons told Esquire magazine “Rock is finally dead. The death of rock was not a natural one. Rock did not die of old age. It was murdered”. Simmons does not blame the so-called death of rock on the creation of new sub genres. Rather he points the finger at the lack of value fans have placed on the music itself and the emergence of music file sharing. Simmons emphasizes the undercurrent beliefs that

talent does not guarantee success. In a sense Simmons is blaming fans for letting the death of rock rather than the industry.

Almost immediately it seemed that other musicians were forced to comment on the controversy. The Foo Fighters' front man Dave Grohl soon took to the band's Twitter account to counter Simmons' rock is dead mantra remarks, "Not so fast, Mr. God of Thunder...RT: [@esquiremag](#) Gene Simmons declares "rock is finally dead" (Foo Fighters twitter page cite). Grohl believes that rock bands are still around and can use technology to their benefit. The Foo Fighters which Simmons called "the last rock band" heavily promotes themselves through internet streaming and social platforms.

Writer for *Pop Matters* Josh Indar commented on Simmons' comments, "I've actually learned to rejoice upon hearing rock has yet again been declared dead. In the past, that these premature orbits have really signified is that the poseurs will clear out for a while and let the real rockers carry on in sublime obscurity, creating, nurturing and supporting the next wave of awesome bands that are sure to rise up and carry us to the new promised land of hard beats, slick licks and bas-ass bassline" (Indar). Indar argues that the mantra has been revised and reused to be beneficial in the reinvigoration and rebirth of rock leading Indar to believe that, through a type of natural selection, rock is as strong as ever. From this perspective, the industry mantra "rock is dead" creates panic among would-be musicians which results in many finding other musical genres to inhabit or to leave music altogether in effect, he argues, creating a more solid (if smaller) rock "brand".

Whether or not rock is really dead or not it is clear that the heydays are gone for some time (if not forever). One rarely hears of the fantasy of rock as rebellion and, while

it would take this project in a different place, one might easily argue that much of what constitutes rock today is less rebellious by far than its heritage. In psychoanalytic terms we would say that the “rock is dead” talk produces anxiety that the symbolic order will become completely totalitarian meaning there will be no freedom in this order. There will be no space to be different or to have the type of cool life that rock promised. In other words “rock is dead” comes with it a kind of melancholy where we have lost something and we now just have to live with it being gone forever. The melancholia then produces a type of hysterical and miserable subject trapped in a symbolic order they cannot believe in. Ultimately it does not matter so much that there is a definite answer to is rock dead rather, what matters is why is the discussion happening and what are its implications.

Method

In the following section, I advance the argument that in order to understand the preceding phenomena we must supplement traditional rhetorical scholarship with analysis of the affective dimensions of subjects. Affect studies deals with the intensity of emotions and serves as a means to understanding your surroundings. Sensation and feeling are difficult concepts to grasp and study because they are classified as “unlabeled”. Affects are free floating forms and genre criticism will aid in recognizing and articulate them. Critical Affect Studies are considered interdisciplinary because of their ability to be studied within just about any context. Brian Massumi defined the term affect as, “a degree of intensity that is prior to an indexed or articulated referent. Affect describes an energetics that does not necessarily emerge at the level of signification” (Rice 201).

In the early 2000s, rhetorical studies developed a still-growing interest in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Scholars such as Barbara Biesecker, Joshua Gunn and Christian Lundberg, among others, began analyzing and then applying Lacan's approach to the psychic life toward communicative texts. For many, psychoanalysis offered an alternate mechanism for articulating subjectivity and therefore identifying pathways for social change by combatting ideology. For those scholars the (largely Foucaultian) existing protocols for charting agency fell short in that, at best, they could offer no more than temporary relief from social control rather than operating as the grounds for a full scale radical challenge to the system (Biesecker, *Whither Ideology? toward a Different Take on Enjoyment as a Political Factor*). While Biesecker, for example, has aligned herself with Foucauldian research protocols, she has also critiqued its limitations by suggesting that Foucauldian style resistance does not promote radical agency. Moreover, along with Joan Copjec and others, she has suggested that such resistance cannot be inventive because every possibility for agency already exists within the symbolic order making it impossible to break outside the ideology of the system (Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*).

Scholars interested in the way that affect moves subjects to action found ready-made language in Lacan. Biesecker, for one, claimed that desire helps propel the subject. As she put it ““new” work on subjectivity, speech, and collective life *both* makes visible the limits of a number of contemporary theories of rhetoric that foreclose, disavow, or devalue, the speaking of beings' affective attachment and the desire that puts them into play, *and* the desire that puts them into play, *and* gestures towards strategies for overcoming them” (Biesecker, *Rhetorical Studies and the “New” Psychoanalysis:*

What's the Real Problem? Or Framing the Problem if the Real). In Marantha Joshua Gunn likens the film "The Passion of The Christ" to pornography as part of a largely effort to guide rhetorical scholars to make correlations between pop culture discourses and their affective underpinnings even, and especially in that case, when the explicit content of the text appears to offer a much different "message". Gunn writes, "Physical revulsion while watching the film is crucial because the film also simultaneously organizes fantasies or cultural scripts to suggest the spectator how to feel. The Passion, in other words, stimulates the bodies of the spectators (affect) and delivers them to suggested emotions" (Gunn, *Marantha*). Elsewhere Gunn has argued that communication is a coping fantasy and "a psychoanalytic perspective on fantasy, like most perspectives on rhetoric, however, only retains communication as a concept insofar as the agent is also understood as a product of fantasy" (Gunn, *Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead*). He suggests desire oscillates between fantasy and the real making agency completely exterior due to the fantasies that establish social reality.

Recently, however, a number of scholars have challenged the nearly singular focus on fantasy structures and have suggested we ought to supplement that attention with an equal consideration of drive. Essential to the argument is a critique of the field's long-standing grounding in the assumption that communication addresses a public that, in turn, serves as a mechanism for the validation of particular ideas over others. Christian Lundberg, for example, has emphasized the importance of publics in the process of how enjoyment is experienced, "If rhetoric is characterized by the work of trope and enjoyment as a mode of affective investment, it also requires an account of publics as

privileged sites for the economic interchange between trope and enjoyment” (Lundberg). To these ends across the project I pay attention to affective structures but, being mindful of Lundberg’s concern, also work to make sure those efforts are not merely an analysis of fantasy structure but that I am equally sensitive to the components of drive that complete the psychic register.

Critical Affect Studies attempts to name the un-namable and answer the age old questions: How are feelings produced? What are the sensations that are experienced? Affects are commonly mistaken for emotion. Affects refer to vibe, intensity and non-signified emotion while emotion is signified, more apparent and easier to relay. The easiest way to differentiate the two is to remember affects influences emotions. “Where emotion describes a subjectivity felt state, affect describes the set of forces, investments, logics, relations, and practices of subjectivization that are the conditions of possibility for emotion” (Gunn, *Stick It in Your Ear: The Psychodynamics of iPod Enjoyment*, 365). Since Critical Affect Studies is relatively new there are different interpretations and no unified consensus regarding how affects are produced and experienced. Affects are “what gives ‘color,’ ‘tone’ or ‘texture’ to the lived” (Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, 81). Through better understanding and having the ability to decipher affect we will then in turn be more in tune to our own experiences. By paying attention to and understanding Deleuze’s phrase “real but abstract” (meaning that even though all affects cannot be seen - hence the abstract- they are still real) we will be able to disclose the “Total Field” of vision and perception; a critic would be able to map what the subject is made to see, sense and feel as registers of the affective, emotional and physical registers of an experience. Along

with the understanding the differentiation of affect from emotion, then, will allow us to have the ability to read the scene more effectively.

Massumi and Grossberg describe affect in terms of plenitude meaning the thing is satisfied in itself. This theory is more direct and offers a rather simple explanation. An example in terms of church paradigm would be the reasons for believing in religion. Examining with plenitude might reveal how churchgoers are conditioned to believe because it was reinforced throughout their lives. The repetition of conditioning reveals the simple answer. This is contradictory to the Lacanian approach of affect portraying the lack as rich and full. Lacan suggests there is deeper psychoanalytical reasoning behind the lack and desire that affects the affects experienced. Using the same example from above, the Lacanian answer as to why churchgoers believe in religion would have relation to the lack.

Conclusion

I examine discourse associated with Bruce Springsteen's keynote address to the South by Southwest festival as paradigmatic of a struggle against neoliberalism's closure of genuine freedom. As I have taken pains to underscore, my goal is less to understand Springsteen as an artist than it is to understand how an alliance of pop culture, news, self-improvement authors and academics all gravitated to Springsteen and his insights *as if* he were the appointed head of rock and *as if* this purported standing afforded his words greater insight into the proper way to live in this (neoliberal) age. In showcasing the emergence of this network my aim is to demonstrate that the desired revival of rock operates as a fantasy structure standing in rebellious opposition to neoliberal orders.

While that fantasy may be immediately satisfying it nevertheless raises concerns about whether rock, or at least rock as it has been experienced in its classic communal form, could ever deliver on the promise of radical subjectivity with which it has been freighted. This is not to suggest that rock's (potential) death is of no consequence. It is, however, to bring attention to the ways in which a particular *way of doing rock* is being offered as promised avenue of deliverance. Put differently, while rock may have always offered an unrealistic and fantastical vision of its otherness it is important to note the ways in which, today, the wish-structure of its rehabilitation aligns perhaps too smoothly with neoliberalism itself. I make this argument by suggesting that Bruce Springsteen's drive (however authentic it may be) is converted into a public desire via that alliance network described previously. In short, Bruce's passion is turned into a program of self-help and self-improvement. That this is so is, on its own, hardly cause for alarm. However, if political challenges to neoliberalism are to have any genuine effect and if scholars are to better understand those maneuvers and their consequence then being clear about the motivating force behind the revived rock fantasy and its suggested way forward are essential.

II. METHODOLOGY

Coined the ‘father of psychoanalysis,’ Sigmund Freud began to form psychoanalytic theory in the late 1800’s, but it did not reach full fruition until the 1960s. Freud sought a therapy which would allow his patients to make their unconscious conscious. Freud believed such therapy would aid in catharsis which ultimately lead to the healing of the patient. Psychotherapy was mostly deemed fit for patients with histories of trauma, anxiety and repressed emotions. It was seen as a way for patients to come face to face with their problems. Treatment included patients lying on a sofa and being asked questions by the doctor mainly about past experiences and dreams. The end result for a patient to complete a successful psychoanalysis treatment could take years. Since the establishment of Freud’s practices, the validity and effectiveness of his treatments has been called into question. Ethical issues between patients and doctors, patient’s painful memories dredged to a conscious level along with a long term financial and personal commitment were often criticisms of Freud.

French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan became well-known within psychoanalytic circles in the 1950s with his seminars that continued until his death in the 1981. He is most credited for his work with desire, the mirror phase, and the three orders of the imaginary, symbolic and the real. Lacan associated Freud’s work with structural linguistics and the symbolic. In the 1960s and 70s Lacan took a turn away from traditional Freudian psychoanalysis and established what is now known as Lacanian psychoanalysis. His form of psychoanalysis was heavily based on the study of the ego

and he put a great deal of time onto his lectures. Lacan's branch of the field has led to the gaining popularity of psychoanalysis with rhetorical scholars (Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*).

