

STARKIE, ZACHARY J., M.M. Cool Kids Never Have the Time: The Music of the Smashing Pumpkins and Youth of the 1990s. (2008)  
Directed by Dr. Guy Capuzzo. 105 pp.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the connection between youth of the 1990s and the music of the Smashing Pumpkins. The introduction is used to provide the reader with pertinent background information on youth, the 1990s, alternative music, and the Smashing Pumpkins. Following that, Chapters 1 and 2 feature analyses of two songs by the Smashing Pumpkins, "Here Is No Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth."

The analyses of both songs focus on text enhancement and musical contrasts in each song. At the end of Chapter 2, the qualities of each song are compared.

Chapter 3 examines two styles of music that were influential on the band, progressive rock and heavy metal, and examines their place in "Here Is Now Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth." Chapter 3 also examines how the differences between these two styles are evident in the Smashing Pumpkins' music.

Finally, Chapter 4 examines the band's newest recording, *Zeitgeist*, and assesses its use of the musical aspects evident in "Here Is No Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth."

COOL KIDS NEVER HAVE THE TIME:  
THE MUSIC OF THE SMASHING  
PUMPKINS AND YOUTH  
OF THE 1990S

by

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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Music

Greensboro  
2008

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APPROVAL PAGE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. Guy Capuzzo, Dr. Irna Priore, and Dr. Steven Stusek for their time and assistance. He also thanks Emily Hay at Kings, Holmes, Paterno, and Berliner, LLP and William Patrick Corgan for permission to use the lyrics of the songs presented in this thesis. All song lyrics are used with permission.

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## INTRODUCTION

There are few studies that find many musical reasons for connection between rock music and youth. Simon Frith claims it is the sexuality of rock, the steady, erotic beat, or the thrill of the electric guitar solo that attract a young audience.<sup>1</sup> He also focuses on socio-economic factors to determine the connection.<sup>2</sup> However, little research has been done on the specific musical factors that have attracted and keep attracting youth to rock music. While this study does not claim to single-handedly change this, it does seek to determine how the Smashing Pumpkins, a Chicago band that recorded and toured in the 1990s, attracted an audience of youth. It must be mentioned that while it would be irresponsible to begin a study like this one supposing that the musicians of the group set out to attract young people, there is at least some evidence of it. In a November 1995 interview with David Fricke, head Pumpkin Billy Corgan confessed that “I still spend a lot of time thinking about what a 15-year-old must be thinking right now. Because that is the predominant audience that you're

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Frith writes that “The sexuality of music is usually referred to in terms of its rhythm – it is the beat that commands a directly physical response. . . and in sexual terms our musical response is, perhaps above all, to the grain of a voice, the “touch” someone has on an instrument, the sense of personality at play.” Simon Frith, *Sound Effects* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1981), 240.

<sup>2</sup> Frith focuses largely on rock as a marketable commodity for the young. Part three of *Sound Effects* explores musical taste in relation to class and education level. Some of that will also be discussed in Chapter 3 of this paper.

going to be relating to.”<sup>3</sup> It sounds less like Corgan set out to write records for that age group and more like he knew who would be listening to his music.

Either way, he has designated his target audience, and the reader can assume that to this end, at least some parts of his music would cater to this age group.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the connections of youth culture in the 1990s to the music of the Smashing Pumpkins. It is important to first understand a short history on the connections of rock and youth, because the two have been intertwined since their respective origins. The introduction explains youth culture and rock in the 1990s as well as the band itself. Chapters 1 and 2 of the paper explore two Smashing Pumpkins songs and their connection to 1990s youth. The songs examined in this study, “Here Is No Why” and “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” were chosen for their particular stylistic qualities and for lyrics that capture the spirit of some part of the youth experience. While the songs contrast stylistically, the band included them both on the 1995 double-disc set *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, and thus both contribute to what Corgan had hoped would be *The Wall* for the 90s.<sup>4</sup> These chapters focus on the lyrical content of both songs and then the methods the band used to enhance the meaning of the lyrics, by way of text-painting. Chapter 1 focuses on “Here Is No Why,” Chapter 2 features lyric and musical analyses of “Tales of a Scorched

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<sup>3</sup> David Fricke, “Smashing Pumpkins,” *Rolling Stone*, 16 November 1995 [magazine on-line]; available from [http://www.rollingstone.com/new/story/5938710/smashing\\_pumpkins](http://www.rollingstone.com/new/story/5938710/smashing_pumpkins); Internet; accessed 28 March 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Jim DeRogatis, *Milk It! Collected Musings on the Alternative Music Explosion of the 90s* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 80.

Earth,” and also contains a section comparing the two songs.

Chapter 3 focuses on what Deena Weinstein calls the “duality of youth.” While she draws few specific musical connections in her writing, I draw many in mine, and I examine the ways the music of the band captured the musical aspect of the youth experience. In the second part Chapter 3, I assess effects of text painting and other songwriting techniques. I then examine two of the styles of the Smashing Pumpkins and the sources from which they derived those styles. The focus of Chapter 3 is on progressive rock and heavy metal. I describe these musical styles, explore their attributes, and assess their place in the music of the Pumpkins. Then, after finding these influences in “Here Is No Why” and “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” their roles in these songs will be observed and compared to its musical ancestry.

Next, I explore the fan base of progressive rock and heavy metal to determine what kind of audience the Smashing Pumpkins may have attracted with their particular brand of music. Although one cannot assume that the modern incarnations of these styles would attract the same audience as in previous decades, it can be assumed that some of the qualities that attracted a particular demographic then would still attract some of the same people now.

Finally, the material from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* will be compared to the songs on the band's newest album, *Zeitgeist*. A brief lyrical and musical overview of *Zeitgeist* follows and several indicative songs will be chosen

and examined. A comparison with the aspects of the songs from *Mellon Collie* will follow, as well as an evaluation of the new material's link to youth.

## Youth

“Youth” in this paper refers to people between the ages of 15 and 25. Although some citations may reference teens, teenagers, or adolescents, the demographic with which I am concerned encompasses these and expands beyond them.

There must be some age margin, as youth is determined by more than physiological aspects. Deena Weinstein defines that margin by writing “Youth, in the sense that is meant here, is not primarily a biological or even psychological category but a sociological one.”<sup>5</sup> She later elaborates on her idea by saying,

the general structural predicament of the adolescent typically appears in the conscious form of a dualism between freedom and constraint. The latter is interpreted alternately as being treated as a child when one is capable of exerting one's own will and being forced into a system of obligations and responsibilities that must alienate one from one's new-found will. Freedom, in contrast, is interpreted as doing what one wants.<sup>6</sup>

Weinstein's notion of youth is a sound one, and the dualism she mentions here is explored in Chapters 2 and 3. The delineation of 15-25 will be used with the understanding that other ages acting as youth will be considered in this demographic.

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<sup>5</sup> Deena Weinstein, “Rock: Youth and Its Music,” in *Adolescents and Their Music: If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old*, ed. Jonathon S. Epstein (New York, NY: Garland Pub., 1994), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Weinstein, 11.

## Youth and Music

The sociological connection between youth and rock music in the twentieth-century has been examined in many prior studies. It is acknowledged that both rock and youth culture emerged in the economically stable years following World War II. Andy Bennett writes “Between 1945 and 1955, youth changed from a taken-for-granted and largely unacknowledged transitional stage between childhood and adulthood to a cultural category marked by particular stylistic trends, tastes in music and accompanying patterns of consumption.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, “youth,” as a cultural phenomenon, was born out of an economic consumer niche. At the end of World War II, young people had money with few things on which to spend it. With the rise of the new middle class, and more economic affluence for the working class, young people began to have more spending money. In turn, manufacturers and retailers realized the demand for merchandise for the young to purchase and began producing items aimed at youth. Bennett writes,

The consumer industries quickly realized that young people presented a highly viable and lucrative market and, consequently, a whole range of commodities designed specifically for them began to appear. These commodities included fashion clothes, cosmetics such as lipstick and mascara, as well as relatively new goods such as plastic 45 rpm (revolutions per minute) records, record players, and transistor radios.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Andy Bennett, *Cultures of Popular Music* (Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Bennett, 9.

Rock music became a marketable commodity in the same decade, with the rise of cheaper recording technology as well as the ability to mass produce 45 rpm records. The causes of popularity of rock music with the young are disputed. Some research claims that the correlation between rock music and youth was as an appropriate soundtrack to newfound youth leisure time.<sup>9</sup> Others believe rock and roll's success was a result of marketing African-American music to white suburban youth or that it became popular as well-to-do young people romanticized the ideals of the working class.<sup>10</sup> Bennett writes "The generation that had lived through the hard times of the depression . . . preferred its music soft and romantic. Their children, growing up in safer, more affluent times, wanted to hear more dangerous music."<sup>11</sup> The styles of rock music of the 1990s, however, were different than that of the 1950s. Attempts at a definition of rock music end up sounding ambiguous, with many denotations of subcategories and references to other styles. For instance, in *Grove Music Online*, Richard Middleton defines rock as

A term used to denote a particular category of popular music. . . It was used to describe certain new music pop styles developing after about 1965. . . associated with young, white audiences and musicians.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Frith, 249.

<sup>10</sup> Bennett discusses the link to suburban youth in *Cultures of Popular Music* (12). Frith writes in *Sound Effects* (217): "Part of the middle-class use of music. . . is as a way into working-class adolescence; rock offers the fantasy of a community of risk. . ."

<sup>11</sup> Bennett, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Middleton, "Rock," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy; available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet; accessed 3 May 2006.

Middleton lists several divisions within the rock category and discusses the social, musical, and ideological implications of rock music. His musical definitions are pertinent to this study, but there he is vague as well. He states, "Musically [rock] tends to be highly amplified with a strong beat and rhythmic patterns commonly considered erotic."<sup>13</sup> However, Middleton writes nothing more about the content of the music; the rest of his article is spent discussing the history of rock and its social and ideological associations. The social implications of rock, however, can reveal salient qualities of the music. Middleton mentions the "young" in his definition, and one can assume that the youth he describes is the youth of the 1960s. With more exploration, one discovers that the idea of youth is intertwined with rock music. Deena Weinstein writes, "Rock music and youth are inseparable. . . . From the beginning, the most significant emblem of the youth group has been its music, known first as rock and roll, then as rock."<sup>14</sup> She attributes the original popularity of rock music to the simultaneous emergence of youth culture. She implies that the many general aspects of youth that were in place at the time of its origin are the same today. She writes, "*Youth*. . . could now apply to someone of any age who upheld the values of 'youth': vitality, rebellion, sexuality, and freedom to live for the moment and to reject constraint."<sup>15</sup> One finds these aspects in the music of the Smashing Pumpkins 30 years later.

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<sup>13</sup> Middleton.

<sup>14</sup> Deena Weinstein, "Rock is Youth/Youth is Rock," in *America's Musical Pulse*, ed. Kenneth J. Bindas (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 91.

<sup>15</sup> Weinstein, 97.

However, it is not the purpose of this paper to trace the lineage of rock music or youth culture to the present day, but rather to accept the progression through time as a backdrop to the setting of this study. In other words, unless applicable to this paper, any further history and causes of rock and youth will be accepted and ignored. I am concerned with the state of both in the 1990s as a result of social conditions.

### **Youth of the 1990S**

The youth of the 1990s faced different challenges than the youth of the 1950s. Changes in the lives of young people included educational and social differences. Students were pressured in school to perform to new, higher standards. Public schools introduced nationwide standardized tests; teachers and students alike felt pressure to score well on these tests or face budget cuts.<sup>16</sup> Topics like the teaching of evolution, affirmative action, and school uniforms further polarized schools.<sup>17</sup> Yet, effects on the young were not only a result of political turmoil. The 1990s witnessed an increase in violence in schools. Although statistics show a decline in teen violence in the 1990s, there was more attention to the violence from the media. Many sources were cited as the inspiration for the violence, including music, film, and video games. Whatever the cause, American youth were at the center of the controversy, and no doubt

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Layman, ed., *1990-1999, American Decades* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, c1994-1996), 165.

<sup>17</sup> Layman, 165.

were affected because of it.

Social challenges for youth of the 1990s came from changes in the structure of the American family. *American Decades* states that “children . . . struggled to deal with the pressures of the adult world to which they were increasingly exposed; many were forced to adjust to new stepfamilies” and that “the trend toward the formation of stepfamilies continued in the 1990s. As more divorced parents remarried, the number of stepfamilies increased; by 1999 there were 5.5 million such families in the United States.”<sup>18</sup>

Although the economic effects of increased work time and divorce rates will not be assessed, the effects on the young can be hypothesized. It has been noted that fewer children spent time with both parents, and more work hours would have increased the time children spent away from one or both parents. This meant that young people would be spending more time alone, with less parental supervision to guide their leisure activities. One could also argue that the increased divorce rates created an apprehension or disillusionment with marriage or love in general. Whatever the causes, the effects were obvious: during the 1990s, “physicians wrote an estimated five hundred thousand to one million prescriptions a year for antidepressants to treat children and teenagers.”<sup>19</sup> *American Decades* continues by relating

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<sup>18</sup> Layman, 341.

<sup>19</sup> Layman, 346.

The pressure on children to behave like adults became almost irresistible during the decade . . . Half were children of divorce. As young children they worried about being abducted by strangers . . . Before they had been on a date, they had heard about the perils of AIDS. Many were exposed to drugs, gangs, and violence before they entered junior high.<sup>20</sup>

The media portrayal of youth during the decade reflects the results of this stress: a listless, depressed generation. Marc Oxoby's *The 1990s* relates, "Certainly, youths were often depicted in the media as unmotivated and apathetic, and the repetition of the notion that this was a less moral generation than the lionized ones of the past (whatever the reality might have been), may well have implanted itself in the psyches of American youths."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the portrayal of youth of the 1990s may have been less than positive. The media image of Generation X, although by the 1990s older than the 15-25 demographic, shows the negative portrayal of the young. Oxoby writes that "the notion was held that this generation was an aimless one, lacking direction in their lives, and one whose ultimate contribution to society was unknown."<sup>22</sup> Although other studies show this generation as motivated and productive, the apparent lack of direction shown by the media would have had an effect on teenagers and twenty-somethings of the time.

One can begin to see a conflict emerging when examining the issues relevant to youth in the 1990s. On one side, studies show that the young

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<sup>20</sup> Layman, 346.

