

6.3.2.1 Example One: Einstürzende Neubauten: Haus Der Lüge (1984) ²⁹⁶

Einstürzende Neubauten are one of the most well-known industrial artists, having published or been the subject of several books and having had a career spanning more than two decades. The band began in Berlin, influenced by Dada, particularly by Kurt Schwitters, whose *Ursonate* was a likely influence on some of singer Blixa Bargeld's unique intonations.

The album *Haus der Lüge* is accompanied by lengthy liner notes with a translation and explanation of the lyrics (see below). The imagery on the back cover, a 1540 engraving of Samson grasping onto a tumbling building seems to relate to the song (and the band's name).²⁹⁷ The lyrics translate as follows:

296 Although the version I analyse was from 1989, it was written at least as early as 1984, as a live version exists from that year on *Strategies Against Architecture II*. This studio version does not deviate significantly from the live version, but offers a better recording quality.

297 By Hans Baldung Grien. Samson, of course, the judge of ancient Israel, pulled down the Philistine assembly house after being betrayed by Delilah (see Judges 16:23-30).

House of Lies	Haus der Lüge
Erstes Geschoß	First Floor
Hier leben die blinden	Here live the blind
Die glauben was sie sehen	Who believe what they see
Und die tauben	And the deaf
Die glauben was sie hören	Who believe what they hear
Festgebunden auf einem küchenhocker	Bound and gagged to kitchen -stool
Sitzt ein irrer, der glaubt	Sits a fool, who believes
Alles was er anfassen kann	In all he can feel (all he can understand)
(Seine hände liegen im schoß)	(his hands in his lap)
 Zweites geschoß	 Second floor
Rolle für rolle	Roll after roll
Bahn für bahn	Length after length
Rauhfaser tapeziert	In woodchip wallpaper
Einzelne mieter stehen herum	Lone tenants stand around
Betrachten die wände aufmerksam	observing the walls with frowns
Suchen druck und rechtschreibfehler	looking for printing and spelling mistakes
Könnten nicht mal ihren namen entziffern	they couldn't even decipher their own names
 Auf ins nächste geschoß!	 Up to the next floor!
Welches, oh wunder! Nie fertiggestellt	Which, oh wonder! Never completed
Nur über die treppe erreicht werden kann	Can only be reached by the stairs
Hier lagern irrtümer,	Here are stored errors
die gehören der firma	Which belong to the firm
Damit kacheln sie die böden	And with which they tile the floors
An die darf keiner ran	Upon these none may tread
 Viertes geschoß	 Fourth Floor
Hier wohnt der architekt	Here lives the architect
Er geht auf in seinem plan	Immersed in his plan of
Dieses gebäude steckt voller ideen	This building crammed with ideas
Es reicht von funda -bis firmament	It stretches from funda - to firmament
Und vom fundament bis zur firma	And from its foundations to the firm
 Im erdgeschoß	 In the ground floor
Befinden sich vier türen	There are four doors
Die führen	They lead
Direkt ins freie	Directly outside

<p>Oder besser gesagt in den grundstein Da kann warten wer will Um zwölf kommt beton Grundsteinlego! (Lüge, lüge, lüge!) Gedankengänge, sind gestrichen In kopfhöhe braun Infam oder katholisch violett Zur besseren orientierung</p> <p>Dachgeschoß es hat einen schaden im dachstuhl sitzt ein alter mann auf dem boden tote engel verstreut (deren gesichter sehen ihm ähnlich) zwischen den knieen hält en ein gewehr Er zielt auf seinen mund Und in den schädel Durch den schädel Und aus dem schädel heraus In den dachfirst Dringt das geschoß Gott hat sich erschossen Ein dachgeschoß wird ausgebaut Gott hat sich erschossen Ein dachgeschoß wird ausgebaut Lüge Lüge, Ein dachgeschoß wird ausgebaut</p> <p>Epilog Untergeschoß Dies ist der keller Hier lebe ich Der keller ist dunkel Feucht und angenehm Hier lebe ich Dies hier ist dunkel Dies ist ein schoß</p>	<p>Or more precisely: to the corner stone He who wants to can wait there The concrete's coming at twelve Corner-stone lego! (lies, lies, lies!) Thought passages are painted over In head-height brown Infamous or catholic purple For better orientation Top floor Has some damage In the rafters an old man sits Dead angels are strewn across the floor (their faces resemble his) between his knees he holds a gun he aims it at his mouth and into the skull (through the skull) and out of the skull's other side into the roof's apex drills that bullet god has shot himself now a top floor can be renovated god has shot himself now a top floor can be renovated Lies, Lies A top floor can be renovated</p> <p>Epilogue Lower Floor This is the cellar Here's where I live Here it is dark Dark and pleasant Here's where I live Here it is dark This is a womb</p>
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The English translation provided by the band in the liner notes is reasonably accurate with the exception of 'rauhfaser tapeziert', which was translated poetically as 'woodchip wallpaper' but is more accurately a generic term for cheap textured wallpaper. In addition, I have made a few corrections and added a line (in italics).²⁹⁸

