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## Article

# Affective Turn, or Return?

A Critical Overview of Music and Affective Politics

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## Abstract

The 'affective turn' suggests that we pay attention to how affects create subjectivities, build communities, and shape new forms of politics in the making. It invites us to move beyond established humanities and social science paradigms and toward richer forms of contextual analysis by studying how bodies – human and otherwise – 'act and are acted upon' (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 1). The 'affective turn' requires sensitive attention to a host of cognate terms and concepts – sentiment, emotion, reverberation, resonance, atmosphere, and far beyond, including the more specific trans-category of 'affective politics' as well as affective reinterpretations of the social. Music has long been recognized as a site where affective politics play out. However, existing scholarship often view Baruch Spinoza, Silvan Tomkins, Gilles Deleuze, and Brian Massumi as the founding fathers of affective thinking at the expense of related work in the broader tradition of music philosophy. We address this lacuna by discussing the relationship between music, affect, and politics in the work of Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, Qian Sima, Johannes Tinctoris, René Descartes, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Theodor Adorno, Antoine Hennion, and Tia DeNora, as we aim to broaden, nuance, sharpen, and situate contemporary understandings of affective politics in music studies. In doing so, we discuss whether the affective turn is, perhaps, better understood as a 'return' to cross-disciplinary music research that situates the understandings of affective politics, relational agency, and political emotions within a longer history of music philosophy that, taken together, provide a more robust theoretical argument for the social and political force of musical sounds.

## Keywords

music, affect, affective politics, theory, politics



## **Music and Affective Politics**

The ‘affective turn’ suggests that we pay attention to how affects create subjectivities, build communities, and shape new forms of politics in the making (White 2017; Desai-Stephens and Reissour 2020; Graber and Sumera 2020; Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Clough 2007; Goodwin et al. 2001). It invites us to move beyond established humanities and social science paradigms and towards richer forms of contextual analysis by studying how bodies – human and otherwise – ‘act and are acted upon’ (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 1) and how they ‘affect and are affected by’ one another (Deleuze 1988). To describe anything that might be explicated by the ‘affective turn’ requires sensitive attention to a host of cognate terms and concepts – sentiment, emotion, reverberation, resonance, atmosphere, and far beyond, including the more specific trans-category of ‘affective politics’ as well as affective reinterpretations of the social and the collective (Ahmed 2004, 2010, 2014; Schiermer 2023). Regardless of the conceptual apparatus employed, a turn to affective politics foregrounds what Erin Manning (2009) calls a ‘relationscape’, where affective forces, continuously produced by interacting human and non-human participants, work to shape each other’s capacities to act (Spinoza 2002). As such, it underscores how processes of subjectification, as well as social formations, are always relational and co-constituted by material and human factors (Barad 2003; Latour 2007; 2013, 233–259). Such affective forces operate at what Shaun Gallagher (2016) calls a ‘pre-noetic’ level and what Brian Massumi (2002) describes as pre-cognitive, doing their work of shaping subjectivities *before* conscious awareness kicks in. As Friedrich Nietzsche frames it, ‘Between two thoughts all kinds of affects play their game: but their motions are too fast, therefore we fail to recognize them’ (Nietzsche 1967, 264). Affect, thought this way, shapes action, including collective action (Schiermer 2021).

Music has long been recognized as a site where affective politics play out. However, with the exception of recent work by Ana Hofman (2015), Roger Grant (2020), and Judy Lochhead, Eduardo Mendieta, and Stephen Decatur Smith (2021, especially their co-authored Introduction), existing scholarship seldom engages with related work in the broader tradition of music philosophy. Instead, there is a tendency to view Baruch Spinoza (2002), Silvan Tomkins (1962, 1963), Gilles Deleuze (1988), and Brian Massumi (1995) as the founding ‘fathers’ of affective thinking. Inspired by Lochhead, Mendieta, and Smith’s arguments (2021) our examination of the relationship between music, affect, and politics begins in ancient Greek philosophy, and pursues how these ideas were developed further in musical and philosophical theories during the Renaissance, the Romantic period and throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, across disciplines. In doing so we focus on the work by Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, Qian Sima, Johannes Tinctoris, René Descartes, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Theodor Adorno, Antoine Hennion, and Tia DeNora, among others. Our aim is to broaden, nuance, sharpen, and situate contemporary understandings of affective politics in

music studies.<sup>1</sup> We therefore discuss whether the affective turn is, perhaps, better understood as a ‘return’ to cross-disciplinary music research that situates understandings of affective politics, relational agency, and political emotions within a longer history of music philosophy that, taken together, provide a more robust theoretical argument for the social and political force of musical sounds. In discussing these theories, we draw attention to similarities and differences in conceptual understandings of the terms and point out how genealogies of affective thinking have developed over time. While we take deep inspiration from the pioneering work by Spinoza, Tomkins, Deleuze, and Massumi, we also believe that, through further development of affect theory, and notions of affective politics, music studies have much to gain and little to lose if we broaden the theoretical dialogue by discussing relevant work by scholars that are often excluded from established conversations on music, affect, and politics.