<sup>21</sup> Marc Oxoby, *The 1990s* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2003), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Oxoby, 29.

accomplished more than ever. *American Decades* relates this about the youth of the era: “These were the children of the 1990s: educated, affluent, computer savvy, apparently obsessed with athletic competition, and often motivated by the dictates of consumption, fashion, and celebrity.”<sup>23</sup> That sentiment is a far cry from the stereotype of the young at the time. Oxoby writes “Unfortunately, the popular image of youth in the nineties is not a particularly positive one. Rather it is one of violence, sex, and drugs.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Alternative Music**

Although many styles of popular music flourished in the 1990s, including gangsta rap, teenie-bop, and heavy metal, the one I examine in this study is alternative. Alternative music is the category into which the Smashing Pumpkins fit, but one will find that instead of a genre based on exclusive inclusion rules, alternative music, for a while at least, was a sort of musical “other” in the 1990s. The *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* relates that “Alternative rockers differentiated themselves from their traditional rock predecessors in part with their call for greater diversity and experimentation in music, and in part with their critique of mainstream society.”<sup>25</sup> John Ulrich shares a similar idea in *GenXegesis*: “Alternative music was thus by definition not a particular musical

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<sup>23</sup> Layman, 346.

<sup>24</sup> Oxoby, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Cindy Wong, “Generation X,” in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Culture*, ed. Robert Gregg, Gary W. McDonogh, and Cindy Wong (London: Routledge, 2001), 22.

style or practice but simply music that was too innovative, avant-garde, or political for mainstream tastes.”<sup>26</sup> In *Rockin' Out*, Reebee Garofalo relates, “the term *alternative* could be used to connote opposition or resistance to established norms, or a countercultural lifestyle.”<sup>27</sup> He later describes the genre as a descendant of the punk scene of the 1970s and 80s. In his article “Communities and Scenes in Popular Music,” Will Straw describes the properties of alternative rock:

[Alternative rock's] practices, most often involving the eclectic revival and transformation of older musical forms, collectively fell under the sign of the term 'alternative'. . . Arguably, the most notable feature of alternative rock culture over the last decade or so has been the absence within it of mechanisms through which particular musical practices come to be designated as obsolete.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, alternative rock embodied a sort of postmodernism within the bounds of rock music; groups and artists borrowed from many sources, and the result was rich and original.

The roots of the alternative music can be traced to the New York City underground music scene of the 1970s. Bands like the Talking Heads and Blondie are two of many bands who founded the alternative genre.<sup>29</sup> Later, as

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<sup>26</sup> John Ulrich, “Introduction: Generation X: A (Sub)Cultural Genealogy,” in *GenXegesis: Essays on Alternative Youth (Sub)Culture*, ed. John Ulrich and Andrea L. Harris (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press/Popular Press, 2003), 48.

<sup>27</sup> Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin' Out: Popular Music in the USA*, 2d 3d. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2002), 366.

<sup>28</sup> Will Straw, “Communities and Scenes in Popular Music,” in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (London, England: Routledge, 1997), 471.

<sup>29</sup> Oxoby, 161.

alternative music gained in popularity, bands like REM, the Cure, and grunge acts like Nirvana and Soundgarden were added to the horde of alternative artists. Nirvana played an important role in the popularization of alternative music. As Oxoby relates, “And although it would be a grand generalization to suggest that Nirvana alone was the reason for this, the band's influence on the opening up of the mainstream to other kinds of music should not be underestimated.”<sup>30</sup> But as alternative gained popularity and more artists fell within its boundaries, the former musical “other” became the musical mainstream. Lead singer of REM Michael Stipe laments this in *A-X of Alternative Music*. “‘Alternative’ was a good description of bands like my band, but it became, over time, just another category. And then, of course, it became the mainstream and became as myopic as the thing it was supposedly alternative to.”<sup>31</sup> Billy Corgan shares a similar sentiment in a *Rolling Stone* interview with David Fricke. He says “My rock & roll – alternative music – has been co-opted, become[sic] something easily imitable.”<sup>32</sup> So alternative music, like all other genres before it, had its rise and fall. The interest in alternative for this study is that the Pumpkins were prolific during the peak popularity of the genre. While some opponents of the band claim that they rode the coattails of Nirvana into the spotlight, it is not my purpose

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<sup>30</sup> Oxoby, 161.

<sup>31</sup> Steve Taylor, *The A-X of Alternative Music*, with an introduction by Michael Stipe (New York, NY: Continuum, c2004), 27.

<sup>32</sup> David Fricke, “The Pumpkin King Perseveres,” *Rolling Stone*, 29 December 1998 [magazine on-line]; available from [http://www.rollingstone.com/new/story/5923089/billy\\_corgan](http://www.rollingstone.com/new/story/5923089/billy_corgan); Internet; accessed 28 March 2007.

to prove or disprove that notion. It is important to understand that the Smashing Pumpkins found their niche in the 1990s, and that they were categorized as alternative at that time.

### **The Smashing Pumpkins**

Billy Corgan formed the Smashing Pumpkins in Chicago in the late 1980s. Corgan wrote the bulk of the band's lyrics and music; he also sang and played lead guitar. James Iha played guitar and wrote several songs. During most of their time together, D'arcy Wretzky played bass and Jimmy Chamberlain played drums. They released their first single in 1989, and it was followed by their first full-length album *Gish* in 1991. The band reached the height of their popularity with *Siamese Dream* in 1993 and the double-disc *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* in 1995. At the time of their break-up in December 2000, they had six albums to their credit and had sold twenty-two million recordings.

Oxoby sums up the style of the band when writing that

The success of grunge also opened doors for bands with an equally aggressive sound that might not be strictly considered grunge. Smashing Pumpkins, for instance, developed a rather interesting sound of its own, including not only grunge, but also seventies rock and the gothic rock sound of the 1980s. Smashing Pumpkins' songs on their debut *Gish* (1991), their breakthrough recording *Siamese Dream*, and their sprawling two-disc concept album *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* were marked by deep (and often bleak) introspection and full-out rage.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Oxoby, 164.

The band became well known for their dreary lyrical content and aggressive music, and this was not lost on Brent Forrester, writer for the “Homerpalooza” episode of *The Simpsons*. The Smashing Pumpkins themselves guest starred in the episode and interacted with Homer. One exchange was informative of the reputation of the band:

Homer: Thanks to your gloomy, depressing music, my children no longer hope for the future I cannot afford to give them.  
Corgan: Yeah, we try to make a difference.<sup>34</sup>

The Pumpkins gained what David Fricke calls a “reputation as the poster band for dysfunctional America.”<sup>35</sup> With the social challenges that young people faced in the 1990s, like unsafe schools, increasing divorce rates, and a perpetuating stereotype of indifference on the part of youth, the somber lyrics and dark music of the Pumpkins helped the band appeal to youth of the 1990s. Although one will find that not all of their music contains the aforementioned bleakness, it is present in many of their songs. Before I determine the actual stylistic nuances that display these traits, I will examine the lyrics of two of the Pumpkins' songs and then how the music enhances these lyrics.

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<sup>34</sup> *The Simpsons*, *Homerpalooza*, directed by Wes Archer, written by Brent Forrester, 22 min., FOX, 16 May 1996.

<sup>35</sup> Fricke, “Smashing Pumpkins,” 1.

## CHAPTER I

### “HERE IS NO WHY”

The song “Here Is No Why” appears on the first disc, *Dawn to Dusk*, of the Pumpkins' double-disc set *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. On the surface it sounds like an interesting glimpse into the mind of a young male, and the steady rhythms and distorted guitar tones help categorize it as *rock* or *alternative rock*. Both a lyrical and musical analysis reveal much about this song; this chapter connects the music with the lyrics to show their interaction. For the purposes of this study, the song is divided into verses, choruses, and bridges. One can understand the divisions by examining the chart in Example 1, as similar lyrics connect choruses and bridges. Verses contain different lyrics, but, as is the case with the other sections as well, congruent melodic and harmonic content link them.

#### Example 1

<b>Time</b>	0:18	0:40	1:07	1:31	1:43	2:13	2:53	3:05
<b>Section</b>	Verse 1	Chorus	Verse 2	Bridge	Chorus	Verse 3	Bridge	Chorus

## Lyrics

A few words about the lyrics of the Smashing Pumpkins in general will help prepare the analysis of “Here Is No Why.” I examine the lyrics first. Although the music enhances the written word, I analyze the words themselves to determine their connection to youth. In a 1995 review of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, Jim DeRogatis discusses the lyrics of the album. “One could argue that Corgan's lyrics aren't meant to be analyzed under the microscope, that . . . they're simply intended to conjure a mood along with the music. But the vocals are much too prominent in the mix to accept that.”<sup>36</sup> Although DeRogatis goes on to criticize the Pumpkins' lyrics, his point about prominent vocals in the mix is accurate. It would be a mistake to disregard a lyrical analysis in an examination of this song, especially once one considers the interaction between music and lyrics. However, at this point only the lyrics are discussed, in order to better understand their purpose in the song.

Earlier in the same review, DeRogatis asserts that the songs on the two discs of *Mellon Collie* are bound by a common theme and are not a random batch of songs. He writes “But the twenty-eight songs on *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* aren't linked by a libretto; they're only connected conceptually through the broad theme of being part of a day in the life of a typical, alienated teen.”<sup>37</sup> Many alternative songs focus on this theme of alienation. The *St.*

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<sup>36</sup> DeRogatis, 80.

<sup>37</sup> DeRogatis, 80.

*James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* says of alternative lyrics that “isolation and loneliness were common themes which indicated an ambivalence about modern society.”<sup>38</sup> Bennett relates that “extreme metal” of the same era showed a similar preference toward lyrical content. He writes “it was subsequently shown how, during the 1990s, emergent subgenres of heavy metal, collectively referred to as extreme metal . . . largely abandoned the gendered themes of earlier metal styles, focusing instead on issues of alienation and isolation.”<sup>39</sup> I explore the metal influence on the Smashing Pumpkins later as their gloomy lyrics are akin to either style. Lyrically, the song “Here is No Why” emphasized the heavyheartedness of discontented youth.<sup>40</sup>

With the lyrics in mind, one can begin to understand the overarching viewpoint of this song. The reader can make a superficial connection to youth by finding several mentions of it in the lyrics. “Death rock boy” appears in the second line of text, and sets the tone for the imagery of the rest of the song. In a 1995 interview with David Fricke for *Rolling Stone*, Corgan admits that “there’s a lot of me in that lyric. There’s certainly an acknowledgment of that self-absorbed woe-is-me thing.”<sup>41</sup> Once one understands that, it is easy to find other references to youth. The next set of lyrics in the verse describes mascara, lipstick, and glitter, which also conjure up imagery that is not only adolescent but also goth.

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<sup>38</sup> Wong, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Bennett, 57.

<sup>40</sup> The lyrics in full can be found at <http://www.metrolyrics.com/here-is-no-why-lyrics-smashing-pumpkins.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Fricke, “Smashing Pumpkins,” 6.

The connection between material consumption and the youth experience has already been established. To say that Billy is referencing teenage consumption in this lyric may be a stretch, but the idea is youthful. The addition of the words “lost,” and “burned” taints the image of youth. That is to say, perhaps, since mascara and glitter are both products that target females, the sullied aspect of them represents a lost love for the male singer. In a broader sense, if the mention of these products is meant to convey youth in general, then the sodden modifiers depict misspent youth. In either case, something pure, love or youth, has been ruined by the worry of “being forgotten.”

Later verses find further mention of the young male character, such as “somewhere, he pulls his hair down over a frowning smile,” and “may the king of gloom be forever doomed.” Both of these lyrics support the idea of a self-absorbed, unhappy young person. The chorus continues to describe the despondent adolescent attitude with the lyric “and in your sad machines you'll forever stay, desperate and displeased with whoever you are.” This sentiment supports the imagery of the verse as well as the idea of teenage despair by insinuating that the feelings of self-loathing are permanent and not a temporary phase. Marcel Danesi expresses a similar theme of teenage disillusionment. Danesi explains in his book *My Son is an Alien* that his encounters with teens had this aspect in common: “They have invariably tried to impart to me that 'no

one else could possibly understand' what they are feeling."<sup>42</sup> It is this self-centeredness that Corgan mentions when discussing this song with Fricke. It is also interesting to note the change in person between the verses and the chorus. While the verses are in the third person, the lyrics of the chorus are in the second person. Corgan has stated that the male character of the song is based on himself. Perhaps the "you" of the chorus is directed to the listener and implies that Billy understands the plight of teenagers, as he was once there himself. This kind of connection with the lead singer of a band would attract young listeners, not only because the lyrics pertain to their lives, but also because listeners can feel a connection with Corgan. The overall gloom of the first two verses and choruses is juxtaposed with a glint of positivity in the final verse, however. Corgan reuses some material from earlier in the song: "The useless drags, the empty days. The lonely towers of long mistakes. Forgotten faces and faded loves. Sitting still was never enough!" The lyrics reinforce the notion of endless hopelessness, and they align with the idea that the perpetual despair and unchanging despondency are unproductive. Before the return of the final chorus, which repeats previous lyrics, Corgan leaves the listener with one new thought "And if you're giving in, then you're giving up." In light of the relationship between pronouns of the chorus and the verse, this line could be meant to empower the listeners to change the perceived endless cycle of despair. Perhaps from the

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<sup>42</sup> Marcel Danesi, *My Son is an Alien: A Cultural Portrait of Today's Youth* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 18.

position of his own adolescent experience he is conveying that doing nothing about one's deplorable position will not rectify the situation. He expresses that lamenting one's plight with no action is acceptance of it, and to do so is unsatisfactory.

Since the lyrics are perhaps the most tangible carrier of meaning in "Here Is No Why," it is important that they are understandable to the Smashing Pumpkins' audience. It is interesting to note that the lyrics of this song straddle the line of being imaginative and simple. While they are abstract, the imagery that they conjure is accessible to the young mind. The possible effects of this understandability are at least twofold. First, parts of the symbolism and meaning would be available to the listener on the first few listening sessions. One can choose to listen superficially and still glean some meaning from the song. However, because the lyrics are at least somewhat conceptual, they can be analyzed on following listening sessions to glean further meaning. In the case of the lyrical analyst, it can be found that the notions presented in the lyrics are youthful. Since the words are such that they could be understood by the audience they concern, it would not have hindered the appeal to youth.

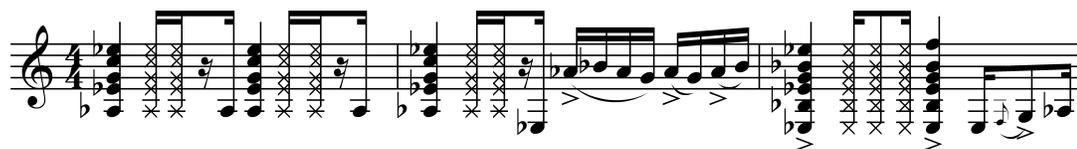
### **Musical Enhancement of the Text**

It has already been shown that the lyrics emphasize teenage apathy, and with further musical analysis, one can see that the music paired with the words

enhances the meaning of the song.

The song opens with a short introduction of the rhythmic ostinato figure that is played through much of the verse. The opening measures of the song create an awkward, stumbling introduction. Two sixteenth notes of muted string strums follow the opening chord, as seen in Example 2.