Lacanian psychoanalysis saw resurgence in popularity in the early 2000s with rhetorical scholars such as Barbara Biesecker, Joshua Gunn dedicating research and analysis into Lacan's discipline. Joan Copjec's book *Imagine There's No Women* details the example of artist Jasper John's clothing hanger artwork. Copjec details John's persistence of the object (hangers) and the voice (drive) that influences John's artwork. John's drive is the connection and attachment to the hangers (object). He gives into his drive because he enjoys it for what it is. Slavoj Žižek has contributed to psychoanalytic theory with his belief that affects are more important than ideology itself. Barbara Biesecker has written numerous articles to the field. In *Rhetorical studies and the "new" psychoanalysis: What's the real problem? Or framing the problem the real* she suggests that "work on subjectivity, speech, and collective life *both* makes visible the limits of a number of contemporary theories of rhetoric that foreclose, disavow, or devalue, the speaking of beings' affective attachment and the desire that puts them into play, *and* the desire that puts them into play, *and* gestures towards strategies for overcoming them" (Biesecker, *Rhetorical studies and the "new" psychoanalysis: What's the real problem? Or framing the problem the real*). In this particular article Biesecker focuses on desire and its implications. I do agree that desire is important to examine but my analysis will demonstrate how an investment to a subject's drive can be more hopeful and realistic. Joshua Gunn has authored articles such as *Marantha* where he equates *The Passion of the*

Christ film to the likes of pornography has helped psychoanalytic rhetorical scholars to make correlations between pop culture and discourses.

Academics have long depended upon and analyzed the public (and its various iterations) as a means of making sense of the texts and phenomenon they analyze. While a great deal could be said about this academic reliance on publics it is also true that much of our public discourse suggests that a subject's worth is dependent upon how they appear in front of the public. This reliance on publics, and on having oneself be heard in public, creates the (often false) hope that one will be recognized and accepted on their own terms. Desire, from this view, has implications that can ultimately damage and hurt the subject. The subject ends up spending more time acting for a public that does not exist or, if it does, will see the subject through its lenses and not as the subject might wish. Often times, people overwork themselves preparing themselves for the fantasy. In reality, the fantasy is a dead end in an attempt to prepare for the goal. Psychoanalytic scholars should adopt a model that pays attention to drive. If rhetorical scholars implemented this they would notice the intransigence of subjects comes not from their dedication to a fantasy that could be rewritten but rather from their attachment to an object and its call/ voice that keeps them attached to that object. In doing so they will also notice the opportunities for political engagement need to shift away contesting someone's fantasy to speaking to them in terms dictated by their object otherwise the envelope surrounding them will deflect all speech and efforts to reach them.

The notion of a single public being non-existent further exemplifies why drive should be read in addition to desire. As, in the normally functioning subject, desire does not hold the subject completely under its spell because it is checked by the drive, so too –

these scholars argue - we should afford the arresting function of the drive more attention. For myself, I accept that desire is important to examine, but my analysis will demonstrate how it is equally essential that we counterbalance that investment with equal attention to a subject's drive.

Publics are situated in the symbolic order. The symbolic produces a notion of what is good and what we need to do to be recognized and authorized in the public space. In order to be recognized you have to adhere to the rules of order cancelling, from the outset, any possibility of a subject's radicalization. The communication field remains heavily invested in the notion of publics and as long as we are invested on the symbolic order it will not be productive. In order to seek the possibilities of a subject that could be less controlled in advance scholars have argued a place for radical subjectivity lies in the drive.

To redress these issues, scholars need to be able to read for drive in addition to desire. While it is important to note that both drive and desire are necessary, drive affords satisfaction to the subject no matter the outcome of the fantasy by producing enjoyment for subject and leaves them feeling complete. Desire, on the other hand, has the inherent capacity to be dangerous. In recent years we have seen any number of examples where a subject or nation is hell bent on achieving their desire no matter the obstacle or cost. Drive, however, provides enjoyment merely through the act of engaging some object of affection, there is no need for it to function as a platform for something grandiose. Indeed, in the normally functioning subject not completely under the spell of desire, drive provides the essential function of providing a necessary alternative to the unfettered pursuit of desire; we should afford it more attention. One of the drawbacks of the

emerging drive scholarship is that it has been exclusively theoretical and has not shown how to read for drive or to read how it is deferred/muted/held back.

Since Critical Affect Studies is a new field there are different interpretations and no unified consensus regarding how affects are produced and experienced. I am not suggesting rhetorical scholars should stop looking at these aspects rather, take a broader approach and study drive more. Slovenian philosopher and scholar Slavoj Žižek called attention to the discord in his latest book *Event a Philosopher Journey Through A Concept*, “In short, authenticity is fallenness itself: we leave behind our false Self not when we keep reality at a distance, but precisely when we totally without reserve, ‘fall’ into it, abandon ourselves into it” (Žižek, *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept*, 50). Here he is explaining the irony in authenticity. Authenticity is the fall because, according to Žižek, to be authentic one must be inauthentic; the codes of authenticity are fake because they are rules and not organic. The fact that deliberative steps must be taken to be considered authentic and genuine is ironic and contradicts the definition of authenticity. Žižek’s argument demonstrates the failure and downfalls of such popular aspects examined by rhetorical scholars. I am arguing that there is too much emphasis placed on these notions and more analysis of drive can help alleviate some discourses.

Throughout the course of my examination I will reference and implement theories from Brian Massumi who is the most credited and referenced theorist in affect studies. I will also be referencing Lawrence Grossberg’s book *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* with its discussion of music from a cultural studies stance and also looks at affect. Grossberg described emotions being created at the cross section of affects and signification.

Massumi and Grossberg describe affect in terms of plenitude, meaning the thing is satisfying in itself. This theory is more direct and offers a rather simple explanation. An example in terms of church paradigm would be the reasons for believing in religion. Considering plenitude might reveal how churchgoers are conditioned to believe because it was reinforced throughout their lives. This is opposed to the Lacanian approach of affect portraying the lack as rich and full. Lacan suggests there is deeper psychoanalytical reasoning behind the lack and desire that affects the affects experienced. Using the same example from above, the Lacanian answer as to why churchgoers believe in religion would have relation to the lack. Possibly something may have happened in their life such as growing up in an impoverished broken family; Lacan believes they are attempting to fulfill their lack with a substitution with a different object (in this case their religious faith).

Affect studies deals with the intensity of emotions and serves as a means to understanding the subject through an analysis of their surroundings. Sensation and feeling are difficult concepts to grasp and study because they are often classified as “unlabeled” and they do not register in the same public way that linguistic (or visual) texts might. Brian Massumi defined the term affect as, “a degree of intensity that is prior to an indexed or articulated referent. Affect describes an energetics that does not necessarily emerge at the level of signification” (Rice 201). Critical Affect Studies attempts to name the un-namable and answer the age old questions: How are feelings produced? What are the sensations that are experienced? Affects are commonly mistaken for emotion, however, affect refers to an intensity – a type of non-signifying energy while emotions are coded, practiced, purposively (and sometimes involuntarily) displayed and signified.

The easiest way to differentiate the two is to remember that affects influence emotions, or to put it differently affect creates a state of possibility through which various thoughts and feelings can be accessed. So, for example, you might feel that something is “off” upon entering your house late at night. Were you asked you could not point to anything to signify or gesture to your apprehension – you just have a sense of the room as if it were not quite right. This affective state might lead to any number of emotions (fear, panic, aggression, e.g.) as well as thoughts (call for help, get a weapon e.g.). In this sense we might say that “affect describes the set of forces, investments, logics, relations, and practices of subjectivization that are the conditions of possibility for emotion” (Gunn, *Maranatha*, 365). Since Critical Affect Studies is a newer field of there are different interpretations and as yet little unified consensus regarding how affects are produced and experienced.

In examining Springsteen as a text and identifying signifiers of desire and indicators for drive we are better positioned to explain the discourses by which desire is constructed as a public good in ways that undermine the work of drive. Graham Wolfe has persuasively argued that much of the content of rock music is centered on desire itself. He suggests that

A surprising feature of many ‘80s songs about desire for past days is the way in which *desire itself* emerges as the past’s own defining feature. “When I turned seventeen,” sings Tom Cochrane in “Boy Inside the Man,” “we had passion, we had dreams”- the element of the past that most attracts him to desire itself (something tragically lost when he “turned much older”). Bruce Springsteen’s “No Surrender” is an even more direct analogy with “Summer of ‘69.” From the

vantage point fading desire (“hearts of fire grow cold”), the singer rocks his way into a past whose glory and wonder reside in a passionate attachment to *future* glories, evoked by the playing of music: “maybe we could some place of our own with these drums and these guitars.” (Wolfe 6)

What makes the performance of this desire so appealing (literally what makes the audiences “feel” the rock) from this perspective is that the object of the desire itself is, as always, elusive. Rock, Wolfe suggests, is particularly good at conveying the structure of fantasy precisely because in its short minutes it conveys abstractions so idealized that listeners everywhere can substitute (see) their own desire for the desire of the singer; a type of play on Lacan’s line that desire is always the desire of the other. Wolfe explains,

What Lacan and Zizek share with many rock anthems is their insistence on the ultimately *unsymbolizable* nature of desire’s object, its attachment to an unspecified, indescribable “something” toward which that six-string seems to gesture. “Born to Run” - *where?* “Never Surrender” -*what?* “Don’t Stop Believin’”- in *what?* We should resist the temptation to reduce the dynamic of these songs to a generality that enables listeners to “fill out” their lyrics with differing personal content (each listener can “identify” with the song because he or she has specific to “keep believing” in). When Journey encourages us to passionately to “hold onto that feeling”- without offering a scrap of insight into what the feeling might be - they are not merely being vague. What they recognize, like Lacanian psychoanalysis, is that holdin’ on is often most intense when it doesn’t know what it’s holdin’ on to” (Wolfe 6).

In short, attending to the textual production of desire can also show how public forces push those subjects toward fantasies that encourages “muting” the pull of drive by participating in a symbolically shared fantasy that desires desire itself. Or, put differently, it is not that rock music allows us to find our own desire so much as it affords us a vehicle for the *jouissance* of desire itself. Curiously, then, while we might feel alive in rock music the uncontrollable urge to participate in the collective embrace of this ineffable crave is self-satisfying so long as we give ourselves over to this other in a type of self-nullifying wish fulfilment that may not know what it wants other than that its “wants” feel activated and thus felt. Mickey Valle offers this, somewhat sobering, take on the assumption that the rebellion of rock might instigate a rebellious attitude in the listener:

In Lacanian fantasy, one searches relentlessly for self-gratification, achieves it momentarily, yet is returned to the same place where one initially wanted more... 'more than a feeling' (to quote Boston's rock anthem). Classic Rock, in its relentless repetition of fantasy, enforces a feedback loop the listening subject that entraps him in the eternal return of always-wanting-more (or, always in pursuit of *it*)” (Valle 246).