## **The Affective Turn in Context**

The recent interest in affect in music studies can be read, in part, as a response to earlier ‘linguistic’ (Rorty 1992; 2012) and ‘discursive’ turns (Steinberg 1998) and the concomitant rise of social constructivism and other social science methods that have informed research on how music has shaped and been shaped by social and political structures (Born 2012; Feld and Brenneis 2004; Frith 1996; Negus 1997).<sup>2</sup> Inspired by ‘new musicology’ and developments in ethnomusicology and popular music studies, as well as neighbouring disciplines like cultural sociology and music anthropology, many music scholars became in the 90s and early 2000s reluctant to study music as a self-contained ‘object’ (often referred to as ‘the music itself’), eschewing music-analytic approaches deemed too formalist, positivist, or structure-oriented, and instead privileging contexts over musical texts.<sup>3</sup> Read against this history, we understand affective approaches to music studies as a way to close the gap between socio-cultural approaches and those which foreground musical details and their effects. Such approaches potentially bring multiple methodological perspectives into dialogue: theories of musical meaning and work on relational agency, ethnographic and historiographical methods, archival work, consideration

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<sup>1</sup> We use the terms ‘music studies’ and ‘music research’ interchangeably in referring to music scholarship as an inclusive cross-disciplinary field of research that include, but are not limited to, musicology/musikwissenschaft/musikkvitenskap/musicology/musicologia, ethnomusicology, music theory, popular music studies, music philosophy, music aesthetics, music sociology, and any given field of research that aims to study music as culture. In addition to the those already mentioned, our broad musical engagement with affective politics also follows in the footsteps of related work by Marcel Cobussen and Nanette Nielsen (2016), Marcel Cobussen (2016), Denise Gill (2020) and Roger Mathew Grant (2018), among others.

<sup>2</sup> To make a long story short, these studies used ethnographic methods and different types of contextual analysis, and other methods inspired by sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, at the expense of in-depth music analysis and aesthetic interpretation of the music itself.

<sup>3</sup> See Agawu (2004) and Horton (2020) for sensitive defences of music analysis as a method and disciplinary orientation, and Juan Diego Díaz’s (2021) musical interpretation of ‘Africaness in action’ in Afro-Brazilian musics, for a recent example of how music analysis can be used to interpret cultural dynamics.

of aesthetic or cultural formations, analyses of musical structure and process, and much more. That these diverse methodological perspectives can fruitfully coexist is an assumption that drives affect-oriented approaches, even when they are not named explicitly as such, as we see, for example, in Michael Spitzer's (2017) analysis of the emotional range that unfolds across *The Arcade Fire's 'Funeral'*. Affect-oriented music research always aims to better understand how interacting bodies (including the 'bodies' of musical sounds; Stover 2016) affect and are affected by one another in specific social and political contexts (Cobussen 2016, Gill 2020, James 2021, Turner 2020); paying attention to the specific ways affects do their work necessitates the kind of close attention to detail that music analysis, among many other methods, makes possible (Böhler 2021; 2017; Stover 2017). Taken together, recent affective approaches to music studies have been attempting to recalibrate what kinds of analytical perspectives are possible by inviting new dialogues between music theory, (ethno)musicology, popular music studies, and other disciplinary perspectives, including queer (Maus 1995), feminist (Luong 2017), disability (Straus 2006), decolonial (Robinson and Nickleson 2023), critical race theory (Eidsheim 2019), and multi-species (Tomlinson 2021) approaches, as well as sound studies (Goodman 2010, Thompson and Biddle 2013).<sup>4</sup> However, to fully understand the analytical potential of what a turn, or return, to affect can offer music studies we first need to take a step back.

## Music, Affect, and Politics in Greek Antiquity

Almost 2,500 years ago, Plato described how changes in musical taste following the Persian wars fuelled social unrest and critiques of established political authorities (Plato 1997, *Laws* 700a–701b). He argued that music should be strictly regulated by the State because of its potential to influence people's affective and political dispositions (Pelosi 2010; Plato 1997, *Republic*, 4.424b–d). Plato's imagined republic would only have allowed for musical affects that would improve people's education and sense of morality (Pelosi 2010). By calling in this way for what was, in effect, musical censorship, he illustrates the degree to which he believed music's social and political affordances – including specific rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic configurations – could influence political sentiment and build moral character for better or worse, in no small part due to their affective potentials (Pelosi 2010). As Plato's Socrates suggests,

[...] rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul more than anything else, affecting it most strongly and bringing it grace, so that if someone is properly educated in music and

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<sup>4</sup> Again, many of these authors do not specifically use the term 'affect,' but their work resonates with affect theory in crucial ways.

poetry, it makes him graceful, but if not, then the opposite.  
(Plato, 1997, *Republic*, 3.401d)

Given the value that nurturing good citizenship education held for Plato, it is clear how important music was for doing this formative work and, by extension, the degree to which Plato understood the role music could play in terms of what we're calling affective politics: its ability to shape listening subjects in one direction or another.