### Example 2



This figure continues throughout the introduction and verses of the song, and it gives a loping, tripping feel to the music. The music is accented on beats 1 and 3; these beats receive emphasis not only because of their duration, but also because they are the beats with pitch material. The bass plays Ab on these beats as well, reinforcing the accent on them. However, the drums accent beats 2 and 4, which furthers the awkwardness of the introduction, as it creates friction between the two parts.

The tempo is slow at 80 beats per minute, and harmonically the song oscillates between Abmaj7 and Eb every two measures.<sup>43</sup> To further the feeling

<sup>43</sup> Since the Smashing Pumpkins often tuned their guitars and basses down one half step, it is likely that the sounding chords are one half step lower than the fretted chords. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will focus on what is heard.

of imbalance, the phrases of the introduction and verse are three measures long. This is unusual, as a listener usually expects an even number of measures in a phrase. When the Db chord is played, the meter changes to 7/8, which heightens the asymmetry of the introduction. This figure appears in Example 3.

### Example 3



All of this combines to prepare the listener for the opening lyrics in the first verse “The useless drag of another day, the endless drags of a death rock boy.” In other words, Corgan has enhanced the lyric by creating a musical background that embodies the feeling of adolescent listlessness and teenage ennui. The lyric itself could be paired with different accompanying rhythms to evoke another emotion, but the chosen rhythms emphasize the words “useless” and “endless drags.” Even the harmonic motion reinforces the notion of laziness: the song oscillates between I and V in Ab major, with only a short excursion to IV5 at the ends of the phrases. It is a simple progression, but effective in creating an awkward feel. After the oscillation between tonic and dominant in the introduction, the non-functional movement from V-IV5 sounds out of place. All of

the chords in the verse contain unresolved dissonances which add to the graceless quality of the simple harmonic motion. Even the short break from strummed chords reinforces this text setting. The figure centers around Ab, which is played on four of the eight sixteenth-notes as displayed in Example 4.1.

#### Example 4

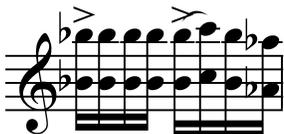
Ex. 4.1



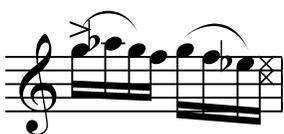
Ex. 4.2



Ex. 4.3



Ex. 4.4



Ex. 4.5



In the next lyric, Corgan addresses the teenager's fear of infinite gloom: "And in your sad machines, you'll forever stay, desperate and displeased, with whoever you are." The long duration of the word "stay" reinforces the word's meaning and an implied shift to the relative minor key of F reinforces the melancholy of the lyrics. The vocal melody with a rhythmically reduced accompaniment appear in Example 5.

### Example 5

Example 5 shows a musical score for the lyrics "And in your sad machines you'll forever stay". The score consists of a vocal melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The key signature has one flat (Bb), and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal melody is in a simple, slow-moving line. The bass line consists of block chords. Below the bass line, chord symbols are provided for both Ab and Eb.

Ab:	vi5	I5	V	vi5	I5	V
Eb:	ii5	IV5	I	ii5	IV5	I

Although the shift may sound angry rather than sad, as the texture thickens with the addition of more distortion and an added guitar, this could represent a young person's dissatisfaction with his or her present situation, and the frustration of being unable to change it. In the chorus, another neighbor tone figure occurs over the Eb chord after "in your sad machines." It serves not only to remind the listener of the awkwardness of the verse, but also to create a cohesiveness that holds the song together. Once again, it centers around the fifth of Eb major and



The next new musical material in the bridge also features an interesting instance of text painting. The words “king of gloom” appear on a descent from  $\text{^4}$  to  $\text{^1}$ . Since “gloom” is the lowest note of the figure, its setting enhances the meaning of the word. However, it is also notable that Corgan sings “king” on the highest note of this phrase, which highlights it in the texture and gives it a sense of importance. The juxtaposition of the low and high notes also accent the sense of irony in the title “king of gloom.” The descending motion also highlights the sarcastic nature of this line and it is shown in Example 7. A similar occurrence takes place on the repeat of the bridge, when the same descending figure sets the words “giving in.” In the context of the song, these words sound desperate after the triumphant guitar solo. They are a reminder of the imagery that has appeared throughout the rest of the song. Corgan follows these words by singing “then you're giving up.” This phrase is illustrated in Example 7, and shows the descending figure for “giving in,” and the directional emphasis for “giving up.” Corgan sings “up” on two of the highest notes of this section.

### Example 7

And if you're giving in, May the king of gloom be for - ev - er doomed then you're giving up -

The third verse has several salient musical qualities. First, the melody is the same as in the first verse. The lyrics in both measures are congruent. However, instead of continuing like the melody in the first verse, Corgan repeats the same melody three times. The words change, but the repetition of the notes creates a feeling of musical stagnancy. The song has lost its sense of direction in this verse. Not only does the melody repeat, but the rest of the music has ceased to move as well. One finds that the harmony has come to rest on an Abmaj7 chord and swirling guitar textures replace the strict, plodding rhythm. The lyrics fit perfectly: "The useless drags, the empty days. The lonely towers of long mistakes. Forgotten faces and faded loves." The lyrics tell of a life with no obvious direction or purpose, and the music enhances this feeling by avoiding a goal-oriented progression. To counter this sentiment however, Corgan surprises the listener with a change of direction at the end of the verse. In this measure one hears the reaction to the stagnancy of the previous five measures: "Sitting still was never enough!" The music that is paired with these words is as defiant as the lyric itself. Although "sitting still" sounds like it will continue the same melody that has been sung in each of the three previous measures, that part of the melody is the only similarity. Following those words, it shifts to F5 and continues to G5 above that. In this measure the guitar regains a stronger sense of rhythmic motion as well, as it begins to play eighth and sixteenth notes, a stark contrast to the psychedelic effects that have been heard in the rest of the third

verse. The guitar solo continues to reflect the words “sitting still was never enough!” Not only does the guitar solo start on beat 1 with the highest note of the song up to this point, but it also features a change in harmony and texture. The solo has several other interesting qualities; Corgan incorporates elements of Example 4.1 in it. One finds an allusion to the neighboring figure on the second beat of the third measure of the guitar solo, and one hears the figure in full three measures later. Here the pitches are one octave higher than the introduction. These figures can be found in Example 4.4. The use of this neighboring figure in the solo provides something familiar in the midst of otherwise new material.

The words “Sitting still was never enough” give the solo its initial burst of life, but the intensity builds until the return of the bridge. Not only is the texture of the song the thickest during the solo, but also beginning at 2:46, both guitars ascend to the highest notes of the song. The harmonic motion of the solo increases to one measure alternations of Eb and Ab major. If “sitting still was never enough,” then the song has broken the cycle, even for a brief nine measure guitar solo.

The harmonic structure of the song is nebulous throughout. The first harmonic note of interest in “Here Is No Why” is the key. The song starts on an Abmaj7 chord and the harmonic movement of the introduction implies I-V in Ab major. Db follows Eb at the end of the phrase, which strengthens the claim for a tonic of Ab. Although the effect of the authentic cadence lessens with the

movement of V-IV, the progression of V-IV-I is not uncommon to rock music. The progression of the verse is the same as the introduction, and the addition of the vocal melody solidifies the claim of Ab major. In fact, the melody of the first verse uses only notes from the Ab major pentatonic collection. The chorus features an implied change to F minor, the relative key to Ab major. However, the chorus should be considered a tonicization rather than a full modulation when considering the lack of a dominant-tonic relationship in F minor. Instead the progression changes to i-III-VII in F minor. It is possible to consider the Ab5 chord in the chorus as an extension of the F5 chord.

It is in the chorus that one finds the first support for harmonic ambiguity in the song. Although one can understand the progression of the chorus as vi-I-V in Ab, there is some support for a tonic of Eb. If one considers Eb as the tonal center, then the progression becomes ii-IV-I, which is found in other Pumpkins' songs. One finds that in the chorus, Eb major receives more emphasis than other chords. Not only does the Eb major chord receive the longest duration in this section, but it is also the only complete chord. The third of the chord is present in the strummed part, and on the word "stay," G is brought out of the texture by the vocal part and doubled by the lead guitar. The other chords of the section appear only as a root, fifth, and octave.

The bridge contains the next new harmonic material. This section reinforces the verse key area of Ab major. Again Db5 precedes Ab5, a IV-I

progression as heard in the introduction. The Eb5 chord at the end of the bridge can still be heard as V in Ab major, in which case the following F5 is vi in the same key. This deceptive cadence allows the arrival of the second chorus to fit harmonically without sounding out of place. When the third verse begins, sheer duration reinforces Ab major as the tonic. However, when the solo starts, the harmony shifts every measure between Eb major and Ab major.

The remaining portions of the song contain previous material, until the end when the harmony takes a surprising turn. The last three measures of the song mimic the first three in the introduction. However, on the penultimate measure, instead of moving from I-V as in the introduction, the bass moves from Ab to Bb before finishing on Eb. When listening to the song, the final progression acts as a perfect authentic cadence.

The significance of the cloudy key areas is that the song flirts with two of them, but does not commit to one or the other until the final cadence. In this way the harmony reinforces the lyrics of the song. "In your sad machines, you'll forever stay," and "lost inside the dreams of teen machines" are both phrases that imply personal stasis, and the vague harmonic direction enhances that notion. The uncertainty apparent in the harmony coincides with the despair of feeling lost indicated in the lyrics; the merger of these two factors elevates the perplexity of each. When listening to the song, the most surprising chord is the

C5 at the bridge. At that moment, the aggressive sound of the guitars can be heard as underscoring “the king of gloom.” When the guitar solo arrives, it is further set apart by a slight harmonic shift from Ab major to Eb major, which adds to the effect of the lyrics at that point as well: “Sitting still was never enough!” enhances the shift to a new key area during the guitar solo.

Since the music in many instances enhances the meaning of the lyrics, it is critical that they are understandable to the listener during the first several listening sessions. Corgan has taken care to not obscure the pronunciation and meaning of the lyrics in several manners. First, the melody features very few melismatic passages; the lyrics are paired syllabically with the melody. In some instances a single syllable is held over two or three pitches, but that occurs at most one time per phrase. Not only does the syllabic text setting make the lyrics more understandable, it also makes them easier to sing along with. Although the effects of singing along to a song have not been proved to attract young people to music, it is a common practice and no doubt helps a listener to connect with the music. A catchy, singable melody will attract listeners more than repel them.

The nature of slurred melodic notes also helps to enhance the meaning and feeling of the lyrics. In all cases except for one, which will be discussed shortly, the held syllable moves down in pitch. In other words, the movement between pitches slurred over one word or syllable is descending. An instance of this can be seen in Example 7 on the words “giving” and “up.” It appears on the



The larger melodic shapes of the vocal line increase the effect created by the descending slurred notes and falls in the melody. Throughout the verse and chorus of the song, the melody descends on lyrics that express listlessness. The other type of descending phrase appears throughout the first two verses. In this kind of phrase, which appears after a measure-long descent, the melody descends for half of the measure, and then leaps up a perfect fourth only to come back down. The significance of this figure is not that it descends twice to double the gloomy effect, but that the melody highlights certain words in the text when it leaps up. The words “death,” “restless,” “cannot,” and “never” are all brought out in the melody, and all of these words carry at least some negative connotation. The interrupted descent also preserves the effect of the repeated full descent for the third verse, which helps build tension for the climax.

The treatment of non-chord tones in the melody serves to add to its singability. Most of the non-chord tones throughout the song are either a complete or incomplete neighbor note of some sort. This also holds true for the slurred notes. In the case of the interrupted descent in the verses, the leap to F5 resolves downward by step to a chord-tone, which keeps the melody easy to sing and sounding smooth. The only other type of non-chord tones in the song are the passing tones and anticipations in the verse. In both cases they are approached and resolved appropriately, which maintains the singability of the song.

Corgan uses a limited number of non-chord tones in the song, but he uses them frequently. This means that not only is the melody simple enough to be catchy and singable, but also that it has enough color to be interesting. A further examination of the pitch content allows the analyst to find that each section of the song is separated from the others by way of different pitch sets. One will find that this not only regulates the number of non-chord tones, but also helps move the song toward the climax.

Most of each verse is comprised of five pitch classes. They form the Ab pentatonic set {Ab, Bb, C, Eb, F} which strengthens the claim for an Ab major key in the verses. This also limits the non-chord tone possibilities, considering that the underlying harmony is Abmaj7 and Eb major. An instance of this set can be found in Example 6. The second five-note set appears at the end of each verse and chorus, paired with the words “of being forgotten,” “with whoever you are,” and “over to you.” It is the first five notes of the Ab major scale, {Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb} and is a separate set because of its appearance as a transitional measure between sections.

The notes of the chorus, {Eb, F, G, Bb, C} form the Eb major pentatonic collection. Although the key area here seems to shift to F minor, it adds to the overall struggle between Ab major and Eb major. The Eb major pentatonic set adds support to the notion that the key center changes to Eb for the choruses, which foreshadows the perfect authentic cadence in Eb major in the final

measure. The Eb pentatonic set is also illustrated in Example 5.

The final point of interest addressing the pitch content of “Here Is No Why” lies again at the climax of the song. Throughout the rest of the song, each section is made up of only five pitch classes. The verse contains the Ab major pentatonic collection, the chorus contains Eb major pentatonic. The transitional measures are another pentachord build on Ab, and the bridge is comprised of five pitches as well, {Ab, C, Db, Eb, F}. There is one stray note at the beginning of the first and second choruses, and the only time an additional note appears in the middle of a section is at the climax. On the word “enough,” in the third verse, the vocal melody rises to G5, which adds a sixth note to the pentachord, forming the diatonic hexachord {Ab, Bb, C, Eb, F, G}. Although the note lies within the key of Ab major, the addition of a sixth note at the climax of the song is significant. If “sitting still was never enough,” then neither were five notes to express the climatic release in this measure. The addition of the sixth note to the set is illustrated in Example 8.

The discussion of the lyrics in Chapter 1 shows a connection between the words and the youth of the 1990s. Now one can see that the music enhances the meaning of the words that Corgan wrote. Many of the compositional choices made by the band for the music of the song, including asymmetrical meters, melodic motives, rhythms, and harmonies showcase the teenage listlessness described in the lyrics.

## CHAPTER II

### “TALES OF A SCORCHED EARTH”

“Tales of a Scorched Earth” appears on the second disc of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. It stands out as a song that captures extreme frustration and angst, which appeals to disenchanting youth who feel the same kinds of emotions. Like “Here Is No Why,” the lyrics will be examined first, followed by an analysis of the musical methods used to enhance the words. In the conclusion to this chapter, aspects of the two songs will be compared. This comparison will demonstrate how the songs use different techniques to capture different meanings. Peter Christenson supports the idea of the lyrics being at the forefront of a song in *It's Not Only Rock & Roll: Popular Music in the Lives of Adolescents* when he writes “attention to lyrics is highest among fans of oppositional or controversial music. . . The more defiant, alienated, and threatening to the mainstream a music type is, the more attention its audience pays to the words.”<sup>44</sup> An examination of the lyrics and the music shows this song to be quite oppositional, a trait potentially detectable on the first listen.