Valle punctuates this point by underscoring that the symbolic of rock is not a failure, as some knee-jerk pundits might suggest, because it is a teenage fantasy unprepared for the hard realities of the so-called real world; that in effect rock fails by being pure escape. Instead, he argues, it is precisely because the pursuit of that fantasy is fulfilling inasmuch as it offers a promise of something Other – an oasis never reached – that the subject's satisfaction is always on the point of arriving. Or, put differently, the dissatisfaction

essential to fostering genuine radicality is never actualized insofar as the dissatisfaction is held at bay by the almost-coming of the fantasy's promised arrival. Valle puts it thusly:

Classic rock fits the neoliberal conception of freedom and free trade by the virtue of the fact that it was an essentially heterogeneous genre that espoused principles of particularized sovereignty. The fantasy of neoliberal freedom was afforded by a generous development in recording technology, which fostered a creative exploration of studio techniques, an access that afforded a subjectivity capable of self-knowledge. As the Classic Rock fantasy is aligned closely with the Lacanian fantasy as a form of escapism that protects the subject from the traumatic rupture of the Real, it is evident that neoliberal ideology is entwined with the fact that the genre promoted a universal ethic of freedom which purported that (a) there is no alternative to Classic Rock, and (b) someone, somewhere has stolen access to pleasure" (Valle 259).

If, I have been suggesting, social change comes from diagnosing ways in which radical possibilities to do something other than the status quo exist as live options, then revealing the ways in which fantasy exerts a type of control and deferral over drive would afford us a better an awareness of what is necessary to resist the lure of the fantasy structure.

Drive

Drive is uncontrollable, comes out of nowhere and does not let the subject go. It is responsible for subject' personal satisfaction and once it is complete the subject does not need anything else because it is fulfilled. Drive occurs when a subject does something for the enjoyment of it and becomes fixated; they are tantalized by the siren call of the object. It also produces and creates the conditions in which value is produced.

This is the case because attraction and the need to experience the enjoyment created by the drive gives it sublimation because value is added to the object by the subject. Dylan Evans describes the implications of drive:

The drives differ from biological needs in that they can never be satisfied, and do not aim at an object but rather circle perpetually round it. Lacan argues that the purpose of the drive (*Triebziel*) is not to reach the goal (a final destination) but to follow its *aim* (the way itself), which is to circle round the object. Thus the real purpose of the drive is not some mythical goal of full satisfaction, but to return to its circular path, and the real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit” (Evans 47).

In a sense, drive is an example of plenitude meaning it is self-fulfilling and does not rely on fantasy. Evans explains drive as a circular path because it is never ending. The subject feeds into the drive to gain enjoyment, there are no other reasons. It is as if someone with the desire to become a great scholar so that they would be able to influence many people suddenly found themselves so overwhelmingly satisfied with the love of books and the smell of a library that they could barely pull themselves away, perhaps even jettisoning their former plans in order to become a librarian. Or that the person so wanting to be wealthy instead became so enamored with the idea of giving people opportunity that they opened a homeless shelter that also provided job skills. In these instances, the subject’s drive has infiltrated their desire and their sensibilities leaving the subject feeling satisfied. Drive is repetitive and also what Dylan describes as a “closed circuit” because it is a never-ending process of which the subject never tires; they continue to seek it. Copjec notes, “it is crucial to note, too, that what prevents the drive

from achieving its aim, what induces the drive to find satisfaction in objects it finds along the way, should not be understood as issuing from elsewhere or from some other entity” (Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*). The enjoyment of drive can be found only within drive itself. Unlike desire and fantasy, there is no real end to drive.

Biesecker and Trapani’s article *Escaping the Voice of the Mass/ter; Late Neoliberalism, Object-Voice, and the Prospects for a Radical Democratic Future* focuses on publics and the how desire is not necessarily the best outlet to self- fulfillment. The authors put emphasis on how drive can give rise to polemic stances where resistance is created between the subject and the system. When a subject experiences drive they are attached to the object for no other reason than for pleasure. They argue,

calling attention to the invocatory drive which is responsible for effecting the Symbolic order’s interpellative address, the second part makes the case that Lacan’s retheorization of desire, the drives, and/as jouissance opens the way toward an ontologically grounded conception of radical political agency and rhetorical intervention that is sensitive to but not captive of its situatedness within the current regime (Biesecker and Trapani 27).

Biesecker and Trapani advance the argument that drive is a safer roadmap to follow because there is less risk of the fantasy becoming much more destructive of others as people steamroll their way to their desired ends. Reliance on publics and making your argument heard in the public is false hope. The authors believe that more time spent trying to act for the public is wasted because the public does not exist. More attention, both individually and in an academic field, should be placed on drive because publics tend

to make arguments less interesting and useful. When a subject follows their drive it is a failsafe because they will experience enjoyment. Drive allows the subject “enjoy the ride” so-to-say no matter the outcome because they are seeking pleasure. The notion of drive fulfilling the subject without obtaining their goal can be explained by Mladen Dolar “on the way to that inhibited end a certain by-product emerges: the voice-or, more specifically-the “object-voice” of the drive, a “side-satisfaction, but one which suffices to fuel all machinery” (Biesecker and Trapani 28). Drive is productive for the radicalization of a subject in that the subject does not expect some grand thing to occur; they take what comes because what comes is satisfying on its own. The connection of “take what comes” to “radicalization” is essentially a type of uncontrollability - not because they are intentionally wild but because the rules don't offer them anything. Someone caught by their drive does not “need” the symbolic and so they do not enter into the space of its control.

The sonorous envelope in psychoanalytic terms can be described as a sort of shell or blanket that wraps around the subject because the subject gets sucked into the siren song of the subject. In being transfixed by the call of the object the subject is held in its sonorous envelope. An example would be in the scenario of “I spoke to them but they did not listen”. In fact, the audience did “listen”, but the message did not get through their sonorous envelope and did not really reach them for comprehension. The envelope explains drive, meaning why subjects are called by the siren song of certain objects and not others. It is through this satisfaction becomes intelligible and readable. It can be argued that the sonorous envelope is productive in discourse because it insists and refuses to comply. The envelope allows the subject to be in their own world and challenges the

objects outside of the envelope to connect to them. This process creates the conversation which discourse may ensue.

The sonorous envelope also serves as a quasi-safety blanket where the subject can find shelter. French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu insists “the sonorous envelope originates in the womb as the pre-nate experiences two senses as if they were a single sense. These are touch and sound” (Goodale). The envelope dictates the subject’s connection, interaction and effects with the object. It also has the ability to encase the subject in comforting sounds which reassures and supports the subject while it feels threatened. “By enveloping ourselves in a comforting sound, we reassure and support ourselves, often during a period when we feel threatened” (Goodale). Individuals vary with what objects have the ability to make it through their envelopes. An example being:

It is the child who sticks his fingers in his ears and talks loudly over the sister who disagrees with him: “I CAN’T HEAR YOU.” This is the anti-audience that tunes out. These are the individuals who turn down the channel when politics are discussed, the person who refuses to share his or her opinion about a candidate for office, the man who turns up his portable music player when his friends begin to talk about current events. These people refuse to engage in political conversation because they feel threatened or disempowered or disenfranchised by such talk....this is a protective cocoon that is harmful to political deliberation, though in a non-violent manner (Goodale).

This example is harmful to deliberation because both are vehement about their own agenda. The subjects are not willing to discuss the possibility for compromise or are a powerless. In other cases the discourse of the sonorous envelope can be beneficial as well

and inspires for the status quo to be questioned. Varying sonorous envelopes create dialectical discourses and make it difficult to communicate between subjects.

While studying musical events themselves is not in the scope of this project nevertheless we can illustrate the value of attention to affect by considering them momentarily. For many, the Bruce Springsteen concert experience parallels that of the religious church experience. The affects and sensations that are produced evoke the heightened awareness that influence emotions. The affects of the experience dictate the overall perceptions of the event itself.

Bruce Springsteen concerts are routinely talked about among fans as embodying cosmic moments that freeze time. Encores are the peak of the concert performance where musicians make their last push to have a lasting impact on their fans. For a moment in time concert-goers experience a heightened sense of awareness like no other. It is difficult to put a specific name to on what makes them feel this way; it is almost unexplainable. These heightened senses of awareness and goose bump evoking sensations are the affects produced. Springsteen describes the song performance as:

When the chorus hit, that's the gospel. The pump organ comes in. That's where the thing lifts and makes sense of the first verse and, hopefully tries to make sense of the experience itself. And my best songs have done both of those things, blues and gospel. That's what my band, and my writing with the band, has always been about. You can hear the blue's thing, but the band is more like Sunday church. We're gonna shout that thing to you, right into your face, and try to get you to stand up. And there were the essential elements of what I do with the band.

(Binelli)

The “shout that thing at you” comment reflects being immersed with in the experience itself. Springsteen attempts to do this as a way to allow his audience to feel and experience the beauty the music carries. Through this the deeper symbolic meaning occurs:

People wanna see other people they know, they wanna be around things they are familiar with. So he may need to see me right now. That made me sense, like, ‘Oh, I have a job to do.’ Our band, hopefully, we were built to be there when the chips are down. That was part of the idea of the band, to provide support. The most fundamental things I hear from fans, constantly, is, ‘Man, you got me through’- whatever it might be. ‘My divorce. My graduation. My high school. This part of my life, that part.’ And I usually wanna say back, ‘Well, you know, you guys got me through quite a bit yourselves! (Binelli).

The Springsteen concert experience is an emotional roller coaster. Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band have accrued a fan base worldwide and were made Rock ‘n’ Roll legends for their live performances. Their performances are described as an “extraordinary plane where troubles are temporarily forgotten, adrenaline is accelerated, and ecstasy arrives” (Masciotra 209). The shows are a communion mechanism and Springsteen strives to have a lasting impact on his fans.

You come out there in that dark and make that passion pendulum. Pull something that doesn’t exist out of the air. It doesn’t exist until any given night when you are standing there in front of your audience. Nothing exists in that space until you go 1,2,3,4...vroom. Then you and the audience together manifest an entire world.” (Springsteen)

Springsteen has often said that his mission is for his concerts to be a space and experience of escapism and, “tremendous finding of the self while also an abandonment of the self at the same time. You are free of yourself for those hours; all the voices in your head are gone. Just gone. There’s no room for them. There’s one voice, the voice you are speaking in” (Springsteen). Bruce described his shows as “freeing”, “finding” and free from voices. Affect helps understand the actuality of feeling the “there-ness” produced from the experience then less as escape from the world as an escape from one’s self – a joining with others into the “one voice” of the rock fantasy.

Musicians intend for their performances to be fulfilling. Springsteen recounted what the peak performance feels like to him: “something happens like the planets aligning and the times, you, your story, the story that is alive out there at the moment, that’s going on out in the world your craft, your skills, line like that and then bang! It comes out like that and good things happen” (Springsteen). A fan who goes by the internet handle ericim104 described the Springsteen concert experience he shared with his daughter:

I was there with my daughter that night and went through the exact same emotions. At the end of “Backstreets” she turned to me and said, “Wow, that was something else,” and there I was wiping tears away and said. “Tell me about it.” She was like, “It’s ok Dad, there’s a lot of people here crying now.” I’ll never forget that show, the emotions of the band and crowd, the intensity of the night, and the way the crowd pulled each other through the show. Never happened to me before at a Bruce show. (Rose, *Raise Your Hand: Adventures of an American Springsteen Fan in Europe*, 56)

Both the father and daughter were impacted by the performance of “Backstreets,” but they experienced it differently. The father along with other concert attendees experienced tears run down their faces while the daughter did not. She did not have high enough investment in the performance to experience the same affects as the long term fans had.