Aristotle developed his mentor's theories with what he called *aisthesis* in *De Anima* (Aristotle 2016), which he defined as a form of sensory perception that foregrounds affective engagement through the body, paraphrasing the earlier Greek concept of *aisthetikos*, or sense experience (Kaeppler 2003). Aristotle linked *aisthesis* to the kinds of knowledge gained from practice (*phronêsis*) and technical expertise (*tekhnê*) like, for example, playing a musical instrument (Pickford 2017, 24). By understanding music through the intersection of technical and affective parameters, he argued that musical structures, such as specific scales, could give rise to particular affects and therefore influence social formations (Schneider 2010, 77; Aristotle 1991; 2013). In contrast to Plato, Aristotle had a predominantly positive view of music's affective potentials, and he believed that musical sounds could inspire moral judgments and noble dispositions and practices (Aristotle 2013, *Politics*, 1341a-1342a). Central to Aristotle's theory was his concept of *scholê*, which can be translated to a form of leisure, and which he considered to be one of the goals of organizing a healthy political community, which according to him, should be modelled on music, arts, sports, and philosophy, among other things. More importantly, these activities could induce particular forms of pleasure and well-being. He argues, for example, that

Being at leisure, on the other hand, is held to involve pleasure, happiness, and living blessedly. This is not available to those who are occupied but rather to those who at leisure, for the person who is occupied is occupied for the sake of some end [...] while happiness is an end and something all suppose to be accompanied not by pain but by pleasure. (Aristotle 2013 *Politics*, 1337b)

Experiences of musical pleasures are central to Aristotle's concept of 'being at leisure' as he argues that 'music belongs amongst the most pleasant things' (Aristotle, 2013, *Politics*, 1339a) and throughout Book VIII in *Politics* he elaborates on how the affective force of music can play a crucial role in organizing the political community. He writes extensively about the role of specific melodies, scales, and rhythms, as the following quote illustrates:

[...] the Phrygian [scale] makes [people] inspired [...]. Things stand in the same manner in connection with rhythms as well: some of them have a character that is more steadfast, other a

character marked by movement, and of these some have movements of a cruder, others of a more liberal sort. It is evident from these things then, that music can render the character of the soul of a certain quality. If it is capable of doing this, clearly it must be employed and the young must be educated in [music...], music by nature belong among the sweetened things. Moreover, on their part for harmonies and rhythms: hence, many of the wise assert that either the soul is a harmony or that it involves harmony. (Aristotle 2013, *Politics*, 1440a)

This passage echoes, and elaborates on several arguments made by Plato, but in contrast to his mentor's fear of music's seductive power, Aristotle viewed music largely as a positive resource for social and political organization that could enhance well-being, education, and togetherness and spread good values. More importantly, he viewed musical and political education as deeply intertwined and argued that political leaders should be educated in music because specific types of music had particular ethical, social, and affective affordances that could shape actions and ways of being together (Aristotle 2013, *Politics*, 1341a):

[...] we see that the factors in music are melody and rhythm, and it is important to notice what influence each of these has upon education [...] And since we accept the classification of melodies made by some philosophers, as ethical melodies, melodies of action, and passionate melodies [...] it is clear that we should employ all the harmonies, yet not employ them all in the same way, but use the most ethical ones for education, and the active and passionate kinds for listening to when others are performing – for any experience that occurs violently in some souls is found in all, though with different degrees of intensity – for example pity and fear, and also religious excitement; for some persons are very liable to this form of emotion, and under the influence of sacred music we see these people, when they use tunes that violently arouse the soul, being thrown into a state as if they had received medicinal treatment and taken a purge; the same experience then must come also to the compassionate and the timid and the other emotional people generally in such degree as befalls each individual of these classes, and all must undergo a purgation and a pleasant feeling of relief; and similarly also the purgative melodies afford harmless delight to people. (Aristotle 2013, *Politics*, 1341a-1342a)

As this passage makes clear, Aristotle viewed music's affective qualities and affordances as both universal and deeply subjective as he recognized how scales, rhythms and melodies affected people differently. He elaborates on this by pointing

out how young and old people use music in different ways: ‘it is clear that it suits the younger pupils to be educated rather in the Dorian melodies [...] those whose powers have waned through lapse of time cannot easily sing the highly strung harmonies, but to persons of that age nature suggests the relaxed harmonies’ (Aristotle 2013, *Politics*, 1342b). Aristotle clearly recognizes music’s affective qualities and potential in social engineering. These ideas have influenced music therapy (Garrido et al. 2013; Garrido and Schubert 2015; Provenza 2017; 2020), music education (Regelski 1998; Stamou 2002) as well as approaches to music and politics (Klette-Böhler 2024), and broader interpretations of music and culture.