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Christenson, *It's Not Only Rock & Roll: Popular Music in the Lives of Adolescents*, (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1998), 3.

## Lyrics

The sectional delineations of “Tales of a Scorched Earth” can be found in Example 9.<sup>45</sup>

### Example 9

<b>Time</b>	0:00	0:28	0:59	1:21	1:29	1:51	2:15	2:32	3:03	3:18	3:37
<b>Section</b>	Intro	Verse 1	Chorus	Guitar Solo 1	Verse 2	Chorus	Bridge	Guitar Solo 2	Verse 3	Chorus	Outro

The lyrics of the song are perhaps the most rage-filled in the entire Pumpkins library. Although other songs express despondency and disconnectedness, in this song all-out rage replaces feelings of ennui. The song focuses on the singer; there are very few mentions of the ominous “you” that is present throughout other Pumpkins songs. The lyrics concern the singer’s feeling of disconnection to the rest of the world. Although not a narrative, the song reveals more about the anger as it progresses. At the start it is self-righteous: “Let me be. Let me die inside.” The lyric “Cause the die is cast, and the bitch is back” alludes to the feeling that some other force, the die in this case, controls the singer’s eventual outcome and that now his anger, the bitch, has returned. This is a song expressing the frustration of life after “a shattered past,” and the repetition of unfortunate events. Corgan also expresses that he

<sup>45</sup> The lyrics to “Tales of a Scorched Earth” can be found in the lyric booklet accompanying the official release of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* or at <http://www.metrolyrics.com/tales-of-a-scorched-earth-lyrics-smashing-pumpkins.html>

believes there is no one there to save him from his circumstances, not even his parents. The final verse implies that even though he “[tried] to dare, to dare for a little more,” that he was unsatisfied and now feels empty and angry.

The song expresses feelings of despondency with phrases like “I lie just to be real and I'd die just to feel,” “Why do the same old things keep on happening?,” and “We're all dead.” The lyrics are dark, and touch upon feelings of self-deprecation. “You're all whores and I'm a fag” and “We're all dead” not only point a finger at others but also blame the self. While not introspective, the lyrics do capture the frustrated rage of an adolescent: directionless, indulgent, and sometimes aimed inward.

Certain word choices in the song also increase the feeling of anger. Strong language is present in the Pumpkins' catalog, but it is rare. The inclusion of curse words is important to note, since it raises the level of animosity in the song. The words “bitch” and “fag” are also scarce in their music. Both are used in a self-referencing, depreciative manner, and are each derogative slang terms for a weak male figure. Their use augments the feeling of self-abuse felt throughout the song. While the language in “Tales of a Scorched Earth” is less abrasive than in other songs of the era, it could be considered offensive by some. The attitude of the song, however, seems uncaring for the feelings of others, and the strong language reflects that. In the mind of adolescents, their anger is paramount, as they may disregard the opinions and feelings of others.

Like "Here Is No Why," "Tales of a Scorched Earth" deserves a lyrical analysis. Since the vocals of the song are heavily distorted, which clouds the syntax, Corgan has taken care to write lyrics that can overcome the distortion that obscures them by using frequent one syllable words. The delivery is very straightforward, and the distortion is the only factor that could hinder syntactical understanding. The words are set syllabically for the most part as well, which keeps them short and punchy. The short length of the words adds to the anger of the song, as eloquence or verbosity would quench some of the fire of the meaning, or at least potentially sound out of place.

A complete rhyme analysis would provide little insight for a direct connection to youth, but recognizing some of the poetic devices that Corgan used helps one discern lyrical structure in the song. Alliteration appears in the phrase "kiss the kids," and in the same line the words "bless" and "kiss" link consonantly. The rhyme scheme of the chorus is interesting, as "I lie just to be real and I'd die just to feel" contains not only end rhyme, but also internal rhyme on the words "lie" and "die." While these techniques do not provide a direct connection to youth, their use creates a stronger coherence in the song, which would not have repelled young listeners.

### **Musical Enhancement of the Text**

While there are several instances of text-painting apparent in this song, it is best to examine the style of the music in conjunction with the lyrics. The contrasts in this song exemplify the Smashing Pumpkins' style. In interviews, Corgan spoke of the contrast of loud and soft, which is evident in this song, but dynamics are not the only means of contrast.<sup>46</sup> I explore the effect of contrasting dynamics, as well as other factors, in Chapter 3.

“Tales of a Scorched Earth” is the most aggressive song on *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, and is among the most aggressive song the Pumpkins ever wrote. The music gains its angry tone through several means. First, the guitars are heavily distorted and tuned down an entire step.<sup>47</sup> Detuning the guitars adds to the darker tone created by the distortion effects. In this case, the detuning is a sonic effect just as reverb or delay could be.

The song is riff-based, and is comprised of three riffs. Riff 1 appears at the start of the song and is a rhythmic pattern based on D and E. It features syncopation that creates a driving, repetitive feel. Riff 1 is shown in Example 10.1. One first hears Riff 2 as the accompaniment for the verses and appears as Example 10.2. Although not as simple as Riff 1, its movement is based on rhythm rather than harmony. There is a slight v-l motion from measure to measure, but

<sup>46</sup> Billy Corgan, “Song Composition and Arranging,” *Guitar World*, October 1995 quoted in The Smashing Pumpkins, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, transcribed by Andy Aledort and Hemme Luttjeboer (Miami, FL: Warner Brother Publications, 1996), 8.

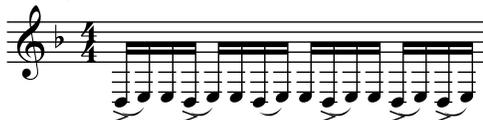
<sup>47</sup> The Smashing Pumpkins, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, transcribed by Andy Aledort and Hemme Luttjeboer (Miami, FL: Warner Brother Publications, 1996), 173.

the entire figure can be understood as an arpeggiation of the Dm chord. Riff 1 is harmonically ambiguous; it could be heard as D major or D minor. With the introduction of Riff 2, the song alludes to D minor. However, the major third that appears on the first beat of every subsequent measure of Riff 2 foreshadows the struggle of major and minor that appears later in the song. Upon the first listen, however, it provides a little color to the otherwise dark riff and does not overpower the audible D minor key area present in these measures.

Riff 3 begins at the chorus and furthers the harmonic duality hinted at in Riff 2. Until this point, the song has been heard in D minor. However, at the chorus, the guitar begins outlining an ascending D major scale. To add to that, F#5 begins appearing in the vocal part during the chorus. The significance and relation to youth of this harmonic struggle will be discussed later in conjunction with other methods the Smashing Pumpkins used to express the duality of youth in this song. For now it is important to understand and recognize the use of the different riffs present throughout the song. They are rhythmically driving but harmonically stagnant. Riff 3 appears in Example 10.3.

### Example 10

Ex. 10.1



Ex. 10.2



Ex. 10.3

D5      E5      F#5      G5      A5      B5

C5      C#5

These aspects of the music underscore the aura of disillusion and anger present in the lyrics, and sometimes that is enough to enhance the meaning of a song. Even in this case the music is effective in conveying the same feelings of aggression, but further investigation shows that Corgan paints the text in several other manners that further enhance its meaning.

Although Corgan screams the vocals throughout the song, he does make an effort to apply some melody to the words. The screaming indicates that perhaps he desired to perform the lyrics with the same anger they convey semantically. Despite the distortion on the vocals, they are still understandable and audible in the mix. In this way, the meaning of the lyrics was paramount to

Corgan, and the music served to enhance their meaning. The first instance of direct text painting occurs at the start of the first verse at :28. At this point one finds musical material that is new and never recurs in other places in the song. Corgan sings the words “Farewell, goodnight, last one out turn out the lights” over G5. The rhythm has slowed here, and the harmony has changed as well. These two measures represent, perhaps, the last bastion of sanity in a song that is filled with hatred and chaos. Even the lyrics imply that the song plunges into something darker following the stint over G5. Indeed it does, as Riff 2 returns, which underscores the lyrics “Let me be, let me die inside. Let me know the way through this world of hate in you.”

Up until the chorus, the song has been comprised of riffs that create a D minor centricity. Even in the short interlude at the end of the verse, the chords are centric to D minor. At the chorus, however, the guitar allude to the D major scale. Corgan sings “I lie just to be real” which makes the switch more interesting. Although the listener cannot hear the allusion to D major until the F# power chord, Corgan has matched the lyric with the raised ^3 to enhance the switch. After this in the chorus, he sings “die” in a lower register, which adds the emphasis of descent to the word. The guitar changes registers in the same measure; instead of continuing up in pitch, the B power chord is down an octave, which further enhances the word “die.” The registral change can be seen in the third measure of Example 10.3.

The second verse contains no specific instances of text painting until the four transitional measures leading back into the chorus. It is here that the song turns to a harmonic progression that implies centricity in D and alludes to functional harmony. One finds another intimation of D major here, however, since the vocal part fills in the major third of the D5 power chord in the guitar part. It is appropriate that the words in these measures are “to save me from the wasted, save me from myself.” They are a continuation of the lyric “I’ve got no mother and I’ve got no dad,” which indicate that the singer has no one to rescue him from his own perils. The short harmonic progression combined with the I chord implies that salvation could have been possible. These measures appear with a rhythmic reduction in the accompaniment in Example 11.

### Example 11

To save me from the wasted, to save me from my-self.

d: I III5 VI5 IV5

One finds a similar technique after the second chorus in the bridge.

The bridge is the longest section of the song without the use of riffs. Instead, harmonic motion drives it. The first significant aspect of this new driving factor is that the motion is on G minor, which is reminiscent of the measures in G at the start of the first verse. At that time the listener sensed a departure from that chord as well as any brightness in the lyrics, but it returns at the bridge. Although these measures are not harmonically functional, they do outline movement through chords diatonic to G minor and G major. Ascending thirds over a G pedal in the guitar part create this motion. A rhythmic reduction appears in Example 12.

### Example 12

The musical notation for Example 12 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in the treble clef and contains a melodic line starting on G4, followed by a half note G4 with a bar line, then an A4 note, and finally a B4 note. The lower staff is in the bass clef and contains a bass line starting on G3, followed by an A3 note, then a B3 note, and finally a C4 note. The chords Gm, Am, G, and C are indicated below the bass line.

This figure creates a similar sense of harmonic uncertainty that is present in other sections of the song as well. Between the verse and chorus, there was a struggle between D minor and D major and in the bridge there is a shift between

G minor and G major. Even after the shift from darkness to light in the song, there is still a sense of conflict present, which the modal shift between minor and major emphasizes.

The lyrics in this section are not present in the official lyric booklet provided with the album. However, Corgan is not singing nonsensical words. To match the harmonic and style shift of these measures, Corgan has changed the tone of the vocals. They are melodious rather than screamed, and the meaning of the lyrics has changed as well. These lyrics sound almost hopeful when compared to the rest of the song, which the style change enhances. However, at 2:25 familiar music replaces the harmonic movement of the previous measures. The tone of the lyrics begins to shift as well: "No one is ever gone" seems to imply that Corgan's angry side, which has remained restrained for five measures, has begun to return. "And time is everything and I have none" gives the impression that the niceties of the bridge were a waste of time, or that Corgan has little patience for the people and things that make him angry. In either case, as the tone of the lyrics begins to change, the tone of the singer's voice changes as well. Screams replace pitches, and in the guitar parts chords revert back to Riff 1 of the song. It is interesting not only that the Pumpkins did not print the lyrics from the bridge, but also that the music obscures them. Perhaps Corgan, in such a rage, is reluctant to admit that he had ever felt differently than at the present. It is important to realize the meaning of the lyrics though, because not

only does it enhance the switch to a more harmonically driven style, but also because it adds dimension to the song. This will be discussed more later, along with the other facets of duality that are present in this song.

Beginning at the noisy guitar solo, Riff 1 is played for 8 measures, the most it has been heard since the opening measures of the song. Since Riff 1 is the most rhythmically driving and least harmonically functional of all the riffs of the song, it is appropriate that this plunge back into darkness contains many repetitions of this riff. The guitar solo over these measures comprises fewer structured guitar licks and more noise and effects than in other Pumpkins songs. As with the short solo before the second verse, the guitar sounds ad libbed. The complexity lies not in virtuosity in this case, however, but in the randomness of the sound. The heavy effects also serve to obscure any pitch content present in the solos. These noisy guitar interludes fit with the style of the song and lyrics. The sound and lack of harmonic or melodic motion in the guitar interludes leaves them feeling at least somewhat directionless. They sound angry, but never seem to move through that anger, much like most of the song itself.

The final example of text-painting occurs before the third verse. Beginning at 2:47, Riff 1 ends. The lead guitar is still audible, and is playing a combination of feedback and torn-speaker effects. The bass plays Riff 1, but the drums have dropped out except for the high-hat. The song sounds like it has slowed down, and Corgan sings "Everyone's lost, just waiting to be found. And everyone's a

thought just waiting to fade.” These lyrics fit the atmosphere of the song at this point; rhythm, which was the driving force behind most of the song, has ceased to move it forward. Even any implied melodic motion is lost, as at this point Corgan speaks the lyrics. With no harmonic or melodic motion, and little rhythm of which to speak, it sounds like the song is lost. The return of the verse also signals a return of the elements that drove the song. It plays out with no text-painting outside the realm of music that matches the tone of the lyrics. The chorus, however, has a new set of lyrics at the very end when the word “reasons” replaces “feelings.” The new lyrics, “Beyond my hopes, there are no reasons,” are a final indication of the directionless nature of the singer's angst. However, the song remains self-righteous to the end, even after the realization that the emotional release was self-indulgent.

Analyzing both songs has revealed much about their meanings. However, even more can be discovered about them by comparing their content. With a comparison of the lyrics, the text enhancement, and the contrast within each song, more surfaces about their individual qualities. While “Tales of a Scorched Earth” and “Here Is No Why” have some similarities, their contrasts showcase some of the diversity present in the music of the Smashing Pumpkins. In the final part of this chapter I explore the differences between the two songs and show how those differences might attract an audience of young people. I examine the lyrics of both songs first, since they are the most accessible to the

listener.