In recent years in lieu of selling floor seats at performances, Springsteen offers fans the opportunity to purchase tickets for a standing room section of the venue. The section is broken into two areas the first (the Pit) is the sacred space sought after by fans as a chance to be close to their heroes. To have the chance to get into the pit fans must arrive to the venue up to eight hours before the curtain call. Generally, about 120-150 fans make it into the pit. Seasoned fans who are highly invested in the Springsteen experience know what to expect and have rituals to abide by to keep the difficulty of the queue to a minimum.

Every fan, no matter where they are from, has their queue and show survival strategies: some people stop eating or drinking at noon the day of the concert. Others have brought over a suitcase full of 5-hour Energy shots. There is talk about the benefits of effervescent Vitamin C, a discussion about the local equivalent of Gatorade, and analysis how much Ibuprofen you need to get through the show. People had impossibly tiny camp stools or chairs that folded into canes. I do not eat candy and try to stay away from processed sugar, but after a week on the road, the suggestion of having Life Savers to give you an energy boost suddenly seemed genius. The pack of fruit-flavored Mentos in my pocket was a godsend 90 minutes into the show after the adrenaline wore off.” (Rose, *Raise Your Hand: Adventures of an American Springsteen Fan in Europe*, 107)

Springsteen is believed to have amongst the most dedicated and hardcore fan base that has followed him throughout his five decade career. Fans travel internationally to the opposite sides of the globe to see the Boss. Fans that choose to participate in the Pit ticket lottery have a certain level of investment in the band. For them, the band's performance symbolizes much more than three hour of pleasure.

They don't take Springsteen for granted. There is an attitude of respect and gratitude that projects through everything: through participation, through listening and not talking, through paying attention, through the days people spend in the queue, through the dedication and investment of time in travel and waiting. These are real, tangible elements that show an artist you respect them and can't be replaced by holding up THANK YOU signs during a show." (Rose, *Raise Your Hand: Adventures of an American Springsteen Fan in Europe*, 102)

The act of queuing and sacrificing their day equates to the religious experience of fasting. Fans are sacrificing and giving up their lives for that day. In many instances, waiting in the queue may include hours in the snow during a freezing Norwegian winter, 95 degree heat of sunny South Florida, or the unsightly downpours of Seattle, Washington. Fans are exposed to nature's elements and experience fatigue of standing for hours upon hours before the performance even starts. These are the fans that not only sacrifice the physical aspects of attending but they are fasting from their everyday lives. "They don't leave and they still queue early. Bruce notices and doesn't take for granted (the "You are the fucking die-hards!" comment in Florence, another show performed through torrential rain) and he will, in return, meet them in kind via the performance." (Rose, *Raise Your Hand: Adventures of an American Springsteen Fan in Europe*, 103)

In order for a church service to take place there must be disciples and a congregation to preach and spread the word in the name of the Holy Spirit to. Disciples are the “any “student,” “pupil,” “apprentice,” or “adherent,” as opposed to a “teacher.” In the ancient world, however, it is most often associated, with people who were devoted followers of a great religious leader or teacher of philosophy” (bible.org). Disciples give the church service meaning and purpose, disciplines are the students of the religion. In addition, disciples also help spread the words of God’s practices. They practice the religion through both the church experience and in their daily lives. This parallels with the religious concert experience in which the audience are disciples and engage in the service. Disciples are the reason why church exists just as Springsteen preaches on continual nights to his audience, “We’re here for one reason, because you’re here.” (Springsteen). The preacher or any other agent of Christ [insert Springsteen], are the leaders that help the disciples about not only the religion but also themselves.

The audience gives value to the concert experience. They are the reason why Springsteen has remained one of the top musicians for over forty years. If his practices did not resonate with his disciples he would not be relevant and have importance. The audience plays many roles during the concert. Perhaps their most important role is to serve as Bruce’s Disciples. More merely being concert attendees fans believe in Bruce. They are attending the performance because of their intensity of investment in the belief. Audience members are much more than fans they are followers because they relate to the lyrics and believe in the Springsteen cause. Fans vehemently believe in Bruce’s career and seek a sense of community during the night.

Like any spiritual program, is highly ritualized and ritualistic. Fans chant with fists in the air to “Badlands” without being directed or instructed. They sing in synchronicity and gesture in unity with “The Promised Land” and “The Rising.” Spirituality is emphasized not only through the musical strength and audience participation in these songs but also their content, which centers on faith-faith in God and certainty faith in humanity as a shared experience that allows people to courageously face loss of dignity, abortions of justice and conditions of horror (Masciotra 212).

Through the shared experience of participating in the performance the fans evolve into Disciples. The spiritual aspects occur through the affects and essence experienced by the Disciples. The chanting and fist bumping become infectiously contagious and spread throughout the crowd. Fans are advocates and help spread the word and mission of Springsteen’s legacy of hope and redemption.

A fan who participated in the documentary *Springsteen & I* said, “Think about something in your life when you were totally and completely happy. There were 25,000 people singing ‘Born to Run’ live at a Bruce Springsteen concert. I get choked up.” The notion of the audience as disciples further supports the idea of affect as a contagion. During the performance everyone in the audience is singing and clapping along to the music. The affects of the experience are infectious and creates a platform where the symbolic nature of the music becomes reality. The idea of audience as disciples could be applied to any concert experience and Springsteen is merely used as an example to understand how an audience can serve the same purpose of the disciples. The followers

have a significant power because they are influenced by the leader and influence the leader as well.

To his disciples, Springsteen embodies the religious sanctification of purity and accepting ones faults. Springsteen often enables such affiliation by speaking as if he wishes to awaken his concert attendees, “I want to get as far in your soul as I can. And I want to shake and wake you as intensely as I can and wake myself up in the same process.” (Springsteen) He perceives his performances as an affect rich environment that will inspire and awaken you during the process.

We are here tonight on the same mission. To wake you up, shake you up, take you to high ground. And we are here because we need you to take us there. We are here as always to tell you a story and tonight’s story is about what’s goin’ on outside. What it has to do inside and it’s about hellos and goodbyes, and the things we can’t stop from leaving us, and the things that will leave us forever (Springsteen, SXSW Keynote).

During the high energy concert performance Springsteen serves a priest or agent of God. He keeps his audience captivated and continuously on their toes with his interactions with them; his interactions produce the affects of moving and dancing to the music, “Springsteen’s danceable rhythms, escapist lyrics and party sounds possess a uniquely infectious energy which spreads through the stadium with excitement and contagion” (Masciotra 209).

Concerts are a valued as a state of exception and a place for fans to go to escape the drudgery of normal life. More often than not fans have described the E Street Band

performances as embodying cosmic moments that freeze time. Grossberg gestures to the affective dimension of music in a quote worthy of its length. He suggests:

The significance of music is not in the music, not in the fan. For example, the meaning may be found outside the text, in the way it makes our history. Or the meaning may be irrelevant, subservient, or simply absent. As many a rock and roll fan has commented, the power of the music lies not in what it says but in what it does, in how it makes one move and feel. To find out how rock functions it is necessary to explore effects that are not necessarily signifying, that do not necessarily involve the transmission, production, structuration, or even deconstruction of meaning. Rock and roll is corporeal and 'invasive'. For example, without the mediation of meaning, the sheer volume and repetitive rhythms of rock and roll produce a real material pleasure for its fans (at many live concerts, the vibration actually might be compared to the use of a vibrator, often focused on the genital organs) and restructure familial relations (by producing immediate outrage and rejection from its nonfans, e.g. parents). If we assume, further, that rock and roll fans are not 'cultural dopes,' then we must examine the contradictions and struggles that are enacted around, and in, rock and roll in various context. Thus, while it is often true that the 'ideology' of rock and roll appears conservative and that its consumption merely reinforces the capitalist hegemony, there is always a remainder of nonsignifying effects in such calculations (Grossberg, *Is there Rock after Punk*, 113).

Despite this, as Neil Nehring, argues, too many scholars are “habituated to the intellectual reflection in tranquility [and therefore] typically tend to emphasize content analysis and virtually ignore affective experience” (Nehring, 140). Indeed, as Grossberg has long argued, music – through its embodied feelings and its feelings of embodiment – must be understood through these affective dimensions. He argues,

The notion of *affect* points to the fact that there is more to the organization of our everyday lives than just a distribution or structure of meaning, money, and power. There is a variable distribution of concern and energy: Some things *feel* different from others, some matter more, or in different ways, than others. Affect refers to the dimension or plane of our lives that we experience as moods, feelings, desires, and enervation. It is related to meanings but not reducible to them, for an event, even with a specifiable meaning, will have radically different effects depending upon its relations to our affective life, depending on its place in our “mettering maps” (Goldstein, 1983)... Rock and Roll works on the affective level of our everyday lives, at the level of strategies we use to gain some control over the affective life, to find new forms of pleasure and excitement to cope with new forms of pain, frustration and boredom” (Grossberg 164).

It is toward better understanding the complicated and often disjointed ways in which affect is exhibited, experienced, captured and redeployed that I turn in the following chapter to an analysis of Springsteen’s SXSW speech

III. ANALYSIS

On March 15th, 2012 Bruce Springsteen delivered the keynote address at the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival in Austin, Texas. The nearly hour-long speech addressed his musical influences and offered advice to up and coming musicians. While there are any number of themes woven throughout the talk by far the bulk of the speech is dedicated to Springsteen's reflections on himself as an artist. More specifically the speech considers both the nature of his attachment to music as a life-work and passion and the state of being an artist in the contemporary music industry. In this way the address creates a type of historical arc that attempts to answer the fundamental question: what drives the authentic musician?

Indeed it is fair to say that the entirety of Springsteen's keynote is a meditation on the relationship between the subject (Springsteen) and the object (music/music making) to which it is attracted. What, the speech asks, is the nature of this relationship? How can one be true to it? What does it compel the subject to do? And, perhaps most pressingly, what can one expect a reward or return on this "investment"?

I highlight these themes not because I intend to analyze Springsteen's response to the questions on their own but because I wish to show how the speech is refashioned by a network of rhetorical actors who argue that the speech is significant in that it establishes an "authentic" mode of being in an otherwise over-commercialized and difficult social,

political and economic climate for musicians and non-musicians alike. In other words, I wish to demonstrate that for those commentators the speech transcends the particularities of the moment (an address at a music festival) and becomes a type of instructional playbook for how both to live a more authentic life and to resuscitate the prospects of a vibrant rock culture.