There are several wordplays mentioned in the liner notes. *Geschoß* can mean 'floor' or 'bullet' and *schoß* is both the participle 'shot', and the vulgarism of womb, or 'lap'. In addition, *dach* means roof, but is also slang for head or mind (Zinfert 1997: 161). In English, *firmament* is the vault of heaven, the region of the air, or the sky while *fundament* is a base or foundation, and also the bottom note of a chord. There is therefore evidence to suggest that we are meant to contemplate the myriad possible meanings offered by the play on words both in its original German and its translated English.²⁹⁹ The explanation of the lyrics provided by singer Blixa Bargeld in an interview suggests there is some fascistic element to the church, that religion is a lie and humankind cannot be free until we abandon the notion of God (see Zinfert 1997: 162-163).

298 The translation provided in the liner notes is credited to Hotte Pätzold and Mick Harvey. Thanks to professional translator Tilly Schel for checking the translation for me.

299 Einstürzende Neubauten frequently toy with lyrical elements such as this in their texts, and have previously used palindromes, puns and other wordplay. The fact that such wordplay is indicated in the liner notes tells us that there is more than one meaning in the song. As well, Bargeld makes further reference to the continuation of the song in 'The Party on the Roof' and 'Was Ist Ist' (*Ende Neu*, 1999).

Rather than following a conventional song format, the lyrics tell a story which continues from verse to verse. At bar 96 there is a short pause, which at first hearing seems to be the end of the piece. However, one second later we are led into an epilogue, where the tempo is slowed to just half of its previous rate of 120 BPM. At the end of the song, there is no fade out, and the singing ends on an unfinished upwards inflexion.

Vocal performance in the song is unusual and powerful. The song is sung at times in a kind of *Sprechgesang* style. The tempo is too quick to pronounce the words accurately, so many words are contracted or skipped altogether. The rapid-firing of the words leads to a very urgent and anxious sound, and the spitting out, near-shouting in German perhaps led to some of the ‘oppressive’ or ‘nazi’ connotations heard by some Anglo ears (as was discussed also in Chapter Four). At times the voice sounds hoarse, with lots of overtones (particularly on ‘*firma*’). The vocals are treated with minimal effects in the first section of the song, although they are double tracked, evident particularly in the ‘*grunstein lego lüge lüge*’ part and ‘*gott hat... ausgebaut*’. Despite being quite central in the mix, vocals are nearly drowned out in places by the broken glass (bars 78-86). In the ‘*Epilog*’, there is a significant amount of reverb on the vocals, which fits with the lyrics (‘*dies ist ein kellar/ dies hier ist ein schoß*’).