I find the lyrics of both songs to be depressing. Each contains elements of youth dissatisfaction, but both the method of expression and the level of intensity present in the lyrics differ from song to song. Chapter 1 explained how “Here Is No Why” is indicative of adolescent apathy. Themes of restlessness and angst have been shown in the lyrics, but these topics were coupled with a sense of detachment. The audience feels a coolness behind the lyrics that indicates the singer is either indifferent about his situation or complacent. Along with this rather low level of depression is the slight glint of hope present in the lyrics at the climax, “Sitting still was never enough!,” and the final lyrics of the song, “If you're giving in, then you're giving up.” While the delivery of these lyrics will be discussed more later, the hopefulness in them should not be ignored.

The downtrodden lyrics of “Tales of a Scorched Earth” would appeal to alienated youth in much the same way that the apathetic lyrics of “Here Is No Why” did. However, in “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” hate replaces any ounce of hope or laziness. Themes of extreme isolation and self-abuse are present, and while the lyrics may suggest that the singer believes his situation will not change, he has not accepted it. The strong language reinforces the anger in the lyrics that is not present in “Here Is No Why,” but that is not the only difference in the lyrics of the two songs. The only words describing emotion in “Here Is No Why” is the phrase “sad machines.” It appears several times, and colors the song with

discontent. There is little to imply anger, however, which is the overruling emotion present in the lyrics of “Tales of a Scorched Earth.” While the notion of dissatisfaction with repetition is present in the lyric “Why do the same old things keep on happening?” The subject's reaction to it is much more volatile. This difference is exhibited in the stronger language in “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” which not only includes swearing, but also mentions a “world of hate,” “no feelings,” and the topic of death and dying. The different styles of the two songs increase the difference of tone heard in the lyrics.

Before involving musical aspects, it is interesting to note the use of pronouns in the songs. Both songs rely on the use of first-person pronouns in their delivery. This is not uncommon for Corgan; his lyrics are confessional, and thus reflect his own feelings. Amy Hanson, in her Smashing Pumpkins biography *Tales of a Scorched Earth*, describes Corgan's lyrical style as “confessional and urgent, brutal and raw, untried and forceful, had a dynamism that had scarcely dared show its face in a decade, peeling back to the days when singers were not ashamed to speak of their own selves, rather than disguise their emotions beneath a cold, supine whine.”<sup>48</sup> His words, as personal as they are, allow for a certain amount of empathy. That is to say, a young listener could be led to believe that Corgan feels or has felt the same as emoted in a song. Because of the ambiguity in the lyrics, a variety of listener interpretations is possible.

Christenson writes that, like Corgan's lyrics, lyrics of other alternative songs

<sup>48</sup> Amy Hanson, *Tales of a Scorched Earth*, (London: Helter Skelter Publishing, 2004), 40.

contain “many references to a 'you,' but a 'you' that could easily be a father, a friend, or a stranger as a romantic partner.<sup>49</sup> However, the ambiguity in the pronouns allows for a variety of interpretations in both songs. “Here Is No Why” is notable after considering the shift between second- and third-person pronouns. The switch blurs the line of Corgan as writer and singer. As the song progresses, it becomes unclear about whom Corgan is singing. Does he sing about his past self, the former “death rock boy” or about a person listening to the song? Do the sad machines in which “you'll forever stay” belong to that same listener, as the second-person pronoun suggests, or to someone else? Similar questions can be asked about “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” although Corgan only uses first-person pronouns in that song. The questions do not need to be answered to have a valid understanding of the lyrics, in fact, it is the question that helps them further connect to a youth audience. In this way, the young listener can relate the lyrics of the songs to his or her own life in several different ways. Perhaps, when hearing “Here Is No Why,” listeners imagine themselves as the “hidden diamond[s] you cannot find,” or that Corgan sympathizes with sadness that feels like it will never end. Another possible interpretation, from a more mature listener, is that Corgan is reflecting on his own days as the King of Gloom and, from a position of experience, relates that frustration does not disappear, that something must be done about it. Either interpretation, and many others, are viable. The multiple meanings of the lyrics of these songs would allow young

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<sup>49</sup> Christenson, 132.

listeners to capture a host of emotions when listening to them.

“Tales of a Scorched Earth” is open ended, as well, but the end results of each interpretation are similar. The lyrics can be understood from Corgan's point of view; it is his anger and the song is a therapeutic outpouring of it. Another interpretation allows the listener to become the person feeling the anger, and can then apply all the first-person pronouns to him or herself. In either case the end result is a cathartic usage of the song. The interpretations are limited in “Tales of a Scorched Earth” because the emotion that is tapped for its content is a much simpler one than in “Here Is No Why.” For “Tales,” the seething rage that Corgan conveys is more straightforward than the apathetic-but-hopeful feeling in “Here Is No Why.” The music of “Here Is No Why” reflects the lyrical complexities the song. The directness of lyrics and music is congruent in “Tales of a Scorched Earth.”

It has already been shown that, in a variety of methods, the music of these Smashing Pumpkins songs enhances the lyrics. Like the difference in lyric tone, examining the difference in music between the songs is helpful in gleaning a deeper understanding of each.

It is pertinent to revisit the awkwardness of “Here Is No Why.” The main attributes that created the tripped-up, loping sensation in the song were the guitar rhythm coupled with the muted strings, the three measure phrase length, and the measure of 7/8 which interrupts the already irregular flow. One finds that, when

compared to a song like “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” these attributes become amplified. The slower tempo further exacerbates the awkwardness. Likewise, the straightforwardness of “Tales” is magnified when compared to “Here Is No Why.” While the rhythms in “Tales” are syncopated and contain an aspect of hemiola, it drives them forward rather than tripping them up. Phrases are four measures long and only one measure deviates from common time. These aspects become a point of interest when considering that they do not hinder the anger that fuels the song. One can imagine that, bogged down in irregular phrase length and metric shifts, the song could have lost some of the driving rage that is present in the recorded version.

Corgan's delivery of the lyrics furthers the differences in lyrical content. Since, as has been shown with an examination of text painting and style enhancement, the music often enhances lyrical meaning, both vocal and instrumental characteristics will be compared to show the diversity present between the two songs. The first difference is the level of distortion throughout the song. While “Here Is No Why,” does feature some distortion on the guitars, it is not as heavy as in “Tales,” which features distortion heavy enough to obscure some of the guitar parts. “Tales” also features distortion on the vocals which, when paired with Corgan's screaming, is a far cry from the descending melodies of “Here Is No Why.” The effect of both distortion and screaming is simple and effective; both serve to further the enhancement of the lyrics throughout the

song. The clear harmonies and vocal melodies of “Here Is No Why” also serve to foreshadow its hopeful ending. Its complex musical aspects serve to reflect the deeper lyrical content, while the bleakness of “Tales of a Scorched Earth” is present throughout the entire song.

Another discrepancy is the use of harmony and riffs in the songs. “Here Is No Why” features a few riffs, but it is harmonically-driven, and the riffs serve to color these harmonies. “Tales,” however, uses riffs to drive its movement. The disparity here reinforces the difference in vocal delivery style, but it also helps determine the direction of each song. The riff-basis of “Tales” changes the focus of the music from pitch to rhythm. This focus coincides with the heavy distortion and screaming that occurs in the song as well, and amplifies the disparate lyrical content of the two songs. Furthermore, the riff based content of “Tales” shows the metal influence of the song, which will be explored more in Chapter 3.

The style of each song has been shown to match the lyrical content in different manners. In both songs, however, individual elements of text-painting provide musical support for specific lyrics. An examination and comparison of the techniques used in each song show that the Pumpkins used several methods to enhance the text.

Corgan uses similar text-painting techniques in the vocals of both songs. Leaps in the vocals do play a part in both songs though. In “Here Is No Why,” leaps in the otherwise stepwise melody help bring out negative words that

captured the overall apathetic spirit of the song. Words like “restless,” “cannot,” and “never” all received emphasis because of the melodic leap that approached them. Corgan took a more literal approach in “Tales,” separating the word “die” with a descending leap to bring out the dark connotations of the word.

Musical repetition in both songs enhances the feeling of recurring events. In “Here Is No Why,” the repetition of the vocal melody in the third verse captures the sense of monotony of endless, dragging days. Corgan uses a similar technique in “Tales,” when Corgan sings “Why do the same old things keep on happening?” as the ascending D major scale begins again.

In both songs, perhaps the most effective text painting occurs in conjunction with the sections of contrast in each song. That is to say, the sections of musical contrast coincide with lyrical changes as well. For example, the third verse of “Here Is No Why” is the most contrasting section of the song, with stagnant harmonic motion, repeated melodies, and amorphous swirling guitar textures, and the lyrics match this change. In the two contrasting sections of “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” the lyrics also match the musical change. When harmony and vocal melody are introduced in the bridge, the lyrics take a slight turn. Over the fizzled rhythm before the third verse, the lyrics “Everyone's lost just waiting to be found and everyone's a thought just waiting to fade” reflect the temporary stalling of the motion that drives the rest of the song. The comparison of the techniques used to enhance the lyrics in both songs show that, with the

complex emotions evident in the lyrics of “Here Is No Why,” more intricate text and style painting is used. In the more straightforward “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” fewer individual instances of text-painting can be found, but the style of the song portrays the tone of the angry lyrics. By further examining the methods of contrast and climax in the two songs, one can strengthen the connection of music and youth.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of “Here Is No Why” is its climax. The analysis showed how many different factors contributed to the apex of the song. Harmonic, melodic, stylistic, and lyrical aspects contributed to the build and release of the song. In “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” I specified little about any climax at all. This was not for lack of climatic moments, of which there are several. Each ascending scale creates a sense of tension, which is extended by moving through the b7 of the scale, increasing the dramatic release at the end. These scales occur several times during each chorus. The climax could be heard at the end of a softer section, which takes place twice. Each one has its merits as a possible climax. At the end of the bridge, one hears the same ascending scale from the chorus which builds to the noisy guitar solo. This could be considered a musical rise and fall, but a similar event occurs following that one over the spoken words before the third verse. In these measures the music reaches its most stagnant point: a siren-like descending whine replaces riffs, rhythms dissolve, and speech replaces singing. It is followed by the only lyrical

content that provides any conclusion to the torment of rage present throughout, when Corgan sings “So fuck it all, 'cause I don't care. So what, somehow, somewhere we dared.” Although still angry, the lyrics convey some sense of looking back at the path to the present, instead of stewing in anger. These lyrics provide, in a small amount at least, some sense of contrast to the other lyric ideas presented throughout the song. Each point of possible climax has its merits, and it is possible to consider them both as the peak of the song. Not only does this uncertainty provide contrast to the definite apex of “Here Is No Why,” but it also reinforces the lyrics of “Tales.” The anger present in the lyrics is constant, and is in the music as well. Instead of releasing tension, the song retains it, which reflects the full-tilt rage of the words. The connection to youth is similar to what it has been throughout other parts of the song. The lyrics and music coincide, which allows for a deeper connection to the meaning of the words. The song is also of moderate length, which means it ends before the effect of non-ceasing hatred becomes ineffective. The aspects that lead to the lesser climaxes in the song also reveal that the Smashing Pumpkins created contrasts in their music in a variety of fashions.

The comparison of the songs has shown that there are many similar techniques used throughout them. In both, Corgan uses multiple methods of text-painting. The lyrics contain many references to youthful concepts like apathy, angst, and aggression. When paired with music that matches the mood

of the lyrics, both are enhanced and both take on some of the meaning of the other. The Pumpkins take it a step further, however, with their incorporation of contrasting sections throughout their music. Although these techniques are not unique to them, they are effective in creating a connection to the youth experience.

### CHAPTER III

#### MUSICAL STYLE AND INFLUENCES OF THE SMASHING PUMPKINS

In this chapter I draw the broadest connections to youth and the Smashing Pumpkins' music. Until this point, the music has been the focus; I have assumed that youth of the 1990s, disenchanted by an array of factors, were drawn to lyrics that expressed the same disillusionment they often faced. Peter Christenson explains that

Perhaps with good reason, today's young people are seen as an especially vulnerable cohort, cast adrift in a treacherous sea of AIDS, teen pregnancy, gang-banging, crack cocaine, failing schools, child abuse, soaring rates of suicide, violence. . . (fill in the ellipses yourself). Even if one rejects, as we do, the facile argument that popular music and MTV are somehow to blame for all these problems, the pop music culture is inextricably linked to the experiences, both good and bad, of today's adolescents.<sup>50</sup>

The introduction to the specific social and economic factors that fostered the youth of the 90s provided in this paper is enough for the purposes of this study, and acknowledging the social climate of the era, not its causes, is sufficient. However, there is more to explore, as a casual listener may miss the intricacies with which I am concerned. It is this chapter, then, that further explores the musical style of the Smashing Pumpkins. In particular, it focuses on Deena

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<sup>50</sup> Christenson, 3.

Weinstein's idea of the duality of youth and how the band's music exhibited these traits. Following that, I explore two influences on the band, progressive rock and heavy metal. One finds that by examining the origins and the fans of these styles, a glimpse at the fan base of the Smashing Pumpkins emerges as well.

Because Billy Corgan wrote most of the songs the Pumpkins recorded and performed, including the two analyzed for this study, any issues of musical training or background needs to focus on him. It is unlikely that the intricate aspects of the songs explored in the previous chapters were “happy accidents,” that perhaps Corgan did not infuse as much meaning into the music as the analyses revealed. However unlikely it is that such intricacies would be incidental; examining Corgan's comments on his compositions and about music in general adds more support to the idea that he desired the songs' lyrics and music to correspond.

The primary trait of the band's music that exhibits the duality of youth is the alternation of dynamics. On many occasions, Corgan himself has emphasized this tactic as a fundamental compositional technique for the band. On the Pumpkin's video release *Vieuphoria*, Corgan compares the Pumpkins' use of dynamics to his old band's, the Marked: “It was kind of like the same kind of idea behind the Pumpkins which was loud music and quiet music and trying to put it all together.”<sup>51</sup> Corgan further mentioned this balance of dynamics as integral to the band's sound. He wrote a series of articles for *Guitar World* in

<sup>51</sup> The Smashing Pumpkins, *Vieuphoria*, prod. Modi, 161 min., Virgin, 26 November 2002, DVD.

1995 discussing his personal philosophies on music, in which he mentioned dynamics several times. While writing about the song “Geek U.S.A.,” from *Siamese Dream*, he discusses the dynamics used in the song. Corgan writes

When I got up to the two-minute point, I wanted to do something that would change up the song and send it in another direction. After two minutes, a song this heavy ceases to have any *dynamic* impact. You can't play it any louder, and you can't play it any faster. My trick is to go in the opposite dynamic direction, which we in the band refer to as a “reset.” We reset the dynamics by quieting down the song, which serves to increase the impact of it getting loud and heavy again.<sup>52</sup>

This can be perceived in both “Here is No Why” and “Tales of a Scorched Earth.” The dynamic shift is effective in “Here Is No Why.” The intensity of the climax and subsequent guitar solo is the dynamic diminution in the psychedelic section starting in the third verse. Not only does it allow for the apex of the song to sound more climatic, but it also allows for a dramatic crescendo at the end of the verse. This effect is not achieved with just a simple dynamic shift, however; several other factors enhance it. The harmonic stagnancy and cloudy guitar sounds add to the dynamic shift, which increase its effect of contrast in the song. The reset in “Here Is No Why” is obvious and easy to understand. The shifts in the third verse allow the climax and guitar solo to stand out more than if the third verse had occurred in the same manner as the first two.