Perhaps the most repeated theme in the address, one nearly universally cited in coverage of the speech, is that responding to and heeding the call of music is essential to any future artist's potential success. Springsteen, according to the speech, did not have immediate ambitions to use music for anything other than for his own satisfaction; in his telling he felt compelled to follow music's path. His account often indexes the pains and hardships that this dedication unleashed and yet – following the speech – he was incapable of changing his life trajectory because the music calls him. Moreover he takes great pains to convey throughout that he is not in control of his destiny or even of the direction his music takes. Rather than position himself as an innovator or someone who mindfully sets upon terrain not previously tread much of the address rehearses his devotion and attempted mimicry of the “masters” that came before him. It is, then, not only that he cannot escape music's call it is that he positions himself of being incapable of charting the direction it might take him.

In looking at Springsteen's keynote address I am not examining the speech as a persuasive text whereby I consider how the speech *itself* might convince some to emulate him, nor will I use the psychoanalytic protocol for a type of hermeneutic rendering of Springsteen that tries to connect the man to his music. In short, as with Gunn and his analysis of the *Passion of the Christ*, I do not read the text for the pure content of the

address (in this case on the nature of authenticity). Instead, I analyze Springsteen's address as an example of a subject engaged by his drive to make music and music-making as it comes while at the same time feeds into desire with his longing to become like his musical heroes so that I can identify the attraction the speech might serve for those interested (as the music industry mavens certainly were) in crafting an alternative to the commercialized neoliberal state of affairs.

The music industry has changed drastically since the 1970s when Springsteen first got his start. The industry, and rock music in particular, continues to be in a constant downward flux because the massive explosion of people seeking their fifteen minutes of fame. Fame seekers, it is suggested, are blinded by profit and the trappings of celebrity. The popularity of shows such as American Idol and media outlets such as Youtube and Facebook makes it easier for people to seek fame. Synthetic artists are notoriously known to be dependent on auto tune and countless "stars" have been risen in popularity merely by being commercial copies of the latest fashionable music trend. This is detrimental to the industry because it does not allow new artists to learn fundamental skills on their own that contributes to their authenticity. Today it is more common to have a team of people write songs for the performer rather than the performer multitask as the singer and songwriter. In this sense today's music industry is apocryphal in the sense that artists are constructed to satisfy particular target markets and demographic profiles.

At the same time, paradoxically, authenticity is a broad concept that every aspect of our lives appears increasingly contingent upon. It is important, says the discourses of the day I alluded to in Chapter Two, because it determines who we are as people and how well we perform in our daily lives. Authenticity becomes the measure of whether we are

satisfying our obligation to live well with the choices we have at our disposal and in turn to be “authentic” is a marker that we both recognize the hallmarks of genuine skill, power and art and are able to exhibit those characteristics in our own lives. It is the very thing that makes us be able to identify with ourselves, people and the environment around us.

Barker and Taylor’s *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* explores the question whether or not authentic is possible (or beneficial) in pop culture. “Of course, there is no real distinction between real and fake: witness Courtney Love’s statement, “I fake it so real that I’m beyond fake.” In certain subcultures, being “natural” is either suspect or out of the question, and being theatrical is the only real possibility” (Barker & Taylor). Barker and Taylor assert, then, that the harder you try to “make it real”, the more artificial you become. The struggle to determine the differentiation between real and fake creates anxiety in our lives. We want to believe we can tell the difference. Springsteen himself has alluded both to the importance of authenticity and the need to discern the real from the fake suggesting in a 2006 interview, “I’m always going to trust the art and be suspicious of the artist because he’s generally... a stumbling clown like everybody else” (Springsteen).

My purpose in the following is not to examine Springsteen or the advice he gives so much as it is to illustrate how Springsteen’s purported authenticity acts as a paradigm that has been reframed and exported to secondary audiences (including, one imagines, hopeful musicians) in order to teach us how to connect more with our own identity in authentic (and profitable) ways.

No doubt the speech lends itself to this possible uptake. As Springsteen argues in one of the most quoted passages from the address: “we live in a post-authentic world.

And today authenticity is a house of mirrors. It's all just what you're bringing when the lights go down. It's your teachers, your influences, your personal history. And at the end of the day, it's the power and purpose of your music that still matters" (Springsteen, SXSW Keynote). And yet, there is a clear reticence in Springsteen's discourse to the idea that he might serve as a role model. From the first moments of his walking to the podium he tells his audience how he comprised his speech and he immediately notes his hesitation in speaking solely from his perspective suggesting that instead he wished to speak from the perspective of his influences. Early in the speech he says "so really, instead of a keynote speech, I thought that perhaps this should be a key notes speech, or perhaps many keynote speakers. I exaggerate for effect, but only a little bit. So with that as my disclaimer, I move cautiously on" (Springsteen, SXSW Keynote).

Springsteen's reluctance to stand as an exemplar of rock or as a model of a commercially successful artist cuts against the moniker of "the authentic" artist that is placed upon him is clear. This ambivalence is the hallmark of a subject engaged by their drive rather than the pursuit of a socially transferable fantasy that others might share *in toto*. Just as importantly, however, it marks an important distinction between the voice through which Springsteen seeks to speak and the voice he is afforded by the second-order circulation of his address. Put differently, Springsteen's effort to efface his own presumption to know, and to authorize, the precise pathway to sovereign survival in the contemporary age becomes hollowed out and erased by those that use his speech to champion particular ends. Writing in the inaugural issue of *BOSS*, for example, William Wolff argues that,

Springsteen has reached a stage in his career where people actively seek him out as the conscience of society. During his interview with the Paris media, one reporter observed, "... so many people care about what you think, and what you feel about what is happening in the world." Robert Santelli has suggested that "Springsteen was America in the eyes of his fans and much of the world." The last decade has seen Springsteen transform from rock and roll singer to social critic. Springsteen's SXSW talk puts him in a lineage that includes some of the most important writers and thinkers to defend traditional or authentic processes for creating art (what Eliot defines as traditional; Springsteen labels authentic) (72-73).

And writing for NPR Amy Powers suggests that its precisely his unique voice – both as an artist and as an industry trailblazer - that command us to listen to (and follow) his trajectory. She argues,

For rock's Boss to use this high-profile music industry event to celebrate the whole wide cloth of pop, however, was a bold move. Many look to him as an ideal figure, standing for "good" music in the face of Top 40 junk. Springsteen could have trumpeted *Wrecking Ball's* commercial success (it's No. 1 on the *Billboard* album chart right now) as a return to traditional values in music. But he's not interested in upholding tradition — musical, cultural or political — as a way of setting boundaries. This speech, like his music, reminded Springsteen's fans that the values he upholds, like the music he makes, point us toward the unknown future even as they honor the many steps forward that constitute our shared history (Powers).

To be clear I am not suggesting that there is anything nefarious or inherently problematic about these critics advancing their own propositions on Springsteen and his importance. Nor am I arguing that there are (many) other musicians who might command the same level of attention and appreciation as Springsteen. Indeed a substantial portion of Chapter One went toward arguing much the same case. Rather I am underscoring that in this seemingly casual gesture of identifying for their own audiences that Springsteen ought command a particular resonance they activate the possibility that his message be appropriated and put toward ends that he himself seemed wary of joining.

This rhetorical maneuver is crucial to my argument that the elevation of Springsteen into a protocol abets a neoliberalization of the rock fantasy or, put more simply in the psychoanalytic language I have employed throughout this project: Springsteen's drive is converted to public desire and in that difference lays all the difference.

Indeed in the original speech Springsteen makes clear his point that there can be no singular approach to rock and its pursuit in part because the nature of rock itself requires a type of self-discovery but also, importantly, because through its success rock has splintered into diffuse strands of musical genres such that it could never be unified once more. He makes this argument by recalling one of rock's most oft-told stories – the passing of Lester Bangs and upon his passing Bangs' seemingly clairvoyant prediction concerning the future of rock. Springsteen recalls it thusly in the speech:

Perhaps the most prophetic comment I've heard over the past quarter century about rock music was made by Lester Bangs upon Elvis's death. In 1977, Lester Bangs said Elvis was probably the last thing we were all going to agree on -

Public Enemy not counting. From her on in, you would have your heroes and I would have mine. The center of my world may be Iggy Pop, or Joni Mitchell, or maybe Dylan. Mine might be KISS, or Pearl Jam, but we would never see eye-to-eye again and be brought together by one music again. And his final quote in the article was, “So, instead of saying goodbye to Elvis, I’m gonna say goodbye to you.” While that has been proven a thousand times over still here we are in a town with thousands of bands, each with a style, and a philosophy, and a song of their own. And I think the best of them believe that they have the power to turn Lester’s prophecy inside out, and to beat his odds (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*).

This excerpt is very significant in that it signals a maturation of rock to the point where it had exceeded the possibility of being gathered under one particular banner. A “victim” own success, rock would henceforth be incapable of satisfying all members of its culture via one type of music or one approach to that production. Springsteen, unsurprisingly at a music festival as diverse as SXSW reads this musical multiculturalism as an inherent good – more voices have the potential to be heard, more styles can be explored, more audiences can be brought into the camp, e.g. But, as with all splintering the cost, from Springsteen’s perspective, is a type of stuttering fantasy of unification. Said differently the very fact of rock’s dispersal inaugurates a will to power capable of being “the band” whose music will have universal appeal across the rock diaspora.

It is clear from both that quotation and the speech itself that such a fantasy is not, on its own, problematic in Springsteen’s view – it is just hopelessly naïve. The notion of “saying goodbye to you” due to the differences in music taste demonstrates the value of the object that is created by the subject. The fact that music fans are so passionate about

their tastes and are unable to compromise or unify evinces neither melancholy nor challenge from Springsteen; it is merely the state of affairs.

It is worth noting at this juncture that ambivalence to authenticity has always been part of Springsteen's persona (and is shown in his open where he wants to offer a key note but to do so through the voice of other "speakers"). Lawrence Grossberg has written extensively on Springsteen's inauthentic authenticity and the way that its unique stance enables, from Grossberg's perspective, the type of fan attachment that Springsteen enjoys. As passage from Grossberg's "*Rockin with Reagan*" bears quoting at length:

In Springsteen's case, authenticity itself has become a powerful style, which is to say that the question of authenticity, while of immediate relevance to any fan, is always displaced. They know that his act is rehearsed and repeated, that his authenticity is constructed (although the authentic is not supposed to be). In fact, they want to see his gestures repeated. Thus it is not true to say that Springsteen 'has traded the immediacy of the theater for the iconography of the screen,' for he makes visible their inseparability. This contradiction has always been at the heart of rock-and-roll. As Greil Marcus has pointed out, Elvis Presley's power as the king of rock-and-roll was in his image as the self-made (populist) king. And this is the site of Springsteen's popularity: to celebrate simultaneously one's ordinariness and to assert one's fantastic (and even fantasmatic) difference - the ordinary becomes extraordinary. Springsteen's performance celebrates the fans' identity within the mainstream. It gives them an identity in their very lack of difference, or in the artificiality of a constructed difference in their common affective lives (Grossberg, *Rockin' with Reagan*, 133).

If the open to the keynote signaled Springsteen's ambivalence both to his own artistic singularity and to the idea that he might function as an ideal-type for others the conclusion echoes those points in equally strident tones. A relatively extensive biography of his own musical influences and of the principles he attempted to emulate from his predecessors Springsteen closes with a seemingly contradictory set of suggestions for his listeners. He proclaims,

So, rumble, young musicians, rumble. Open your ears and open your hearts.