Aristotle’s ideas resonated with contemporaneous thought in China, for example in the writings of Qian Sima (1969), who considered, among other insights, how when the tones of the pentatonic collection ‘are correct, men’s conduct is correct’ and how, anticipating one of the ideas that drove *Affektenlehre* many centuries later, the relationship between tones generates a force that ‘circulates through the life essences and gives to the heart harmony and rectitude’ (Rudhyar 1982, 169, citing Qian Sima). Qian Sima’s conflation of social, biological, and cosmological functions through affect is noteworthy.<sup>5</sup> Likewise the rich theory of *rasa* in the Indian *rāga* tradition, in which precise musical structures and gestures function as catalysts for helping a listener enter into one of nine emotional states (Nawasalkar, Nawasalkar, and Mangrukar 2016). The foundations of *rasa* theory can be traced back to Bharat Muni’s *Natyasastra*, thought to have been written around 600 BCE. The eighteenth-century Hayy al-Arwāh, written by Miyan Zia-ud-din and drawing upon a many-centuries-long performance practice and theoretical tradition that also intersects with Arabic and Persian music trajectories (Schofield 2021), considers a specific case of music’s affective valence being interrupted and reconstituted by political upheaval. Like Qian Sima, Zia-ud-din’s account brings biological (and psychoanalytic, *avant la lettre*) and social-political considerations into dialogue.

## Music as Affective Politics during the Renaissance

Ancient conceptions of the affective power of music remained influential for many centuries, for example, in the work of seminal Islamic philosopher Al-Farabi. In his tenth-century *Kitab al-Musiqi al-Kabir*, Al-Farabi builds upon Aristotelian ideas as he developed a theory of how specific melodies could trigger particular emotions (Shehadi 1995) or psychological states (Haque 2004).

Aristotle’s influence was likewise profound on the Renaissance composer and theorist Johannes Tinctoris’s systematic study of musical affects (Woodley et al. 2013). Tinctoris drew Aristotelian ideas into dialogue with contemporaneous Christian values, developing a concept of consonance and dissonance to study how musical structures express both affects and moral values (Wegman 1995, 50). He

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<sup>5</sup> See Stover (2022) for further implications for affect theory.



associated consonance with the sacred and dissonance with the profane (Wuidar 2013, 282–284), thus linking music, affect, and politics systematically within a Christian world view; this analytical binary would have a profound impact on subsequent compositional practice and modes of listening as well as on later understandings of music and affect in Christian ethics (Wegman 2002, 50; Wegman 1995).

René Descartes's *Compendium Musicae* (Descartes 1961; written in 1618 and published posthumously in 1650), and his 1649 treaty on affects in *The Passions of the Soul* (Descartes 1989) had an especially strong impact on the subsequent interpretations of music and affect in Western theory and practice. Again, inspired by Aristotle's arguments, Descartes suggests that music's aim is 'to please and to arouse various Affections in us' (Descartes 1961, 11), underscoring how the ways music matters affectively to us are produced through its rhythmic and pitch structures (Augst 1965, 121), echoing Muni's argument many centuries earlier in the *Natyasastra*. He elaborates on this by defining affects and emotions as products of external sensory objects that act upon us through what he calls our 'animal spirit' (Descartes [1649] 2015, 2–3), referring to how bodies function physiologically and spiritually, combining insights from contemporaneous biology and metaphysics and underscoring how feelings are deeply embodied and, potentially, spiritual (Smith et al. 2012). It also anticipated how Baruch Spinoza (2002) would soon theorize the intertwining of affect, embodiment, reason, and ethics, which, in turn, has inspired a great deal of the recent work on affect and affective politics and stands at the centre of the affective turn.<sup>6</sup> Descartes distinguished between six basic affects (or 'primitive passions,' which he called 'wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness' (Descartes [1649] 1989, 56), an affective taxonomy that inspired later developments in psychology as well as the *Affektenlehre* or 'doctrine of the affections' that was soon to have a profound impact on music theory, composition, performance practice, and perception.

*Affektenlehre* links Aristotle's, Al-Farabi's, and Tinctoris's emphases on the relationship between musical materials and affects with Descartes's typology of basic emotions, together with the affordances of new developments in music notation and compositional design. Its theorists applied these ideas to music analysis and compositional and performance practice by modelling, once again, how specific musical structures could give rise to particular affects. For example, as one of the most influential *Affektenlehre* theorists, Johann Mattheson, puts it, '[s]ince for

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<sup>6</sup> While Spinoza's conception goes beyond the bounds of this introductory essay on music and affective politics, it was key for several of the most influential figures in contemporary affect theory, including Silvan Tomkins and Gilles Deleuze, and theorists of subjectification like Antonio Negri and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Deleuze's line of 'minor' philosophical personae—from Lucretius to Duns Scotus to Spinoza and Leibniz to Maimon to Nietzsche and Bergson—could be said to be largely animated by a shared concern with affect he found in their work. Spinoza's conception of affect has been put to work in music studies by Amy Cimini (2010), Andy McGraw (2020), and Chris Stover (2021), among many others.