6.3.2.2 Example Two: Skinny Puppy: Harsh Stone White (1988)

Skinny Puppy formed in Vancouver, Canada in the early 1980s with the intent of producing music imagined through the eyes of a dog. Animal themes run throughout Skinny Puppy's music, especially after the band became involved in animal rights and joined several pro-animal rights groups like PETA and Citpress, an inspiration which would provide the foundation for their *Vivisect VI* album. For the album, singer Nivek Ogre researched animal testing, sending for pamphlets from many animal rights activist organisations, and incorporated his results into the lyrics, live show and video for the album (for the song 'Testure'). Kevin Cey, the keyboardist, explained,

over the last year and a half, we were exposed to some real and shocking footage and reading information upon vivisection and testing on animals. It came largely from Ogre, and it was presented to us and we talked about it as a theme and we all realized that we had been coming toward this, like how Skinny Puppy has always conceptually dealt with the inability to speak up when your tail's being stepped on.³⁰⁰

The band's keyboardist has since discussed *Vivisect VI* as their best album, and many fans agree. Skinny Puppy's lyrics often appear to use words chosen for onomatopoeic value, emphasised by their repetition. In 'Harsh Stone White', the lyrics appear to be speaking about some kind of mental anguish and loss of control. Several elements work to reinforce this lyrical sentiment of dementia and mental torment, particularly the changes in vocal personae, the use of an Echoplex on the voice, background voices and running feedback.

300 <http://www.waste.org/~skumm/Spuppy.html> (04/03/99).

Singer Nivek Ogre takes on several vocal personae. The first uses a fuzz box, double tracking and delay with a whisper underneath. This voice sounds slightly hoarse, disturbed and pained. At times the vocals are nearly spat out and are sung from low in the throat, a bit like the Ramones—especially on ‘stand back’ and ‘unaffected’, and particularly the pronunciation of ‘noñmolested’ which sounds presented with utter disgust. This changes slightly in the second and third verses, where the delay on the vocal is increased, and can range from angry/anguished to a quite disaffected sounding voice, like someone talking aloud to themselves. The instability in the kind of multiple personalities heard gives the impression of somebody in a manic state.

6.3.2.3 Example Three: Covenant: Hardware Requiem (1994)

Sweden’s Covenant consists of Eskil Simonsson, Joakim Montelius and Clas Nachmanson. ‘Hardware Requiem’ is from their first album, *Dreams of a Cryotank*, which takes its lyrical concept largely from science fiction films, particularly *Blade Runner*, but also makes many references to the *Robocop* series through samples on the album. The majority of lyrics on *Cryotank* revolve around the idea that humankind is destroying the planet through the over-reliance on technology.

Our generation has so much to deal with compared with those of the past. There is more information to handle than at any point in history. As technology and the media attempt to pull the world ever closer together, I think people begin to feel overloaded and threatened. These feelings of fear and despair tend to make people feel more lonely and isolated (Covenant *Outburn* # 2: 21).

Songs on the album refer to each other through the use of samples from the same films, but also through lyrical and musical motifs. ‘Hardware Requiem’ for instance is tied to the first song, ‘Theremin’, through having the same lyric line, ‘In the

shadow of our ambitions’. However, whereas the line is left unfinished in ‘Hardware Requiem’, in ‘Theremin’, the line is completed; ‘In the shadow of our ambitions, we’ll kill our children’.

6.3.2.4 Example Four: Converter: Itami (Two)

Converter is, at time of writing, the most popular Power Noise artist. The music is the work of one person, Scott Sturgis, who began his first project, Pain Station, in 1989. Despite Pain Station’s popularity, Sturgis wanted to develop his interest in noise, rhythm and texture outside the limitations of EBM, and so Converter was begun in the late 1990s. The name of the song is likely a reference to the Japanese city, Itami, and perhaps helps to situate the song in a definite urban environment.

The lyrics are completely indiscernible due to a heavy use of vocal effects, but are possibly in Japanese. The effects used appear to be a combination of fuzz box, time stretching and gating, delay, and are possibly cut up or chopped (using a gapper or snipper), giving the effect that the vocals are coming through a radio receiving two stations at once. Such vocals are not uncommon to Noise, and can be heard in songs such as Synapscape’s ‘Tranee’ (*Ant-hology* 1998), or Moata Omen’s ‘Ash Nazg’ (*Ant-hology* 1998).

6.3.2.5 Example Five: Project -X: Dead By Dawn

Project-X have been introduced in the Introduction. The song ‘Dead by Dawn’ was on a limited edition EP release from 2002, *Closing Down the System*, and was originally

used as an introduction to live shows during some German concerts. The version on the CD is instrumental, however for live shows singer Gottberg would improvise over the song, with one version I heard repeating a whispered, ‘This is the last call’ overtop, with additional sounds added. The stage at this point would be dark and empty, and the improvisation would take place from off-stage.