Don't take yourself seriously, and take yourself as seriously as death itself. Don't worry. Worry your ass off. Have ironclad confidence, but doubt - it keeps you awake and alert. Believe you are the baddest ass in town, and, you suck! It keeps you honest. Be able to keep two completely contradictory ideas alive and well inside of your heart and head at all times. If it doesn't drive you crazy, it will make you string. Stay hard, stay hungry and stay alive. When you walk onstage on tonight to bring the noise, treat it like it's all we have. And then remember, it's only rock and roll" (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*).

The use of terms like "rumble, death, awake, alert, suck, honest, alive, heart, crazy, hungry, alive, noise" trigger strings of emotional connections to his advice and emphasize a type of dramatic sincerity. He puts emphasis on these words to show his passion on the subject. And yet the advice he tenders comes in the form of a series of contradictory binaries such as be serious but be flip, be confident but know that your talent is limited and that you will likely fail and so on. I have already made the point that this type of postures refuses any absolute claim to knowledge and certainty. Taken

together the string of oppositions fashion a type of paradoxical subjectivity that might always strive for more but understand its inherent limitations and vulnerabilities.

Unsurprisingly much of the precariousness of the rock wannabes subjectivity is eliminated in the re-narration of the address in its circulation. Where the original address underscored a kind of humble respect for its origins and is mindful of any number of pitfalls that could upend even the best musicians the latter elements all but disappear as the address is recast entirely as a performance of braggadocio and swagger. Keith Goldberg, one of the founders of ticket start up Vendini pronounced,

I hung onto every word of Bruce Springsteen's soul-stirring speech at the South By Southwest festival last month, and left feeling like I could rock the world — at least my part of it. Springsteen's humble and sometimes irreverent look back at his career reminded the thousands of musicians packed inside the Austin Convention Center that hard work and passion is what it's all about, whether you're a musician or a regular guy like me "rocking" a pretty great ticketing company...All of it makes me feel, dare I say it, like a rock star (Goldberg).

And *Nashville Scene* music writer Adam Gold claimed that the speech was,

an honest-to-God, inspired, side-splitter-riddled, foul-mouthed hour plus account...like a motivational speaker and musical evangelist Springsteen told of how his hero worship at the alter (sic) of every badass...shaped the evolution of his own songwriting...its that kind of mental duality like knowing you have to 'bring the noise night after night like its all you have' but remember that 'its only rock 'n' roll' that he credits for a career of creative fulfillment and commercial success (Gold).

What accounts for the shifting register and intonation between Springsteen's account of himself and the commentator's account of Springsteen? They are, after all, happening nearly coterminously; most of the praise heaped upon the speech in the immediate days and weeks following its delivery. To be sure we can put some of the difference down to humility – even the brashest of celebrities do not fawn over themselves as much as their critics/fans might. I want to suggest, however, that something more is taking place: where Springsteen is talking from the place of drive (a subject incapable of doing other than his actions), critics speak from the vantage of desire (converting the Springsteen biography into a generalizable rock fantasy distilled into a few talking points and “to do” lists).

As I have suggested, such a result is neither entirely surprising nor, on its own, necessarily problematic. When, however, it aligns with a type of neoliberal takeover of rock what appears at first glance to be an adoption of a rebel pose becomes nothing more than the inhabitation of a pre-authorized performance devoid of its resistant force. As well, it is important to note that desire is not a disease; it would be impossible for any subject to live a “normal” functioning life without desire. But desire en masse and on script, as I show in the remaining sections of this project, teems with potential for dangerous social and political outcome. It is, in short, a license to run over one's opposition because they have will and the collective on their side. This is why drive has always been configured by psychoanalysts from Freud to Lacan as a type of necessary (healthy) counterbalance to desire; drive's function is to curb desire precisely so that it does not get out of control.

Here, once again, Springsteen's original narrative is instructive. To be sure a substantial portion of the early motivations might be classified as a "desire" to become Other and in particular to become the type of cool rocker that he saw beamed at him from the beginning of the rock and roll era.

We might simplify the following in advance by suggesting that along the way to becoming cool (desire) Springsteen becomes redirected by the nature of music and music-making itself (drive) such that he both embodies the other but remains steadfastly "himself". As the monologue unfolds Springsteen recounts his growing attachment to music but in the earliest stages of his narrative what captured his attention was the look/feel of the stars. In describing Roy Orbison, for example, Springsteen he relays to his audience how even the uncoolest-looking character could nevertheless exhibit a type of power over the audience that he (Springsteen) craved:

He [Orbison] was the true master of the romantic apocalypse you dreaded and knew was coming after the first night you whispered, "I love you," to your new girlfriend. You were going down. Roy was the coolest uncool loser you'd ever seen. With his Coke-bottle black glasses, his three-octave range, he seemed to take joy sticking his knife deep into the hot belly of your teenage dream

(Springsteen. *SXSW Keynote*).

His account of the Beatles exhibits the classic dependence on (mis)recognizing the look (the gaze) of the Other and the way it instills in the subject a yearning for their own becoming.

The Beatles were cool. They were classical, formal, and created the idea of an independent unit where everything could come out of your garage. The *Meet the*

Beatles album cover, those four headshots. I remember, I seen ‘em at J.J. Newberry’s. It was the first thing I saw when you ran down to the five-and-ten-cent store. There were no record stores. There weren’t enough records, I don’t think in those days. There was a little set by the toys where they sold a few albums. And I remember running in and seeing that album cover with those four headshots. It was like the silent Gods of Olympus. Your future was just sort of staring you in your face (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*).

Although it would merely laden down my own account of Springsteen’s discourse with more arcane psychoanalytic reference it is easy to see here the type of psychic relay that has formed much of the basis of Lacanian thinking as it has been imported into critical/cultural communication studies in the last several decades. Through a particular and politically charged field of vision a subject (Springsteen) encounters a type of mirrored reflection of himself which highlights his vulnerability and lack inherent to his status. This encounter spurs an imaginary Other, a type of idealized Springsteen no longer trapped by the particularities of their place, social class, appearance or any other “real” drag on their possibility of otherness. As Springsteen put it, “television and Elvis gave us access to a new language; a new form of communication: a new way of being; a new way of looking; a new way thinking about sex, about race, about identity, about life; a new way of being an American, a human being and a new way of hearing music” (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*). Springsteen elaborates on what Elvis signified to him:

I realized a white man could make magic, that you do not have to be constrained by your upbringing, by the way you looked or by the social context that oppressed you. You could call upon your own powers of imagination and you could create a

transformative self. A certain type of transformative self, that perhaps at any other moment in American history, might have seemed difficult, if not impossible” (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*).

Whether “being” Orbison, the Beatles or Elvis was ever possible for young Springsteen or whether they themselves experienced their own lives with the kind of rapacious sense of freedom that he imagined it allowed is, of course, irrelevant to his own desire. Rock and roll’s appeal, accelerated by the machinations of advertising the modern spectacle of fame had worked its alchemy on Springsteen and instilled in him a desire to become Other by becoming a rock star.

It was in the seeking actualization of that fantasy, however, that something else took place. Indeed, Springsteen describes an effort at mimicry that begins to transform not only himself but the fantasy structure as well. Springsteen goes on to name a list of various other artists who influenced him and exclaimed his appreciation and idolatry for his heroes. “These men and women, they were and they remain my masters. By the time I reached my twenties, I’d spent a thousand nights employing their lessons in local clubs and bars, honing my own skills” (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*). This attachment to the music (object) forced him to practice his skills as a musician and develop personally. Bruce’s comment and reflection gives credit to Biesecker and Trapani’s argument “the proper function of the drives is to redirect a subject’s rapacious attachment to a given object of desire by the way of sublimation through which both the subject and the object are productively transformed. The object of the drive, this object around which the drive repeatedly turns, is of course, what Lacanians call the *object (petit) a*” (Biesecker and Trapani). Springsteen (subject) paid attention to his drive and fed into the object

(music/music making). He honed his skills by practicing night after night and it paid off. Not only was Springsteen able to succeed as a musician, most importantly, he made himself happy and fulfilled. Again, Springsteen mentions the influence of his musical drive to his life:

I remember sitting in my little apartment, playing Hank Williams's *Greatest Hits* over and over. And I was trying to crack its code, because at first, it didn't just sound good to me. It sounded cranky and old fashioned. But it was the hard country voice and I'm playing it, and it was an austere instrumentation. But slowly, slowly, my ears became accustomed to it, its beautiful simplicity and its darkness and depth. And Hank Williams went from archival to alive for me, before my very eyes (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*).

Drive is not planned. It just shows up and speaks/calls to the Springsteen (subject) and he is unable to give upon the object (music). In this instance, when he first heard Hank Williams he did not particularly care for the music but an attraction was created that kept him listening, but he felt compelled and fixated to listen to the music (object) to "crack the code". The force that influenced him to continue to listen to Williams was his drive. In the end it was his drive that allowed him to get his "fix" and see his enjoyment go from "archival to alive" – from something that was pure performative mimicry and script-following into something more individuated and enduring.

From this vantage music allowed Springsteen the type of otherness he sought but not as pure imitation or even the desire to become the celebrities he saw looking down on him from record store windows. Indeed, music operated as a vehicle of transcendence for

his own becoming himself. Springsteen told his audience, “It’s fascinating to see what’s become of the music I have loved my whole life. Pop’s become a new language, cultural force, social movement. Actually, a series of new languages, cultural forces, and social movements that have inspired and enlivened the second half of the twentieth century, and the dawning years of this one” (Springsteen, *SXSW Keynote*).

The sonorous serves as the cocoon or blanket that allows filters out what is reached to the subject. This notion is supported by Gunn and Hall in their work on the iPod, “The concept of the “sonorous envelope” helps to capture both the experience *and* description of one’s enjoyment of one’s enjoyment of music and, more specifically, if a gadget like the iPod. Understanding “rhetoric” to mean the *study* of the representational logics of a given object, a psychoanalytic rhetoric of music begins to take shape when psychical economies are not divorced from one another, but are examined in their tense but mutually implicated relation” (Gunn and Hall). Psychoanalysis is beneficial in analyzing drive and the sonorous envelope because it looks directly at the relationship between the subject and the object which is hard to do otherwise.

In this case it is hardly irrelevant that Springsteen himself becomes a celebrity, but the central point to be made is that his own success comes less from emulating others than from “passing through” the fawning of others into a self that is his own. This sublimation, in which Springsteen pushes himself to find the secret in the music only to discover that the secret is the doing of the music itself (which is to say no secret at all), unfortunately, is largely lost on the commentators. Many take his account as a literal series of steps to follow in order to actualize one’s own self as in Todd Van Luling’s “8 Life Lessons You Can Learn From Bruce Springsteen” (Luling) which creates mantras

from Springsteen's life and music including from his SXSW speech (according to Luling) the command to "embrace contradictions" and "don't hold back, just make it happen." In a similar vein "neuroscientist, anthropologist and entrepreneur" (according to his Amazon.com profile) Bob Deutsch's book *The Five Essentials: Using Your Inborn Resources to Create a Fulfilling Life* (2013) employs Springsteen's SXSW address as evidence of the importance of telling one's story as a way of self-discovery and self-mastery.