example joy is an expansion of our soul, thus it follows reasonably and naturally that I could best express this affect by large and expanded intervals' (Mattheson 1981, 127).<sup>7</sup>

## Affect and Aesthetics

While *Affektenlehre* theorists offered a rich account of how musical structures could give rise to specific affects, inspiring many compositional innovations, they did not account for how, for example, the same interval or gestural topic could trigger different responses depending on the musical context and background of the listeners. *Affektenlehre* also privileged harmony and melody and downplayed rhythm, often describing the affective qualities of rhythms as barbaric and uncivilized, thus repeating value judgments about different modes of musical affect (Christensen, 2019). In short, *Affektenlehre* theorists developed a highly prescriptive model of musical listening and composing. Rooted in part in Christian ethics, its methods also reflected broader geo-political imperatives through which European ways of listening (viz., much later, Aaron Copland's [1939] proscriptively titled *What to Listen for In Music*) shaped and were shaped by colonial structures and imperial ambitions (Radano and Olaniyan, 2016), which was to foreclose the possibility that future colonizers would be able to hear non-western music as music (Ochoa 2014; Radano and Bohlman 2000). This array of listening hierarchies also revealed the growing influence of aesthetics, which took hold most thoroughly via the philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and their foregrounding of rational and 'contemplative' modes of musical listening and ideas of disinterested musical beauty, which influenced later ideas of music's 'ineffability' (Wackenroder 1799; Hanslick [1891] 1986).<sup>8</sup> Hegel saw (European) aesthetics as part of a longer teleological development, which he believed had developed from the primitive to the modern, and where aesthetic progress was evidenced through complexity and beauty (Hegel 1997, 1999, Hegel 1885, 26–29). Like the *Affektenlehre* theorists before him, Hegel described African musics, and music modelled on affective rhythms, as barbaric and uncivilized (Hegel 1997, 136–142; Pieterse 1992, 42), marking a defining contribution to the conceptual and material-political carving up of the world into what Stuart Hall ([1992] 2019) dubbed 'the West and the rest.' Embedded in Hegel's Eurocentric and racist ontology is a foundational Cartesian dualism that elevates the mind (as a site of contemplation and reason) and disdains the body (as a site of affect and interrelationality).

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<sup>7</sup> See Grant (2020) for a rich engagement with *Affektenlehre* and its uses and implications, including its resonances with current understandings of affect.

<sup>8</sup> Wackenroder, for example, suggests that music 'represent[s] a separate world in itself' (Wackenroder 1799, 241), that cannot be reduced to studies of affect and perception. His argument was that (instrumental) music manifests a transcendent reality that operates beyond established structures of ordinary sensory perception, and which can only be understood through a novel Romantic concept of art coupled with the notion of the 'artist as a genius.'

Kant's ideas about aesthetic experience likewise cleave to the duality. Kant explicitly downplays the sensory and affective by claiming disinterested experiences of the beautiful to define aesthetics as such:

Everyone has to admit that if a judgment about beauty is mingled with the least interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. In order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing's existence but must be wholly indifferent about it. (Kant 1987, 24 [§2])

For Kant, affective sensations were evidence of the anti-aesthetic because pleasure triggered an interest in the listener, which in turn prevented 'a pure judgment of taste' (Kant 1987, 24 [§2]). Instead, Kant believed that true aesthetic judgments required a sense of disinterestedness that would prevent the listener, or viewer, from being 'biased in favor of the thing's existence' (Kant 1987, 24 [§2]).

Both Kant and Hegel strove to decouple music from affects – and, by extension, politics and social contexts – and their ideas were instrumental for the construction of a Eurocentric canon of Western art music by 'genius' composers (Born and Hesmondalgh 2000; Radano and Bohlman 2000) and an attitude toward listening experience oriented toward the contemplative rather than the visceral or carnal. A consequence of their critique of sensory experience and focus on abstract reasoning, contemplation, and disinterested experiences of the beautiful has been the consolidation of (still-ongoing) distinctions between 'art' music and 'popular' (or 'folk,' etc.) music, which reifies Western Europe (and by extension Euro-America) as the geopolitical centre and valorises certain forms of music-making and apprehending over others.

### **From Disinterest to Interest: 'Interest is the Soul of Beauty'**

While Kant's and Hegel's theories of aesthetics had a profound impact on later understandings of music, some of their students disagreed with their main arguments. One of them was Johan Gottfried Herder, a student of Kant's, who strongly critiqued his mentor's insistence on disinterested experiences of the beautiful. In contrast, Herder found interest and pleasure (*angenehmen*) as essential to aesthetic experience, arguing that

[t]he poets of paradise, the painters of that Elysium, what do they offer our feeling? [...] Pleasurable breezes cosset the blessed [...] joyfully and freely [...] the pleasurable does not merely gratify, rather the inmost pleasurable empowers, strengthens my existence; the most inmost pleasurable is my living felt existence itself. (Herder in Guyer 2007, 359)

Herder suggests that aesthetic experiences are always the product of the relation between an individual's interest and strong sensations produced by the object of experience, and that these experiences are central to our sense of being as such, as well as what he calls 'being in pleasure' [*Dasein und Wohlsein*] (Herder in Guyer 2007, 361). This leads him to locate aesthetics at the very heart of broader epistemological debates, replacing Descartes's famous '*Cogito ergo sum*' with '*Sentio ergo sum*' (I feel, therefore I am) and arguing that aesthetics, understood in this Aristotelian sense, provides the strongest evidence for our very being in the world, thus anticipating later work in phenomenology related to intentionality and experience.