Revisiting this notion of contrast helps one understand the relationship

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<sup>52</sup> Billy Corgan, “Song Composition and Arranging,” *Guitar World*, October 1995, quoted in The Smashing Pumpkins, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, transcribed by Andy Aledort and Hemme Luttjeboer (Miami, FL: Warner Brother Publications, 1996), 8.

between youth and the music. Deena Weinstein's concept of youth was a struggle between freedom and restraint; she writes, "The general structural predicament of the adolescent typically appears in the conscious form of a dualism between freedom and constraint."<sup>53</sup> Later, she elaborates, "Rock music is, at its heart, a response to and an enhancement of this dualistic consciousness of youth, catering to the desires for freedom and the immediate goods that the independent and irresponsible life offers, or holding out a utopia in which the suspension of coercive routine is the normal state of affairs."<sup>54</sup> In the instance of the Pumpkins, the balance of dynamics is the form this struggle takes. The quiet moments represent Weinstein's "coercive routine," or the dependence of a waning childhood while the loud ones symbolize the adult freedom the teen desires but cannot control. Each one magnifies the presence of the other, and each seems more poignant because of the pairing.

The Pumpkins use a similar technique in "Tales of a Scorched Earth" at the breakdown before the third verse. The riffs that drive the song drop out and the aggressive drums reduce to the high-hat. The reduction in texture softens the dynamics of the song for a moment, and the spoken lyrics reflect the shift as well. The Pumpkins execute this contrasting section similarly to the one in "Here Is No Why," and both are exemplary of Weinstein's notion of the duality of youth. She mentions the struggle between freedom and constraint, and the listener can

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<sup>53</sup> Weinstein, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Weinstein, 11.

align that struggle with the musical shifts of the two songs. The contrast of soft and loud is analogous to the youthful struggle of responsibility and freedom. These measures represent the war between following orders and throwing caution to the wind. In “Here Is No Why,” the contrast both prepares and enhances the climax, and in “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” the respite from Corgan's rage maximizes its return. In both cases, the shifts portray a plethora of adolescent emotions, and the possible frequent shifts between extremes.

The Smashing Pumpkins use other methods of contrast in “Tales” at the bridge. Although these measures may imply a dynamic shift, volume is not the issue that sets them apart from the rest of the song. The new musical material, and more importantly, the introduction of harmonic motion in an otherwise riff-based song create the contrast here. The introduction of vocal melody at this point is important as well. Both of these factors coincide with Weinstein's struggle of youth. They represent an allusion to the rules of functional tonality, even if they do not obey them. In a song that, harmonically, moves little from the realm of the tonicized D, the shift to G minor is striking. Likewise, the shift from screamed vocals to sung lyrics has a similar effect. In both cases, it is like a dynamic shift; when the riffs and distorted screaming do return, their intensity returns with them, and they remain fresh throughout the song.

One can make an argument that dynamics and harmony act as dramatic enhancements in many kinds of music, or that Corgan was not targeting a

youthful audience by including those musical devices. However, the inclusion of dynamic and harmonic contrasts makes the songs more vibrant, and I have already described their effect on “Here is No Why.” Corgan expressed his desire to write music filled with dynamics, and in the *Guitar World* articles he mentions music theory training as important to his background. “In terms of my own playing,” he writes, “I’ve always had a crazy vision of a lot of dynamic changes, so it’s always been important that I have some technical proficiency.”<sup>55</sup> In the same article he relates that “at some point in your development, it’s important to acquire a basic understanding of music theory. Most people who are musical have an intuitive understanding of the structure of music.”<sup>56</sup> Corgan knew the impact of shifting dynamics and styles on the music and in turn on the audience.

The Smashing Pumpkins not only use this technique within songs, but also over the course of the album. Even a cursory listen to *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* reveals that gentler songs often bookend the loudest, hardest songs. Part of the awkward charm of “Here Is No Why” is derived from its placement between “Zero” and “Bullet with Butterfly Wings,” two of the hardest, most scathing songs on the first disc. Likewise, “Tales of a Scorched Earth” sounds harsher because it appears between “In the Arms of Sleep” and “1979.” The soft piano introduction of “Thru the Eyes of Ruby” creates respite from the

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<sup>55</sup> Billy Corgan, “Searching for Style,” *Guitar World*, September 1995, quoted in The Smashing Pumpkins, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, transcribed by Andy Aledort and Hemme Luttjeboer (Miami, FL: Warner Brother Publications, 1996), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Corgan, “Searching,” 6.

sting of “Tales.”

### **Influences on Musical Style**

The introduction established the Pumpkins as an alternative band. Like other alternative acts, their style and sound came from many influences. Oxoby mentions three of those sources, writing that the Pumpkins' style “includ[ed] not only grunge, but also seventies rock and the gothic rock sound of the 1980s.”<sup>57</sup> One can glean that the Pumpkins' sound would be an interesting mix. Other writers acknowledged their mixed influence sound as well. In an article for *Rolling Stone*, Kevin Raub notes, when comparing the Pumpkins to grunge contemporaries, that

If Nirvana and Pearl Jam were about angst and aggression, then the Pumpkins were those things plus atmosphere. . . Corgan's pain not only connected with listeners on a fundamental level as did Cobain's and Vedder's, the band's razor-sharp guitar avalanches were given an extra lift by ornate arrangements and layers of instrumentation.<sup>58</sup>

Something set the Pumpkins apart from their musical contemporaries.

Part of the difference was Corgan's attitude toward style. In the September 1995

*Guitar World* he writes

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<sup>57</sup> Oxoby, 164.

<sup>58</sup> Kevin Raub, “Billy Corgan Disarmed,” *Rolling Stone*, 9 April 1998 [magazine on-line]; available from [http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/smashingpumpkins/articles/story/5918558/billy\\_corgan\\_disarmed](http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/smashingpumpkins/articles/story/5918558/billy_corgan_disarmed); Internet; accessed 30 September 2006.

My attitude is, why be only one kind of band? Why be just a rock band? Why be just a punk band? You are you, and you can do whatever you want to do, so long as it's within your limitations. . . . But the whole point of making music is that it's an expression of who you are, be it angry, happy or sad. If you can somehow reflect that musically, you've achieved something.<sup>59</sup>

Since Corgan disregarded fitting into one style or another, and since alternative music at the time was unconcerned with it as well, Corgan was free to experiment with sounds borrowed from multiple styles.

As one examines their influences, more becomes apparent about the duality of youth in the Smashing Pumpkins' music. Although they drew from a variety of sources, progressive rock and heavy metal are the focus of this chapter; these are the two styles which are evident in "Here Is No Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth."

### **Progressive Rock**

Progressive rock is a style that originated in the late 1960s; at the forefront of this genre were bands like Yes and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer and in the 1970s ELO. Bands like Led Zeppelin and Rush delved into progressive rock somewhat during their careers. The style was popular in Britain, and later in America, and the makeup of its fans and musicians sheds light on the style itself. It is pertinent to this study to examine stylistic qualities of progressive rock and compare them to the music of the Smashing Pumpkins. Evaluating its musicians

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<sup>59</sup> Corgan, "Searching," 6.

and fans gives us an idea of who the Pumpkins might have attracted by incorporating elements of progressive rock. By identifying the qualities of progressive rock that the Pumpkins incorporated into their music, one can determine which aspects of their songs attracted fans of progressive rock acts.

In general definitions of progressive rock, writers cite attributes like the inclusion of elements from western art music. David Brackett discusses several characteristics of progressive rock. He writes “The first of these influences was the incorporation of orchestral instruments, not in the manner of pre-rock 'n' roll background filler, but as active participants in the texture”<sup>60</sup> and later that “another phase involves the use of complex forms: suites, multimovement works, and so forth.”<sup>61</sup> These aspects, however, are evidence of progressive-rock's style, not its foundation. Kevin Holm-Hudson writes that “*Progressive rock* came to describe those bands that aimed at incorporating some degree of cultivated musical influence. . . into a rock context.”<sup>62</sup> John Covach presents a similar idea: “This attempt to develop a kind of 'concert-hall rock' – which was nevertheless still often performed in stadiums and arenas – was a result of a tendency on the part of some rockers and their fans to view rock as 'listening music' (as opposed to dance music).”<sup>63</sup> Both relate that, on the part of the musicians of the genre,

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<sup>60</sup> Brackett, David, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, “Rock Me Amadeus,” (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 283.

<sup>61</sup> Brackett, 283.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin Holm-Hudson, *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

<sup>63</sup> John Covach, *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, “Progressive Rock, 'Close to the Edge,' and the Boundaries of Style,” (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

there was a desire to elevate the position of rock music beyond dance clubs and above the point of primal eroticism, a position rock had enjoyed since its inception in the 1950s. These artists exhibited the aforementioned stylistic traits, and Holm-Hudson summarizes them and others in a list derived from Jerry Lucky's book *The Progressive Rock Files*. Holm-Hudson shares these notions of the attributes of progressive rock:

“Progressive Rock is music that incorporates:

- Songs predominantly on the longish side, but structured, rarely improvised.
- A mixture of loud passages, soft passages, and musical crescendos to add to the dynamics of the arrangements.
- The use of a Mellotron or string synth[esizer] to simulate an orchestra backing.
- The possible inclusion of a live symphony orchestra backing.
- Extended instrumental solos, perhaps involving some improvisation.
- The inclusion of musical styles from other than a rock format.
- A blending of acoustic, electric and electronic instruments where each plays a vital role in translating the emotion of compositions which typically contain more than one mood.
- Multi-movement compositions that may or may not return to a musical

theme. In some cases the end section may bear little resemblance to the first part of the song.

-Compositions created from unrelated parts...<sup>64</sup>

This list highlights the fundamental elements of many progressive rock songs. Although some of the points contrast with others, like the absence of improvisation and the involvement of it in solos, they need not all be met to classify a song as progressive, and the list shows the diversity of the style. The list is more specific than writing that the musicians desired to incorporate art music, and from here one can begin to notice similarities with the musical styles of the Smashing Pumpkins.

Not all of the aspects on the list apply to “Here Is No Why” but many of them do. Some of them apply to “Tales of a Scorched Earth” as well. The first element takes into consideration length and form. While “Here Is No Why” is not long at 3:44, Chapter 2 explored its abundant text enhancement and the use of pitch sets and motives. I have analyzed its dynamic contrasts, showing that it meets the requirements of the second element as well. The blending of sounds, although not as varied as the list implies, is present in the third verse of the song, where not only do the dynamics soften, but also the timbres change from distorted to cleaner guitar tones.

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<sup>64</sup> Jerry Lucky, *The Progressive Rock Files* (Wheaton, IL: Collector's Guide Publishing, Inc., 1998), quoted in Holm-Hudson, 3.

The other elements on the list are absent in “Here Is No Why,” but they occur in other songs by the Smashing Pumpkins. “Tonight, Tonight” and “Disarm,” each a hit for the band, both employ orchestral instrumentation as part of the texture of the song. Corgan also used a Mellotron to mimic these sounds when they were unavailable. Extended solos are also common on both recordings and during live performances.

*Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* as a whole aligns with the aspect of multi-movement works, as the entire album portrays a day in the life of a disconnected youth. It is, after all, a concept album, which is an axiomatic feature of many progressive rock bands of earlier decades. Although derived from rock-oriented sources, the album borrows from different genres.

Based on these aspects, the influence of progressive rock seems undeniable. Corgan's affinity for heavily-layered studio tracks, which is reminiscent of Pink Floyd, fortifies the argument. He found particular success with it on “Soma” from *Siamese Dream*. Corgan says “On *Soma*, if you include the multi-tracking of thirteen tracks bounced down to two, there's probably about 40 tracks. All 40 aren't going through the entire track, but that would be the total on that tune.”<sup>65</sup> Although not present in every song, it is common in the longer, “epic” songs like “Porcelina of the Vast Oceans” and “Thru the Eyes of Ruby,” not to mention several other songs on *Siamese Dream*.

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<sup>65</sup> The Smashing Pumpkins, *Siamese Dream*, with an introduction by Andy Aledort (Miami, FL: Warner Brothers Publications, 1994), 6.

Fans of progressive rock seemed to come from a specific demographic, which warrants inspection. Holm-Hudson writes of its social roots that “the British progressive rock scene has its roots in the south of Britain, an area more upper-class and white-collar than areas farther north.”<sup>66</sup> Other research within the genre, which shows that music and texts influenced by “high art” would not originate anywhere without people familiar with the topics, echoes this sentiment. Edward Macan writes, “Obviously, a style like progressive rock, with its references not only to classical music but also to the art and literature of high culture, was not going to spring from a working class environ. Its emergence depended on a subculture of highly educated young people.”<sup>67</sup> Likewise, it would be rare to have performers rise from an area without an audience of similar tastes. Macan believes that the audience and the musicians shared many traits.

Like the musicians the audience was young (under 30); it was solidly middle class; and it shared the musicians' general educational backgrounds, and thus their familiarity with the art, literature, and music of high culture. The only major difference between audience and performers at this time involved gender: while the audience seems to have had a roughly equal female-male ratio, the performers were overwhelmingly male.<sup>68</sup>

The makeup of the bands is less of a concern than the fans; knowing that an approximate number of people from both genders listened to progressive rock is

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<sup>66</sup> Holm-Hudson, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 147.

<sup>68</sup> Macan, 152.

important, especially when considering the differences in the audience of heavy metal.

### **Heavy Metal**

Heavy metal matches progressive rock's influence on the Smashing Pumpkins. Like progressive rock, heavy metal originated in England, and bands like Black Sabbath and Judas Priest were forerunners in the category. Corgan has admitted to incorporating elements of Black Sabbath's sound, and although much of that is absent from "Here is No Why," it is present in "Tales of a Scorched Earth." "Geek U.S.A." also contains a metal influence, which Corgan described as "Black Sabbath-y" in its early forms.<sup>69</sup> The heavy metal sound is present throughout the band's music, including other songs from *Mellon Collie* like "Jellybelly," "Zero," "An Ode to No One," and "Bodies," to name a few. I have drawn the lyrical connection between metal and alternative, and all of the aforementioned songs contain dark lyrics dealing with alienation or self-loathing. "Tales of a Scorched Earth," is no exception to this, and it is important to understand the anger and self-depreciation in the lyrics are reminiscent of earlier heavy metal styles.