While we might dismiss these more fleeting references to his keynote perhaps the more revealing (and potentially concerning) are those critics that saw in Springsteen's address some type of formula for the revitalization of rock and all of its resistant sensibilities. Ann Powers argued that despite the dire times for the recording industry Springsteen's optimism could give us all hope that a better future was ahead. As she put it,

Springsteen firmly stood on the side of the popoptimists who embrace a wide, shifting definition of great vernacular music. Many are calling Springsteen's talk a pocket history of rock music, comparing it to the best orations given at the annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductions. Yet like that organization, this most admired of all rockers has clearly been working on what he himself thinks "rock" can be. It wasn't an accident that he mentioned KISS three times, and referred to Public Enemy at least twice. His parting revelation that he planned to go see some "black death metal" was likely just a quip, but the insistence that important, meaningful music comes from all cultural corners was deeply serious.

Still others commented on the persona and style of Springsteen itself, as if his composure and mannerisms suggested a type of second golden age of rock. Following those critics “he spoke with depth, passion and humor about his roots (Lifton),” and “offered a rousing, witty and personal history of his varied music influences (Griggs), who’s insights ring particularly saliently because “Bruce Springsteen’s soul has always burned for rock ‘n’ roll. Those who have seen him live over the years can attest...the man is music” (Ostop).

Many noted that if there ever was a voice that young artists might listen to it would be Springsteen’s. Alex Young at the website “Consequence of Sound” described the speech as “One-part history lesson in music, the other an educational seminar on what defines a great band, Springsteen encouraged up-and-comers to do their homework and perform live early and often.” Neil McCormick writing for The Telegraph agreed but cautioned that it would be some time before Springsteen would be ready to give up his position on top of the music industry pyramid. He wrote, “any young musician fortunate enough to have heard Springsteen's speech and witnessed this show will know exactly how high they have to aim if they ever want to reach the top of their profession. On this evidence, Springsteen will be the Boss for a while yet (McCormick).” And, finally, music critic Jim Farber – who has often been critical both of Springsteen’s music and of the artifice of his celebrity – was nevertheless appreciative as well, indicating that somehow Springsteen had tapped into a mode of being that might allow young artists to navigate the difficult terrain of the industry landscape while also preserving their authenticity as rockers/musicians. He notes,

With those few lines, one of rock’s toniest brand names questioned the very belief

system that raised him so high in the critical and popular mind-set to begin with. Here was Mr. Authenticity pronouncing the whole notion of that term outmoded, small-minded and beside the point. Of course, he was speaking about authenticity in quotes- about the calcified notions of what it has come to mean over the last three to four decades. During that time, the boomer bullies of classic rock have asserted their music as the genuine article, casting every other form in its wake as lesser, if not downright counterfeit, Pronouncements like Bruce's would seem eye-rollingly obvious to all those who've long felt there's equal artistic expression in (still) often maligned art forms like rap, electronic music, teen pop or whatever unnameable new style arises to assault the conventions of song form and rhythm. But for an old-school, hard-line rocker like Bruce to challenge musical divisions and hierarchies at this point says something key about where we are now and, perhaps, about where we might be heading (Farber).

The central point to be gleaned is that the voice Springsteen appeared to take pains to efface as authoritative becomes, in the hands of the critics, exactly that: a protocol, a series of mantras and, above all, a reassurance that rock is not dead and if adherents merely remain resolute to the promise it will be resurrected. Importantly, and unlike Springsteen's own narrative, the commentators do not index their own "masters" by which this new legion of rockers might find their similar sublimation. In other words where Springsteen was set in a motion to become Other but then become fixated by the actuality of music itself, the commentariat sets readers off on a pathway of pure desire seeking to instill the rock and roll dream in whatever way and through whatever means they might wish.

Conclusion

Over the course of his address Springsteen showcases both fantasy and its arrest. On the one hand his wish to become like his musical heroes, to become in effect a rock legend and to live the rock star life, demonstrates the classic ambition of desire. On the other hand his tales of personal enjoyment in the music alone and purely for the sake of the music shows a subject – at times at least – willfully forgoing the promise of the order and instead falling under the sway of drive. In order to try to dislodge fellow scholars away from using psychoanalytic protocols that favor examinations of just desire.

Springsteen's SXSW keynote serves merely as an example of the relationship between the subject (Springsteen) and the object (music/music making). This particular speech reflects how chasing drive is more hopeful and realistic to follow drive. The keynote address is an appropriate example in understanding drive because Bruce is not using his drive for music for something else. The speech is a showcase of drive because music is all Springsteen knows how to do and he is drawn to it. Within the context of the speech Bruce is the subject and the music and music making process is the object. Music is the object that is allowed through Springsteen's sonorous envelope and is the drive that pulls him in. Bruce is unable to change because the drive of the music calls him. Throughout the course of his speech he makes numerous attempts to serve as a quasi-politician and storyteller but ultimately listens to the music's siren song calls him back. Springsteen's drive is the reason why he is able to withstand the inauthentic discourses of the music industry. He is unable to give up on the music and if others want to make it through his sonorous envelope they must give into his terms. Bruce's desire for the

music contributes to the music's value with the attraction and pleasure Springsteen gains from the music.

Drive is not planned. It just shows up and speaks/calls to the Springsteen (subject) and he is unable to give upon the object (music). In this instance, when Bruce first heard Hank Williams did not particularly care for the music but an attraction was created that kept him listening. Bruce felt compelled and fixated to listen to the music (object) to "crack the code". The force that influenced him to continue to listen to Williams was his drive. In the end it was his drive that allowed him to get his "fix" and see his enjoyment go from "archival to alive".

IV. CONCLUSION

Lost amidst the controversies associated with Donald Trump's entry into the 2016 presidential race was a minor kerfuffle: the Trump team's choice of Neil Young's 1989 "Rockin' in the Free World" as the candidate's walk-up music. The ensuing exchange of press releases from the Young and Trump camps would have been completely unremarkable had they not briefly resuscitated the impression that "rock and roll" remained a vibrant cultural formation. Indeed, unlike previously well-publicized showdowns between politicians and musicians over permission rights (e.g. Reagan vs. Bruce Springsteen over "Born in the USA", Tom Petty vs. George W. Bush over "I Won't Back Down" and David Byrne vs. the Charlie Christ for "Road to Nowhere" to name but a handful), the Young vs. Trump – and a subsequent Trump vs the Rolling Stones battle over their song "You Can't Always Get What you Want" - occurred against a backdrop of a much diminished music industry. While music sales in general have declined, rock music has experienced dramatic reductions in both radio air time and in record sales and industry magazines are routinely filled with meditations on whether the genre is dead. What then to make of the theft of something so routinely dismissed as passé and supposedly out of touch with today's consumers; out of time and seemingly out of a future?

If as Mickey Vallee argues, rock is neoliberalism's Other because it articulates a diffuse rebellious subjectivity against the consumerist ascendancy of neoliberalism, then rather than read its presence as mere entertainment and its potential demise as a footnote

in history, the status of rock music ought to be of great interest to scholars dedicated to seeking social change through the emergence of radical subjects. Put differently, if “rock” was both neoliberalism’s necessary excess and its affective site of the enjoyment of freedom, then as rhetoricians interested in theorizing alternatives to the ever restrictive present, the its closure – and the discourses through which it occurs – should be of keen interest to scholars dedicated to progressive social change.

It is clear that our standard accounts of the relatively commonplace political candidate’s theft of rock music for their campaign events, and of rock music and its force in general, misses important lessons about the nature of political aspiration and the libidinal economy underlying that effort. Typically, as in the recent cases described earlier, one encounters the campaign team’s response that the appropriation was merely accidental in that they were not aware of legal infringements or that it was minor and should in any case be excused as the mere expression of a fellow music lover appreciating a favorite band or song. In some cases, as in both of the Trump-related controversies, the campaign may also reply that while they did not gain license from the artists themselves they have rights to the recording label’s catalog.

Still the list of such infringements is long and storied and its sheer magnitude alone suggests that we ought to shift our thinking away from considering such acts as mere accidents or attempts to spice up the campaign and instead view them as willful and compulsive behaviors; as irrepressible and essential acts of the assertion of political sovereignty. Moreover, the record of such appropriation is not exclusively reserved for one political party stealing from a brand of musician nor, finally, was it merely a practice in a particular era. Indeed, for every Reagan and Springsteen there is an Al Gore stealing

the Music of Sting. For every lift by McCain – and he was something of a habitual repeat offender – there is an Obama being asked by a member of Sam and Dave to cease and desist. So the list is long and knows no boundaries: Bob Dole’s use of Isaac Hayes’ “Soul Man”, Sarah Palin’s use of Heart’s “Barracuda” and Rand Paul borrowing of the Rush classic “Tom Sawyer”.

No doubt the politicians are encouraged by how little punishment there is for such behavior. While the media may report on the musician’s often extensively verbalized opposition it hardly treats the grievance with any gravitas which parallels their general disregard for the sonic accompaniments to campaigns (see, for example, the way commentators routinely talk over the walk-up and walk-out music). In this case there is a clear homology to the long logocentric nature of our field and its disciplinary origination in oratory and speech analysis such that these musical moments are often figured as afterthoughts to the “main event” of the public address itself.

If instead, however, we were to entertain the possibility that the music was not merely background music but was in fact a register of psychic yearnings we might see something very different. Rather than being forced to adopt the somewhat unsatisfying account that politicians appropriate in order to supplement their rather bland personalities we can, instead, understand the act of the theft itself as a powerful rhetorical statement – an assertion of privilege and a claim to that which is the most threatening to any presumption of sovereignty – the *jouissance* of the Other. Indeed, it could be that the greatest lesson of psychoanalysis is that subjects cannot but feel craven jealousy and fervent hatred for the Other in the throes of their greatest ecstasy. This is, after all, why

Freud insists that it is impossible to love thy neighbor – their sheer presence and satisfaction in life spurs in us something deep and resentful.

Similarly, music – and particularly rock music – has a tremendously long history of presenting, or being taken as, brash rude and dismissive of authority. As Vallee argues, “excess is the non-symbolic grimace of the Lacanian Real: a thing that lurks beyond the fantasy of normalcy...Rock ‘n’ roll terrified moral entrepreneurs because it felt as though it would disturb the regularity of the 1950s conformity by arousing *jouissance*.: excessive pleasure and/of/in disgust occasioned by a traumatic encounter with the Other’s desire.”

Since artistic expression generally and music more specifically and even more particularly rock music are figured as the binary opposition to the logically calculating realms of the political, the theft of music is in fact a surrogate attempted robbery of the *jouissance* thought to abide in the pulsating beats otherwise denied the candidate because such *jouissance* is, strictly speaking, outside the law. Candidates cannot *but* perform the appropriative gesture because the object (in this case rock music) functions to trigger their behavior; rock music drives the political aspirant to their larceny. Or, to put it in Lacan’s well-known if somewhat slippery adage: “desire is the desire of the Other”.