6.4 Conclusion

There are two important conclusions to be made from the results in this chapter. The first is that most respondents associated the songs with dystopia, the second that both fans and non-fans came up with similar connotations. These general findings require further explanation: Chapter Seven is therefore devoted to an examination of *how* industrial communicates the dystopian, dark, futuristic, violent settings envisaged by respondents. The second issue—the similarity of response between fans and non-fans—relates directly to questions of musical reception, the subject of this chapter, and will be discussed here.

Given the degree of cultural competence necessary for the decoding of visual imagery in the industrial genre (see Chapter Four), it is perhaps surprising that fans and non-fans produced similar responses to the five reception test songs. Even among listeners who had no prior knowledge of industrial and who did not understand the lyrics, clear connections were made to death, destruction and dystopia. This may indicate that most of the participants were familiar enough with science fiction and horror films (as well as with the long socio-cultural background to such films—see Chapters Two and Seven), to be able to decode the music in a culturally competent fashion. Does this

suggest, then, that there is no difference between the fans and nonfans in terms of their relationship to the musical text?

This thesis began with some quotations, one of which suggested that the music sounded 'fascist', resembling 'neonazi bands', countered by a fan quotation which implied the opposite. This suggests that there is clearly a difference in readings between fans and non-fans, due to cultural competence, their store of symbols, or the socio-cultural norms they are familiar with. That is to say, despite apparently similar surface readings, it would appear that the visual, lyrical and musical symbols are interpreted *differently*. This contradiction seems to indicate that the symbols *connoted* may be the same, but that the *subsequent values* attached to those paramusical phenomena can be so different (between fans and nonfans) as to be interpreted as the opposite. In other words, the meaning is enriched by the *connotation of those connotations*. I have termed this other level of signification 'supplementary connotations'.³⁰¹

Such a hypothesis suggests that there is a level of communication beyond those included in Tagg's communication model (see above). Although this other level of communication may be latent in Tagg's concept of codal interference, it is not clearly conceptualised:

when transmitter and receiver share the same basic store of musical symbols but totally different sociocultural norms and

301 I would like to thank Philip Tagg for helping me to formulate this argument, and for suggesting the term 'supplementary connotation' (27/07/2002).

are basically 'understood' but that 'adequate response' is obstructed by other factors, such as receivers' general like or dislike of the music and what they think it represents, or by the music being recontextualised verbally or socially (1999: 11).

The reasons for the supplementary connotations may be many. Fans might share with dystopia the sentiment of future-anxiety, they might also be fans of horror and science fiction, they might empathise with the struggle or alienation expressed in the music or in those narratives, etc. Similarly, some respondents may have found the music oppressive, while others found it emancipating.³⁰² The differences of interpretation suggest that listener relationship to the genre as an entirety is crucial in determining the nature of supplementary connotations. In other words, genre, as we also saw in Chapters Four and Five, provides clues and tools to the interpretation of all sorts of texts, musical or otherwise. Just as the imagery worked on an ironic level, but could be decoded through an understanding of the inner ideologies of the industrial community, so the music might work on a level that requires an engagement with the meanings attached to it by the fans.

One of the most striking examples of this supplementary connotation mechanism in industrial is the way in which particular ideological meanings resonate with dystopian narratives produced since World War II. As discussed in Chapter Two, postwar dystopias are often critiques of capitalism: corporations are corrupt overseers destroying the planet, exploiting the workers, etc. and media are seen as propaganda systems. Given the usual ideological positioning of industrial fans, it is fairly safe to

302 These aesthetics of the music are therefore an area for future study.

say that they might have a particular appreciation of such dystopias as symbolic of their own sentiments of alienation. It is therefore hardly unreasonable to conclude that the fans, by identifying with industrial, are in fact also identifying with the ideological critiques expressed in dystopian narratives. Only one stage remains, therefore; to see *how* these sentiments and ideologies are mediated through the music.