A further investigation of heavy metal, its stylistic qualities, and its fans is important to this study, and its influence on the Smashing Pumpkins shows a different facet of their music as well. The qualities of heavy metal have not been

<sup>69</sup> Corgan, "Song Composition," 7.

arranged as neatly as those of progressive rock, but high volumes, belligerent lyrics, and aggressive rhythms mark many metal songs. Robert Walser summarizes a song's inclusion in the genre to one trait: "The most important sign of heavy metal is the sound of a distorted guitar. Anytime this sound is musically dominant, the song is either metal or hard rock; any performance that lacks it cannot be included in the genre."<sup>70</sup> He later adds another defining characteristic, "human screams and shouts are usually accompanied by vocal distortion, as the capacities of the vocal chords are exceeded."<sup>71</sup> Another property of heavy metal is the importance of timbre. The necessity of distortion implies this, and this trait is paramount over other musical qualities like melody, which is not as important for the heavy metal style. Christenson also mentions the power chord, as does Brackett in *The Rock, Pop, and Soul Reader*. He writes

The 'power-chord' – the root and fifth of a chord sounded without the third, but magnified by distortion in a sonic emblem of transgressive masculinity – joined forces with riffs played in unison by guitar and bass and a heavy 'bottom' (bass and bass drum mixed up front. . .), to create a genre of unparalleled volume. . .<sup>72</sup>

Here he touches on several points. He mentions the power chord and volume, but also includes a preference for riffs in metal and the implication of male power. I will explore masculinity and the fans of metal, but first I examine "Tales of a

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<sup>70</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hannover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 41.

<sup>71</sup> Walser, 42.

<sup>72</sup> Brackett, 266.

Scorched Earth's" possibility of inclusion in the heavy metal category.

The lyrical exploration of "Tales of a Scorched Earth" exposed the alienation and aggression present in the lyrics. However, it also complies with heavy metal on several other points. Following Walser's definition of heavily distorted guitars, the song is congruent with other metal songs. "Tales of a Scorched Earth" also exhibits the screamed and distorted vocals that Walser mentions as well as conforming to Brackett's requirement of power chords and riffing. The song is composed of power chords presented within the context of a larger riff, and only the contrasting bridge features any chords with a third.

With these points in mind, a survey of the Pumpkins' metal-influenced songs includes "Tales of a Scorched Earth." By next examining the fans of the metal genre, one can begin to find how the band attracted a larger youth audience.

Philip Bashe denotes the metal genre as a youthful one. He relates that "Rock & Roll has always been youth-oriented, but heavy-metal fandom is almost exclusively restricted to the teenage years."<sup>73</sup> Other sources affirm the notion that heavy metal appealed to a young audience, but they are more specific in their claims. Andy Brown writes that "emerging in the period 1969-70, bands such as Black Sabbath, Judas Priest. . . , to note only the most well known, were

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<sup>73</sup> Philip Bashe, *Heavy Metal Thunder: Its Music, Its History, Its Heroes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 6.

clearly working-class in origin, as were their followers.”<sup>74</sup> In the same article he classifies it as “a distinct musical style that was able to recruit a substantial working-class and lower-middle class following.”<sup>75</sup> Other sources support the claim that heavy metal attracted fans of a lower economic standing. Stan Denski and David Sholle examine the connection between economic standing and musical preference. They write

Heavy metal has tended to be a working-class phenomenon, and there appears to be some correlation between low-levels of educational performance and heavy metal fandom. We could suggest, however, that the implication is not that the heavy metal is made by and produced for low-class, low-taste audiences, but that it is widely popular with alienated (rather than underprivileged) youths, who view the future as under-opportunities.<sup>76</sup>

They make an important point, that the bands recording the music were not targeting a certain economic sector of the population, but instead a demographic based on the social climate of the day. While having heroes who came from similar roots would appeal to some fans, I consider the music to be the attraction here.

The point to be understood is that, with the influence of these two styles in the music of the Smashing Pumpkins, the group would be able to attract listeners

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<sup>74</sup> Andy Brown, “Heavy Metal and Subcultural Theory: A Paradigmatic Case of Neglect?” *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, ed. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl (New York: Berg, 2003), 214.

<sup>75</sup> Brown, 211.

<sup>76</sup> Stan Denski and David Sholle, “Metal Men and Glamour Boys: Gender Performance in Heavy Metal,” *Men, Masculinity, and the Media* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992), 52.

from both genres. In the same way that ambiguous lyrics allowed for a multitude of listener interpretations, the combination of disparate musical styles allowed the Pumpkins to appeal to a wide audience. While I have established that the main fan base of each category was a youth audience, the similarities end there. Metal music fans were generally males from a working-class background, Macan relates “Progressive Rock was never a working-class style, and progressive rock musicians never set out to be working-class heroes. To the contrary, progressive rock – especially in its early stages – was the vital expression of a bohemian, middle-class intelligentsia.”<sup>77</sup> The fans of metal and progressive rock overlapped, but embracing both styles would have encouraged fans from many socio-economic backgrounds to find something pertinent in the Pumpkins' music. The Pumpkins wrote many songs that meet the qualifications for inclusion in the heavy metal camp, and fans of that genre would have found something by which to headbang or slam-dance. The band also had several sprawling rock epics that appealed to fans who desired to whet their musical appetites on something substantial. Many of the band's singles, the songs to which alternative radio would have exposed an unfamiliar listener, straddled the line between progressive rock and metal. Embracing the styles of both but unlimited by the boundaries of either, the Smashing Pumpkins could maintain a fluidity of style and sound that flirted with extremes but maintained their distinct, catchy sound.

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<sup>77</sup> Macan, 144.

The differences between the two styles bring us once again to Deena Weinstein's notion of the duality of youth. This chapter has shown the larger contrasts in the Pumpkins' music, and it is appropriate to assume that perhaps the small contrasts present in the band's songs are a result of these major disparities in style. With this in mind, acknowledging these large-scale differences is an attempt to find the lineage of the Pumpkins' other musical contrasts, not to show the ultimate embrace of progressive rock. While borrowing from other styles is a characteristic of that genre, in this instance it is not the result of purposeful borrowing to sound more like progressive rock. On the contrary, while it would also be irresponsible to think that Corgan incorporated these influences or the contrasts in general to attract a young audience, their inclusion helped their success. The embrace of several different music styles, including but not limited to progressive rock and heavy metal, allowed the Smashing Pumpkins the freedom to explore vast musical territory as well as write songs that captured the range of emotions and feelings present in the youth experience.

## CHAPTER IV

### *ZEITGEIST*

Seven years after their last record, the Smashing Pumpkins released *Zeitgeist* in July 2007. Although not composed of all the original members, *Zeitgeist* is similar in many ways to older Pumpkins' albums including *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. The albums share many traits in part because Corgan remains the primary songwriter. I will examine *Zeitgeist* for the same aspects that helped *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* appeal to youth of the 1990s. A surface examination shows that some of the musical techniques used on *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* are evident on *Zeitgeist* as well. Once again I focus on the same main traits as in previous analyses: lyric content, text enhancement, and musical duality. By examining these aspects, and comparing sales of the two albums, one can gain a better understanding of the musical elements Corgan incorporated to appeal to a young audience. Finally, I relate a personal experience at a Smashing Pumpkins concert on October 11, 2007 as evidence of their continued appeal to youth.

The first area of interest is the lyric content of *Zeitgeist*. A full analysis of each song on the album is not necessary for this study. It is sufficient to find trends in the lyrics and examine them. An investigation of the lyrics shows two

striking differences to the lyrics of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. The first is the presence of political themes in at least three of the songs on the album, and the second is a surprising optimism in much of the lyrics.

While the Smashing Pumpkins' lyrics touched upon social issues in earlier albums, the topics they explored were more introspective than an examination of the situations that sparked the emotion in the songs. Often, the lyrics are purposefully ambiguous, which obscures any outside influence on the lyrics. As I showed in "Tales of a Scorched Earth," the focus of the rage is nebulous. It is uncertain what the lyrics pertain to; it is as likely that they pertain to the singer's parents as they concern an ex-lover. On *Zeitgeist*, however, Corgan takes a decided political turn. The cover art shows the Statue of Liberty waist deep in the ocean, the sun shining over the horizon. The statue itself may represent the United States, and the other imagery is open to interpretation. Is the sun rising on the USA or setting on it? Is the statue standing in red water or blood? Answering either question leads to another, but I believe the imagery is political and represents the United States in some way. The songs on the album are congruent with the cover. The Pumpkins incorporate political topics on at least three of the album's twelve songs.<sup>78</sup>

The songs "Doomsday Clock," "United States," and "For God and Country"

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<sup>78</sup> Although the album was released in multiple incarnations with added tracks, the one used for this study is the twelve-song version.

all take a political turn.<sup>79</sup> These three songs express dissatisfaction with the present political climate of the United States, ranging from fear of an impending apocalypse to a call for revolution. The political nature of the songs shows a distinct difference from the lyrics of “Here Is No Why” and “Tales of a Scorched Earth.” While those songs express an element of dissatisfaction, in both the topic is ambiguous, allowing the listener to direct it to a source of their choosing. In the three songs from *Zeitgeist*, Corgan presents a concrete topic as the focus of each song. One understands the impact on youth by acknowledging the *lack* of politics included on *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. While “youth” has some universal aspects to it, as described by Weinstein, liberal politics is not listed as one of them. Not every teen is disillusioned, but during adolescence it is common to find some dissatisfaction in a young person's life. On *Mellon Collie*, Corgan focused on that aspect of being young, and he drew in many young listeners who identified with it. With the inclusion of political ire I believe that Corgan would lose some listeners who disagreed or could not identify with his point of view. *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* united youth with universal teenage aspects like romantic love, apathy, and self-absorbency; *Zeitgeist* includes three political songs which could divide the listening audience. Politics and the American government are topics that affect everyone living in the country, but they are not topics specific to youth culture. In fact, the Pumpkins'

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<sup>79</sup> The lyrics to these songs can be found in the booklet accompanying the CD or at <http://www.metrolyrics.com/zeitgeist-album-smashing-pumpkins.html>.

other albums are devoid of any political content. The inclusion of political material indicates a number of possibilities. It is possible that Corgan recognized a growing number of young people showing an interest in politics, which led him to write about them on *Zeitgeist*.<sup>80</sup> However, it is more likely that his personal concerns have changed, and he included political references because those were on his mind at the time he wrote the album. Perhaps listeners from the 1990s who grew up with the band have also matured and would be interested in a politically charged album.

On the other hand, Corgan may have attracted listeners who are old enough to understand politics, but too young to vote. In that situation, these songs, like “Tales of a Scorched Earth,” capture the spirit of anger with no opportunity to change the present situation. The chanted “Revolution!” from “United States” could be echoing the cries of teens with no responsible method to bring about change in what they understand to be unjust politics.

As one can see in the lyrics of “For God and Country,” not all of the lyrics are as gloomy as the ones I have examined from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. That is not to say that every song on that album teemed with doom and gloom, but as I showed with “Doomsday Clock” and “United States,” Corgan directs *Zeitgeist*'s anger at the government, which I believe makes it lose some of its sting. While the unrest is still present, there are several songs that almost empower the listener with their lyrics, which further set it apart from *Mellon Collie*

<sup>80</sup> Green Day's *American Idiot* used similar themes to great success in 2005.

*and the Infinite Sadness*. “That’s the Way (My Love Is),” “Bring the Light,” and “(Come On) Let’s Go!” all feature lyrics that are downright cheery.<sup>81</sup>

In these three songs, the titles conjure joyful imagery. “That’s the Way (My Love Is)” focuses on the singer’s dedication to a lover. “Bring the Light” and “(Come On) Let’s Go!” both contain references to God as a source of inspiration and happiness. Biblical references are not new to Corgan’s lyrics; “Bullet with Butterfly Wings” mentions Jesus and Job, and other songs of that era regarded all things religious as untrustworthy or worthy of spite. In “Bring the Light” and “(Come On) Let’s Go!” one finds that Corgan has not only adopted a more positive attitude, but also embraced a holier one as well. Comparing these songs with congruent ones from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* reveals more about their optimism.

Several cheerful songs appear throughout older Pumpkins’ albums, including *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. Some examples of these happy songs include “1979,” “Beautiful,” and “Lily (My One and Only).” Most of the positive songs on the album contain either silliness or youthful irreverent bliss. “Beautiful” and “Lily” contain the former, while, in the case of “1979,” Corgan captures the latter with the repeated mantra “We don’t even care.” However, neither silliness nor a sense of flippancy appears in the upbeat lyrics on *Zeitgeist*; Corgan appears to sound serious about happiness. In at least one instance in

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<sup>81</sup> The lyrics to these songs can be found in the booklet accompanying the CD or at <http://www.metrolyrics.com/zeitgeist-album-smashing-pumpkins.html>.

each of the three songs examined, Corgan asks the listener to forsake the doom and gloom that once marked his music, believe in him (or Him), and follow the path of bliss. One finds evidence of this in “That’s the Way (My Love Is).” The song implies that some unseen force, “they” in the lyrics, is preaching negativity and Corgan stands on the other side, imploring the listener to take solace in his songs during hardship. He references his own metamorphosis in the song when he sings “I feel a coming age now, I feel a change in me. A certain sun keeps rising.” In other words, he seems to renounce his gloom and embrace something more positive.

Once again, comparing Corgan's inclusion of happiness on *Zeitgeist* and *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* reveals more about the topic. Optimistic lyrics are present on *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, but their presentation is different. They seem to be rather fleeting, considering the moments of happiness are far outweighed by apathy or anger. It is important that they are there, as they fulfill another aspect of duality on the album.

The uplifting nature of the songs and the encouragement for the listener to partake in a more positive approach to life imply a departure from self-absorbed woe. Although the lyrical content of the songs differs, a musical survey of *Zeitgeist* shows that the band uses elements of text painting and musical duality.

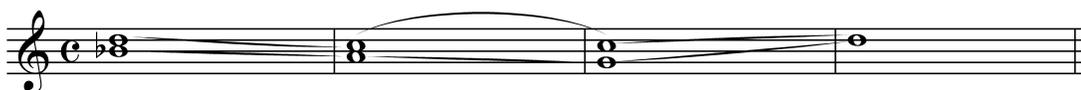
### **Musical Enhancement and Duality on *Zeitgeist***

Text enhancement and musical duality were the two aspects from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* that most aligned with the youth experience. Text enhancement underscores lyrics that captured the spirit of youth, and musical duality exhibited that same spirit by showing the contrasts that are inherent to that period of a person's life. I showed them both throughout "Here Is No Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth," and they are present on *Zeitgeist*. While both appear in many songs on *Zeitgeist*, some songs only contain one or the other, and in limited quantities. Cataloging each time Corgan used them would be cumbersome; therefore, I examine two songs that utilize both, "Doomsday Clock" and "Starz."