Whether or not rock is really dead or not it is clear that the heydays are gone for some time, if not forever; the very fantasy as rock a rebellious alternative is rarely if ever offered as an alternative. In psychoanalytic terms we would say that the “rock is dead” talk produces anxiety that the symbolic order will become completely totalitarian meaning there will be no freedom in this order. There will be no space to be different or to have the type of cool life that rock promised. In other words “rock is dead” comes with it a kind of melancholy where we have lost something and we now just have to live

with it being gone forever. The melancholia then produces a type of hysterical and miserable subject trapped in a symbolic order they cannot believe in. Ultimately it does not matter so much that there is a definite answer to whether rock is dead rather it is clear that we remain locked in the fantasy of rock, overtaken by nostalgia and where that past may (we think) take us in the future. We seem, then, overcome by rock. As we experience the increasingly narrow control of neoliberalism of its contouring by party politics rock its very existence becomes both a stain and a reminder of what we once were such that expunging excess (in this case “rock”) from the public sphere record unleashes a type of psychic relief or, just as problematically, we experience it as a lost horizon never achieved that could have saved us from ourselves. As Calum Matheson explains it is this relation to the object too close in disgust or too close in regard that leaves the subject hysterical. He explains:

Lacan’s singular take on anxiety helps to explain how the fantasy structure supporting any given public discourse is brought to crisis. To summarily state the case...: getting too close to the object of desire will wreak havoc upon the basic structure of fantasy.

He continues

The object’s imminence disrupts the economy of trope and affective investment that give rise to fantasy and underpin specific subjectivities by eliminating the “possibility of absence” that is the “security of presence.”

Drive, as I have argued throughout this project, is uncontrollable – it comes out of nowhere and does not let the subject go. It is responsible for subject’ personal satisfaction and once it is complete the subject does not need anything else because it is fulfilled,

what Dylan describes as a “closed circuit” because it is a never ending process the subject never tires of. As Gunn and Hall note, “in less technical terms, the idea of the drive is that humans are coerced into thinking and behaving in reference to energies that pulsate around certain objects (141)”.

In her work *Imagine There's No Woman*, Joan Copjec identifies the potential dangers of just such an enveloping through the concept-metaphor of subreption which, following her thought, occurs when “a supersensible idea, that is, one that can never be experienced, is falsely represented as if it were a possible object of experience.” Rather than content themselves with the realization that there are limits to sovereignty and realms of control the political aspirant under the sway of drive experiences a type of context collapse in which,

freedom and immortality return in the fantasy of progress to infinity... Within this fantasy subjectivity finitude and failure effaced by the promises of progress.

Death is indefinitely postponed and the temporary checks on the power of human will are denied any ultimate victory (copjec, *imagine theres no woman* 149-150).”

I have suggested that so long as rock is figured as the alternative to a consolidation of power it will serve as a spur to its own appropriation. This is particularly true of politicians who seek the assent of the people and therefore are by definition are vulnerable to their rejection. Read this way, the theft of rock is an effort to short circuit the *jouissance* of the Other not merely by stealing their music but via subreption through the assertion of an alternate frame of being in which, so long as they are commandeered by the sonorous envelope the politician subject imagines no impediment to the manifestation of their own private political fantasy.

Stepping back from the particular example of campaign music, the broader point is clear: affect matters. And, moreover, the way that affect circulates around – and through – music make it a particular strong medium for the flow of this affect. This is even more the case when music is aligned with particular communities in ways that not only foster their existence but then place them on particular paths. In the case of rock that path has been obvious from its inception and its tales of rebellion, self-determination and the romantic search for fulfillment have long-fueled rock's power (b

I argued that academics have placed too much importance on the notion of publics. The reliance on publics and making an argument heard in the public creates false hope and disappointment. Desire has implications that can ultimately damage and hurt the subject. Rhetorical scholars such as Biesecker and Trapani suggest that drive is productive to a new politic because it provides satisfaction to the subject, while at the same time; a subject that has now greater, potential to become a radical agent. With desire the subject ends up spending more time acting for a public that does not exist. People overwork themselves preparing themselves for the fantasy. In reality, the fantasy is a dead end in an attempt to prepare for the goal. Psychoanalytic scholars should adopt a model that pays attention to drive. If rhetorical studies scholars implemented this they would notice the intransigence of subjects comes not from their dedication to a fantasy that could be rewritten but rather from their attachment to an object and its call/ voice that keeps them attached to that object. Understanding the sonorous envelope and drive will alleviate the pain and disappointment of subjects, and it would provide a new avenue of investigation for scholars interested in supplementing traditional accounts of rhetorical force with a consideration of their affective inflection.

Works Cited

- Biesecker, Barbara A. "Rhetorical Studies and the "new" Psychoanalysis: What's the Real Problem? Or Framing the Problem of the Real." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84.2 (1998): 222-40. Web.
- Biesecker, Barbara A. "Whither Ideology? Toward a Different Take on Enjoyment as a Political Factor." *Western Journal of Communication* 75.4 (2011): 445-50. Web.
- Biesecker, Barbara A., and William Trapani. "Escaping the Voice of the Mass/ter: Late Neoliberalism, Object-Voice, and the Prospects for a Radical Democratic Future." *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 17.1 (2014): 25-33. Web.
- Binelli, Mark. "The Return of Springsteen." *Rolling Stone* 28 Aug. 2002: n. pag. Print.
- Copjec, Joan. *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2002. Print.
- Copjec, Joan. *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1994. Print.
- DeRogatis, Jim. Preface. *Let It Blurt: The Life and times of Lester Bangs, America's Greatest Rock Critic*. New York: Broadway, 2000. XV. Print.
- Deutsch, Bob, and Lou Aronica. *The 5 Essentials: Using Your Inborn Resources to Create a Fulfilling Life*. New York: Plume Book, 2013. Print.
- Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2003. Print.

- Farber, Jim. "Has Music Entered a 'post-authentic' Age?" *NY Daily News*. N.p., 01 Apr. 2012. Web. 15 May 2017.
- Gold, Adam. "SXSW 2012: The Gold Report." *Nashville Scene*. N.p., 23 Mar. 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2017.
- Goldberg, Keith. "Thoughts on SXSW 2012." *Promote Events, Track Patrons, Take Donations and Sell More Tickets with the Vendini All-in-one Online Ticketing Solution*. N.p., 28 Jan. 2016. Web. 13 July 2015.
- Goodale, Greg. "The Sonorous Envelope and Political Deliberation." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99.2 (2013): 218-24. Web.
- Griggs, Brandon. "Professor Springsteen's Rock 'n' Roll History Lesson at SXSW." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 16 Mar. 2012. Web. 22 Mar. 2017.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "Reflections of a Disappointed Music Scholar", in *Transformations in Popular Music Culture Rock Over the Edge*, edited by Beebe, Roger, Denise Fulbrook, and Ben Saunders. Durham: Duke UP, 2002. 29-59. Print.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "Rockin' with Reagan, or the Mainstreaming of Postmodernity." *Cultural Critique* 10 (1988): 123-149. Web.
- Gunn, Joshua. "Marantha." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98.4 (2012): 359-84. Web.
- Gunn, Joshua. "Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90.1 (2004): 1-23. Web.

- Gunn, Joshua, and Mirko M. Hall. "Stick It in Your Ear: The Psychodynamics of iPod Enjoyment." *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 5.2 (2008): 135-57. Web.
- Gunn, Joshua, Greg Goodale, Mirko M. Hall, and Rosa A. Eberly. "Auscultating Again: Rhetoric and Sound Studies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 43.5 (2013): 475-89. Web.
- Indar, Joshua. "Is Rock 'n' Roll Dormant, Dying or Already Dead?" *PopMatters*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 May 2016.
- Lifton, David. "Bruce Springsteen Delivers Keynote Address at SXSW." *Ultimate Classic Rock*. N.p., 15 Mar. 2012. Web. 1 Mar. 2017.
- Luling, Todd Van. "8 Life Lessons You Can Learn From Bruce Springsteen, Even If You Were Already 'Born To Run'." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 25 Aug. 2014. Web. 19 May 2017.
- Lundberg, Christian O. *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama, 2012. Print.
- Masciotra, David. *Working on a Dream: The Progressive Political Vision of Bruce Springsteen*. New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.
- McCormick, Neil. "Bruce Springsteen, SXSW, Austin, Texas, Review." *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 16 Mar. 2012. Web. 11 March 2017.
- Ostop, Rick. "Keynotes From the Keynote - Bruce Springsteen's SXSW 2012 Keynote Speech." *San Diego Rock 'n' Roll*. N.p., 01 Jan. 2013. Web. 15 July 2015.
- Powers, Ann. "Bruce Springsteen On The Meaning Of Music." *NPR*. NPR, 15 Mar. 2012. Web. 19 Feb. 2017.

- Rice, Jenny Edbauer. "The New "New": Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94.2 (2008): 200-12. Web.
- Rose, Caryn. *Raise Your Hand: Adventures of an American Springsteen Fan in Europe*. New York: Till Victory, 2012. Print.
- Rose, Nikolas S. *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.
- Rose, Nikolas S. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.
- Sellnow, Deanna, and Timothy Sellnow. "The "Illusion of Life" Rhetorical Perspective: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Music as Communication." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18.4 (2001): 395-415. Web.
- Sawyers, June Skinner. Introduction. *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader*. New York: Penguin, 2004. 11. Print.
- Sommer, Tim. "How Rock 'n' Roll Failed Us Again This Presidential Election." *Observer*. Observer Media, 20 Apr. 2017. Web. 17 July 2017.
- Springsteen, Bruce. "Bruce Springsteen's SXSW 2012 Keynote Speech." *NPR*. NPR, 18 Mar. 2012. Web. 19 May 2015.
- Springsteen, Bruce. *The Rising*. Bruce Springsteen. Brendan O'Brien, 2002. CD.
- Vallee, Mickey. "'More than a Feeling': Classic Rock Fantasies and the Musical Imagination of Neoliberalism." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 56.2 (2014): 245-62. Web.
- Williamson, Kevin. "Chaos in the Family, Chaos in the State: The White Working Class's Dysfunction." *National Review Online*. N.p., 17 Mar. 2016. Web.

- Wolfe, Graham. "'Losing What We Never Had': Zizek and Lacan Rock On with Bryan Adams." *International Journal of Zizek Studies* 5.4 (2011): 1-19. Web.
- Wolff, William I. "Springsteen, Tradition, and the Purpose of the Artist." *BOSS: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies* 1.1 (2014): 36-72. Web.
- Wood, Mikael. "As Bruce Springsteen Closes out Another Rock Arena, Does the Same Fate Await Arena Rock?" *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 15 Mar. 2016. Web. 16 Mar. 2016.
- Wood, Mikael. "'The End of Old School': 5 Takeaways from Bruce Springsteen's Thursday Show at the Sports Arena." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 18 Mar. 2016. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.
- Young, Alex. "CoS at SXSW 2012: Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Fiona Apple, The Jesus and Mary Chain...." *Consequence of Sound*. N.p., 16 Mar. 2012. Web. 19 June 2015.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2014. Print.