Sensory perception, affects, and pleasure, then, are defining features of aesthetic experience for Herder. Inspired by his own work on *Volksgeist* and culture, Herder also argued that aesthetics should not be studied exclusively within the field of Western arts, but should engage other cultural contexts (Norton 1991), through systematic empirical research on how visual and auditory perception give rise to pleasure and affective experiences (Guyer 2007, 354–355). Thanks to these arguments, Herder is often regarded as a precursor to music anthropology and ethnomusicology, as his work inspired early research in cross-cultural aesthetics and comparative musicology (Herder 2017; Noyes 2015, 121–135; Bohlman 2010).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau developed similar arguments, reflecting his interest in music's capacity to affect our bodies and ways of being together (Rousseau 1997; Street 2013, 144–145). Similar to Herder's (2017) interpretation of *Volksgeist* (folk-spirit) and *Volkslieder* (folk-songs), Rousseau believed that deep listening to music from different cultures could provide insights into how music matter for humans 'as sentient, thinking beings' (Rousseau 1997, 248). He was particularly interested in the social, political, and affective force of melody, believing that the 'melody act[s] on us not only as sounds but as signs of our affections' (Herder in Simon 2004, 438). These musical affections could provide insights into deeper truths of our social and political organization (Rousseau in Street 2013, 143–147). More importantly, to understand this convergence between the musical and the social requires deep listening, affective sensitivity, and an understanding of cultural difference. As Rousseau argues,

[...] all men in the universe will take pleasure in listening to beautiful sounds, but unless this pleasure is enlivened by familiar melodic inflections it will not be [totally] delightful, it will not become utter pleasure [*volupte*]. The songs which to us are the most beautiful will only moderately affect an ear completely unaccustomed to them; it is a language for which one has to have the Dictionary. (Rousseau 1997, 415)

The idea that music is both a language and a mode of communication that precedes language is crucial for Rousseau, as he believed that ancient forms of musical communication remind us how affects shape social formations, and ways of being, prior to reason:

[...] cadences and sounds are born together with syllables: passion rouses all of the organs to speech, and adorns the voice with their full brilliance; thus verse, song, speech have a common origin.... [T]he first speeches were the first songs: the periodic and measured recurrences of rhythms, the melodious inflections of accents, caused poetry and music to be born together with language. (Rousseau 1997, 282)

Taken together, Rousseau's and Herder's arguments can be placed within a broader Aristotelian tradition where music aesthetics is primary understood through affect and sensory perception. From this perspective, and in stark contrast to Kantian and Hegelian views, music is always already social and political.

## **Music and Affective Politics in the Twentieth Century**

All of this sets up a somewhat delicate antinomy between affect and aesthetics in the twentieth century, which a careful reading of Theodor W. Adorno's work helps elucidate. On the one hand, Adorno is a product of Kantian aesthetics with its emphasis on rationality, disinterested contemplation, and – and this is a contentious theme which deserves more nuance than we can give it here – a moralistic fear of sensuous enjoyment. From this perspective, Adorno, like Kant and Hegel before him, continues impulses already found in Plato.

But on the dialectical other hand, affects play a crucial role in Adorno's thinking. The very impetus behind his criticism is affective, and so is the very force of Adorno's understanding of 'true' art and the music's 'truth content [*Wahrheitsgehalt*]' (Adorno and Paddison 1982, 176), which he argued could be revealed through deep listening and music analysis (Adorno and Paddison 1982, 176). For Adorno, art's project is to restore affective sensitivity and therefore the modern subject's right to feel the true reality of contemporary society, including especially allowing people to feel their own suffering. For Adorno, there is an affective motor that drives all 'true' art that the culture industry conceals. He argues, for example, that

[t]he intolerance of the Culture Industry toward everything that does not bear its stamp has become so all-embracing that this alienation has ceased to be visible to the consumer. What has been achieved is a false reconciliation. What should be close at hand, the 'consciousness of suffering,' becomes unbearably alien. The most alien thing of all, however, is the process that hammers the machinery into [people]'s consciousness and has ceased to contain anything that is human, invades them body and soul and appears to be the nearest and dearest thing of all. (Adorno 1999, 14)

The alienated subject is so alienated that it does not even feel its own alienation. A key reason is that the culture industry enacts what Adorno calls a ‘false reconciliation’ that allows the subject to dream itself away; by alienating the subject from its authentic suffering, the culture industry permits a transient refuge from societal pressures (Adorno 1976). By keeping reality at bay, culture-industrial products affectively produce alienation, numbing the consumer by becoming ‘the nearest and dearest thing of all’; hence the way the culture industry cultivates an affective obsession with its stars, its glamour, its surfaces, its bodies, and its sentimentalities. It allows people to feel and connect – but only ephemerally.