"Doomsday Clock" is the first song on the album, and thus sets the tone for the rest of *Zeitgeist*. One finds with a partial musical analysis of the song, more emerges about the music that enhances the lyrics. Stylistically, the music of "Doomsday Clock" matches the tone of the lyrics. The heavy distortion, aggressive riffs, and drop-D tuning accent the foreboding topic of catastrophic nuclear destruction. The bass note movement of D-F-A-C outlines a Dm7 chord, setting up centrality around D. Before the first verse, at :22 one hears the sound of a bomb falling which is imitated by a descending glissando on the electric guitar. The Pumpkins rarely use sound effects, especially one as prominent as the slow whine heard at the beginning of this song. Its sonic effect is great

though, and another matches it at the start of the bridge. At :45 the listener hears vocal “ahs” imitating the sound of a siren. This can be seen in Example 13.

### Example 13



The fall and subsequent rise of the background vocals here, when coupled with the glissandi in both parts, recreate the sound of a warning siren.

The most effective instance of text painting in the song appears at the end of the chorus on the words “not broken.” Throughout the verse, bridge, and chorus, the song has been D centric. At 1:21, the song comes to rest on an open D5 chord and Corgan sings “not broken.” However, the pitches he has chosen to sing are A-B-A, and following these lyrics the guitar and bass begin outlining Dm7 again. Because of the minor chord arpeggiated by the bassline, the listener might expect to hear A-Bb-A. The melody can be seen in Example 14.

**Example 14**

Not bro - ken.

The melody itself sounds out of place in the D minor that surrounds it, which enhances the word “broken.” Because Corgan sings “not broken,” however, the words suggest that his heart is unbroken despite the potential chaos of nuclear war. Somewhere, deep down, he holds onto something positive as indicated by the allusion to the major mode in the melody. This brightness reappears in the next verse when Corgan sings “I love life every day, in each and every way.” I have already discussed his use of positive lyrics in other songs, and it seems appropriate that this attitude would shine through the gloom of the apocalypse as well.

The whistle of the bomb and the vocal siren each appear once more later in the song, to the same effect as before. The intimation of D major and the hopeful lyrics at the start of the second verse showed some sense of contrast and duality, but the primary section of contrast appears at 2:29 after the second

chorus. Although dynamic differences are subtle, both the texture and timbre of the music change. Muted strings and harmonics replace the aggressive power chords. The lesser role of the guitar allows the bass to come to the foreground. The change in guitar timbre and the addition of disorienting delay to Corgan's vocals resemble some of the swirling, psychedelic textures of earlier albums. Examining "Starz" reveals Corgan used some of the same techniques in that song as well.

The lyrics of "Starz" have not been analyzed in this study, but one interpretation of the song is tangible after an initial listening. The song compares celebrity and heavenly bodies, drawing conclusions of immortality and power. Perhaps the repeated line "We are stars" implies that Corgan believes everyone is privy to stardom, and that inside each of us is a glamorous immortal waiting to be freed. Although ethereal textures permeate the song as it progresses, the first hint comes from the synthesizer in the opening bars. The synthesizer part oscillates from E6-B5 over the opening chords, and its wispy timbre and high register foreshadow the swirling textures later in the song. When the opening figure repeats at 1:21, the texture has gotten more psychedelic: Corgan juxtaposes a meandering guitar solo over the initial guitar figure, and his vocals have added delay. The effect is a swirling sound that perhaps represents the ever-churning heavens. The delayed vocals continue during the next verse of the song, continuing the impression that Corgan is singing into the astral void,

asking the audience to follow him to the heavens. At 2:40, Corgan acknowledges the transition to the swirling textures with the phrase “and purple haze.” While those words alone do convey some sense of mystery and the unknown, they are an obvious lyrical reference to Jimi Hendrix, not only a star himself, but a pioneer of psychedelic rock. At the time of that lyric, the texture of the song becomes more nebulous than before. The listener hears a mixture of sporadic drum soloing, guitar feedback, and vocals treated with heavy delay and reverb.

While “purple haze” receives a direct musical enhancement, there is another instance of this in the song. At :21, the word “die” is painted both by being sung on the lowest note of the phrase and with a long downward glissando. The significance of this is not only in the text painting, but also in Corgan's use of a similar technique to enhance the same word in “Tales of a Scorched Earth.” The method of duality in this song is similar to both “Tales of a Scorched Earth” and “Here Is No Why” as well.

Corgan's use of dynamics in this song reinforces the changes in texture. The section of highest contrast appears at 2:40, and not only highlights the astronomical theme of the song, but allows for a dramatic crescendo during the final reprise of the lyrics.

One can see that the music on *Zeitgeist* is composed using the same techniques as earlier albums, but there are distinct differences. Lyrically, the

songs are different than before. Corgan marks the lyrics of *Zeitgeist* with a purpose. That is to say, instead of a cathartic outpouring of emotion, Corgan's lyrics on *Zeitgeist* are a rallying cry of sorts. On one hand, some of the songs point their ire toward the United States government. I consider chants of "Revolution!," while angry sounding, to be more constructive than "You're all whores and I'm a fag." In other cases, the lyrics on *Zeitgeist* are positive. Unlike the silly, flippant happiness of certain *Mellon Collie* songs, however, the recent songs are not from the point of irreverent youth, but from the view of someone more experienced. They are contented, and they ask the audience to follow the singer to a more positive state of mind. Even "Doomsday Clock," a song about the end of the world, contains a positive edge.

The effects of these lyric changes on youth are uncertain. The interests and concerns of young people have changed in the twelve years since the band released *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. Although no political material appears on that album, criticism of the current government on *Zeitgeist* could draw in new listeners. The polarizing effect of political material could, on the other hand, repel certain audiences as well. The push for pleasantries on *Zeitgeist* is not as clear cut as politics. Many successful pop songs have happy lyrics, but like those of *Mellon Collie*, the optimism seems shallow or silly. Perhaps the true test of the album's success is sales. Katie Hasty writes for [Billboard.com](http://Billboard.com) that *Zeitgeist* "sold 145,000 units and ties 1998's *Adore* as the second best charting

album of the group's career. The double-disc *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* debuted at No. 1 on the chart in 1995.<sup>82</sup> Continued sales are far less than earlier albums, however; *Zeitgeist* reached gold status in February 2008, nearly 7 months after its release.<sup>83</sup> The Recording Industry Association of America only tracks record sales in America, and 500,000 copies sold is an achievement, but one can see that the band did not recapture the success of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* despite similar qualities on each album.

Lyrical differences aside, Corgan uses the same methods of text enhancement and contrast that helped *Mellon Collie* appeal to a large youth audience. The lyrical overview of *Zeitgeist* shows that in "Doomsday Clock" and "Starz" the band still has a penchant for swirling textures contrasted with heavy metal riffs. A further overview of *Zeitgeist* shows that contrast is present on a larger scale, as can be heard in the differences in distortion and timbre between "Doomsday Clock" and "Starz." The juxtaposition between dark and joyous lyrics is an effective form of duality that appears on the album. Just as *Mellon Collie* contained songs of many different moods and styles, *Zeitgeist* seems to have a song for a variety of emotions. A young person looking for musical catharsis could find something with which to relate on *Zeitgeist*. Perhaps the lesser album

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<sup>82</sup> Katie Hasty, "T.I. Holds Off Pumpkins, Interpol to Remain No. 1," in Billboard.com, (accessed [21 August 2007])

<[http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/news/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1003613204](http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003613204)>

<sup>83</sup> Recording Industry Association of America, "Country Takes the Crop," in RIAA.com, (accessed [4 March 2008]) <<http://www.riaa.com/newsitem.php?id=B5127985-CDB2-C7AD-ADF1-E33023D88A0C>>

sales of *Zeitgeist* reflect a change in taste on the part of youth. I also have not examined differences in marketing schemes for the two albums, which is something that would affect an album's commercial success.

### **The Smashing Pumpkins, Columbus, OH, October 11, 2007**

I attended a live performance by the Smashing Pumpkins on their tour for *Zeitgeist* at Promowest Pavilion in Columbus, Ohio. The concert sold out before the day of the show, which is noteworthy as evidence of the band's continued popularity. The most interesting part of the evening was the demographic of the audience.<sup>84</sup> I observed that most of the people in attendance appeared to be between the ages of 15 and 25, which are the same ages on which I focus for this study. This leads me to wonder where the fans from the *Mellon Collie* era were. The fans at the young end of the age spectrum of that time, 15 years old, would be in their mid- to late-twenties now, and those at the high end, 25, would be in their late 30s.

This leads me to believe that the Pumpkins' music still resonates most strongly with people between the ages of 15 and 25. If the band has attracted the same demographic of a new generation with *Zeitgeist*, then perhaps the text painting techniques that worked for them a decade ago are still viable now.

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<sup>84</sup> These observations are personal and speculative. No empirical studies have been done on the age range at current Smashing Pumpkins' shows. This information offers personal insight to the demographic of current fans.

It is possible to arrive at some conclusions pertaining to the success of *Zeitgeist*. Musically, the Pumpkins have recorded an album that is similar to *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, but the new lyrical material has kept it fresh. Perhaps these changes are the result of Corgan's changing views or an older Pumpkins audience. In either case, with an examination of *Zeitgeist* and a comparison to older material, more surfaces about the success of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of understanding the histories presented in the introduction should now be clear. One can see how the Smashing Pumpkins prospered in the 1990s by examining the early relationship between rock and youth. After understanding that youth and rock were entwined from their conception, and then realizing the specific challenges facing 1990s youth, it is no wonder that the themes of apathy and alienation in alternative music appealed to adolescent audiences. The Pumpkins belonged to the alternative genre not only because of the time period within which they toured and recorded, but also because of their embrace of many styles of music. Their disillusioned lyrical topics helped the band cohere with listeners. Corgan's interview with David Fricke provides evidence to suggest that his target audience was youth.

An examination of the songs "Here is No Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth" shows how the lyrics captured the spirit of two youthful experiences and would have spoken to disenchanting youth of the era. Corgan fit the songs with appropriate music to not only increase the cohesion of the song, but also to convey meaning to the listener. These connections were as specific as painting a specific word and as broad as capturing the tone of rage with the guitar distortion. On an even deeper level, the band's use of musical techniques to

represent the struggle of teenage freedom and constraint strengthened the connection to youth of the time.

The Smashing Pumpkins drew on a wide base of influences, which in turn gave their music a diverse sound. I showed how the two songs analyzed in this study related to the band's influences, and also how those influences were youthful but attracted fans from different backgrounds. I hypothesized that the inclusion of many different styles was another echo of the duality of youth.

One can see that the Pumpkins' songwriting techniques were not a fluke on *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*. The effects of text painting and musical contrast and duality are evident on *Zeitgeist*. Although the semantic content has changed, it shows that Corgan's lyrical capabilities have grown in the twelve years since he wrote "Here Is No Why" and "Tales of a Scorched Earth." As the title of the record suggests, the album is a sign of the spirit of the times, and regardless of one's stance on American politics, the issues contained on *Zeitgeist* are relevant to modern era.

There are several areas of departure from this research. One is that the connection of youth to the *sound* of music is under-recorded. Many authors focus on the sociological aspects of the topic, citing image of performers, peer groups, marketing, or lyrics as the main reasons that youth listen to music. However, little has been said about specific genres or artists other than the raucous beats of rock 'n' roll or the image of its promised lifestyle attracted youth.

Weinstein's idea of duality, which I explored in this paper, could be applied to other artists and genres.

Another aspect that I bypassed was the reputation and image of the Smashing Pumpkins. As a popular rock band, they were marketed to a youth audience. It would be interesting to examine the advertising and marketing factors that contributed to their record sales. Their reputation as a dysfunctional band may have resonated with some young listeners, echoing the distress in their own family lives. The social diversity in the group may have helped them appeal to fans; perhaps having a female bassist increased their appeal to young women, or maybe the presence of an Asian-American guitarist helped garner popularity in Asian countries.

Finally, examining the contrasts just within *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* has revealed much about the band's musical styles and influences. More may surface if a similar study were conducted comparing the change in the Pumpkins' sound between albums. Critical reception of later albums was higher, but sales dwindled. Perhaps at some point in their growth the Smashing Pumpkins began to write music that appealed to a different demographic. Tracing the trends of their albums could reveal much about a band who continued to grow musically throughout their career.

All of these suggestions would be a hefty undertaking indeed, equal to, if not greater than, this one. However, after finding the depths with which their

music is intertwined with youth culture, these ideas promise to be fruitful as well.

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**APPENDIX A. CONSENT E-MAIL**

From: "Emily Hay" <hay@khpblaw.com>  
To: "Zachary Starkie ZJSTARKI" <[ZJSTARKI@uncg.edu](mailto:ZJSTARKI@uncg.edu)>

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2008 01:47PM  
Subject: RE: Copyright license request

Dear Zach: Thank you for your follow up email. Our client has approved your usage of lyrics and excerpts of lyrics from those certain musical compositions written by William Corgan and performed by the Smashing Pumpkins in your educational masters thesis for UNCG on a gratis basis, provided however that such usage shall be solely on a non-commercial basis, that the lyrics and excerpts of lyrics shall solely appear in printed form in-context of the thesis in substantially its entirety and appropriate credit shall be accorded to our client and his publishing designee(s).

If you advise which specific compositions you will be citing in your thesis, I'm happy to forward you appropriate credit information for the copyright owner of each.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I may be of further assistance.

Best regards,

Emily Hay  
King, Holmes, Paterno & Berliner, LLP

## APPENDIX B. LYRIC COPYRIGHT HOLDERS

From: "Matthew Cohen" <cohen@khpblaw.com>  
 To: "Zachary Starkie ZJSTARKI" <ZJSTARKI@uncg.edu>

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2008 01:47PM  
 Subject: RE: Copyright license request

Hi Zachary,

With regards to your request, I made notations beside each composition. \*\* = published by Cinderful Music (BMI) and += published by Faust's Haus Music (BMI). All songs 100% written by William Patrick Corgan

Hope that's helpful.

Best regards,  
 Matthew Cohen  
 Paralegal  
 King Holmes Paterno & Berliner, LLP

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Zachary Starkie ZJSTARKI [mailto:ZJSTARKI@uncg.edu]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 20, 2008 4:08 PM  
**To:** Emily Hay  
**Subject:** RE: Copyright license request

Dear Ms. Hay,

Thank you very much. The songs for which I need credit information are the following:

"Here Is No Why" from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* \*\*  
 "Tales of a Scorched Earth" from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* \*\*  
 "1979" from *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* \*\*  
 "Doomsday Clock" from *Zeitgeist* ++  
 " United States " from *Zeitgeist* ++  
 "For God and Country" from *Zeitgeist* ++

"Starz" from *Zeitgeist* ++  
"Bring the Light" from *Zeitgeist* ++  
"That's the Way (My Love Is)" from *Zeitgeist* ++  
"(Come On) Let's Go!" from *Zeitgeist* ++

Thanks again for all your help!  
Zach Starkie