The affective-political implications of Adorno’s claim are profound. Adorno would argue that popular music’s affective registers are extremely seductive, which by extension would suggest that popular music is, potentially and actually, a site for the shaping of subjective states at individual, group, and even mass levels.<sup>9</sup> His pessimism about cultural products and commodity forms limit his imagination in terms of how that shaping might occur, not least because of the elitist implications of his distinction between ‘true’ art and commodity products and, perhaps more importantly, his unsupported assumption that the affects produced by a product of the culture industry necessarily mis-shape a subject in an alienating way. Still, there is value in working within Adorno’s distinction that helps stake out the terms of music’s affective-political capacities.

According to Adorno, each pop hit mobilizes practically identical structural features – for instance, chorus-refrain ratios, similar (short) length, basic harmonic structures, a pleasurable and easily decodable form, and so on. While the culture industry may insist that they are merely serving consumers’ taste, the truth is that they create conformity among docile consumers. Adorno describes this standardization of the cultural industrial musical product as ‘the eternal sameness of hit songs’ (Adorno [1953] 2002, 135). While a new pop hit may appear as different, it is, according to Adorno, modelled on the same standard features as all the other pop songs. These features exclusively serve the aim of producing profit but also work, as we have seen, to prevent critique and preserve the status quo. Add to this that the cultural-industrial segmentation of market niches leads to a more fine-grained affective tailoring of its products: hence genres and sub-genres marketed, more or less, to specific communities of consumers. In this sense, the culture industry shapes bodies to fit the very affective stereotypes it produces in the first place. It segments the affective capacities of the population. In effect it polices which bodies become capable of feeling which affects.

In absolute contrast to the ‘productions’ of the cultural industry, Adorno characterizes what he calls ‘serious music.’ ‘Serious music’ must not only truthfully portray what is according to Adorno an ever more rationalized, atomized, and

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<sup>9</sup> Lochhead, Mendieta, and Smith (2021, 14) refer to this as ‘an Affektenlehre of the culture industry’.

bureaucratized reality, but must also keep track of the most advanced historical developments in terms of compositional theory and practice. If real social conditions under modernity consist of a systematic grid which assembles completely atomized and lonely pseudo-individuals, then a true artwork must hold all ‘Romantic sentimentality,’ all tonal harmony, and any form of ‘reconciliation’ at bay. Adorno thus insists that the genuine musical artwork must enact a complete rupture with established ways of listening. ‘Serious music’ should not be modelled on established ideas about beauty, but rather expose listeners to ugliness, to the dizzying world of atonality and disharmony. It should be confrontational. It should shake the listener and interrupt ‘the blindness, spire and conventionalism of the actual audience’ (Adorno [1945] 2002, 380). It should rupture, in other words, the commodity form.

In all, Adorno makes a strong case for the political force of musical composition as an affective form of power – good or bad, progressive or regressive. On the one hand, in true art, we are dealing with radical compositional experimentation and technique, meant to convey the dizzying, nauseating, and strident character of affective experience in the context of the mid-twentieth century. As John Street puts it, ‘Adorno suggests [that] we must consider the direct effects that sound has upon us – the musical equivalent of a fingernail scrapping down a blackboard’ (Street 2012, 149). On the other hand, echoing Plato, Adorno was highly critical of music’s seductive qualities. His belief that all conventional form serves as a mere source of capitalist profit and a hidden structure of ideological and affective control leads him to enforce a radical extradition of musical pleasure and of popular forms of collective and bodily enjoyment. Whether or not Adorno’s critical stance is wholly justified, it cannot be ignored that there is a class aspect connected with his total dismissal of the cultural industrial complex in as much as the affective capacities catered for by the cultural industry are the ones – collective, anti-contemplative, embodied – typically connected with popular enjoyment. Obviously, the experimental and sophisticated compositional forms promoted by Adorno require an extreme cultivation of a bourgeois ‘habitus’ involving select affective capacities only found in the absolute cultural elite. Adorno did not sufficiently address these matters.

### **Music in Everyday Life: The New Sociology of Art**

While Adorno’s sociology of music is centered on its role in restoring and resuscitating what he felt to be a true affective reaction to contemporary social reality, other cultural sociologists have integrated affect in other ways. There are current attempts to elucidate, for instance, how Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘implicit theory of affect’ (Matthäus 2017) might animate the class struggle that lurks behind cultural production and consumption, thereby staking out some of the distance between Adorno’s art/culture poles described above. The Birmingham School, led by Stuart Hall’s ground-breaking work, cultivated semiotic analysis in a Marxist frame, reading music as, essentially, a form of strongly affective communication, which could be put to work as what Dick Hebdige called ‘semiotic guerilla warfare’ (Hebdige 1979). There is little doubt that the Birmingham School’s analyses of

subcultural practices – from Hebdige’s analyses of subcultural resistance and overt provocation to Angela McRobbies’s (1984, 1991) work on teenage girl culture – hide riches for a sociology focusing on the affective forces that shape youth culture.

And yet there is little work on the actual enjoyment of music in these cultural sociologies.<sup>10</sup> Sociological analysis has tended to explain away music’s concrete affective enactment, reducing it to a mere ‘screen’ for the projection of a class-based ‘habitus’, to a vehicle for the demarcation of position in a (sub)cultural ‘field’, or as instrumental in the construction of subcultural identity, reducing clothing and music to mere semiotic displays of ‘resistance’ to society and the parent culture (Schiermer 2023). The actual affective relation to musical sounds is often underplayed or even completely ignored in these analyses.

Affective relations to musical sounds, however, are exactly what characterize the work of more recent music sociologists. The so-called New Sociology of Art (De la Fuente 2007) is characterised not only by a focus on the active commerce with the musical object but also – as a rule – by the latter’s positive affective valour. A central work here is Antoine Hennion’s *The Passion of Music* ([1993] 2015). While the affective dimension remains undertheorized in Hennion, there is little doubt that it is crucial in his work. Hennion is directly interested in the sites of musical enjoyment and the ‘ceremonies of pleasure’ found among ‘music lovers’:

It is necessary to develop a strategy of listening in order to ‘feel comfortable’ with music. There is a whole range of possibilities, from teenagers with their Walkmans, or ‘ghetto blasters’ in their bedroom with the volume turned up high, to, at the other (?) end of the spectrum, armchair Wagnerians, who, having laid down certain strict rules to keep their wives and children at bay, have lost no time in developing a ‘hi-fi’ appreciation of music by creating an acoustic environment for themselves with extremely expensive stereo systems and speakers, within living-rooms that have themselves been transformed into speakers, in which they can immerse themselves in moments of Bayreuth exaltation.

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<sup>10</sup> With notable exceptions. One place to start would be McRobbies’s essay on dance and social fantasy: There is, on the one hand, the social pressures which direct little girls towards dance as a suitably feminine form of leisure. And dancing here is linked with being pretty, graceful, controlled and an object of admiration. But this conformist role does not deny the way dance carries enormously pleasurable qualities for girls and women which frequently seem to suggest a displaced, shared, and nebulous eroticism rather than a straightforwardly romantic, heavily heterosexual ‘goal-oriented’ drive (1984, 134). Without leaving structure behind, McRobbie is clearly attentive to the affective – and affirmative – side of dancing cultivated among young women. See also Paul Willis’s classic on Rocker and Hippie subculture (2014 [1978]). Willis clearly sees the importance of active musical enjoyment. Willis’s work is interesting in its attempt to combine acute object sensitivity with a sense of structure and with semiotic impulses. To this see also Willis’s new preface to *Profane Culture* (Willis 2014, xxi–xxii). There are equally important passages in Paul Gilroy’s work, notably Chapter 3 in *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1993, 73–110).



Music itself is not the end result of a passion for music, but a means, like the orchestra, voice, instrumental technique and the stage, of reaching certain states.

Less concerned with the written music than the lover of quartets, the opera lover (because of the singing, the body, the divas, the tendency to eroticize the voice) is more prone to thinking about music in terms of attaining intense states of emotion, and approaches the music partly with this emotional factor in mind. (Hennion 2001, 9)

For Hennion, as for many music sociologists, music is largely a means to obtain a desired affective state. Inspired by Science and Technology Studies (STS), Hennion specifically focuses on the technological mediation of musical affect. To be sure, the development of reliable high-quality recording technologies and affordable audio systems during the last half of the twentieth century must be drawn into any true understanding of the development of contemporary music culture, with all its shifting technologies and their insertion into and co-construction of virtually all spheres of life. One only needs to think about what the invention of the vinyl LP and concert PA (public audio) equipment meant to the very coming into being of a Western youth culture largely centered on music. There is still much to understand about the impact of the digital revolution, new forms of online streaming, and how these transform our practices with music, with ourselves, and with our surroundings.

What is most interesting, though, in Hennion's work, is its illumination of the subject's affective enactment with the object, through technological mediators. Turning up the sound or repositioning oneself in relation to the speakers are often important aspects of such object enactment, but so may be carrying a Walkman while amidst an urban crowd of strangers, cultivating a space free from other household members when enacting the music of Wagner, making sure to have a handkerchief ready when entering the theatre hall to see *Les Misérables*, or preparing oneself for the 'drop' after a long break at a techno rave. It is all, as it were, about 'performing' and becoming 'performed' by the musical object (Hennion 2001) or developing a 'socio-technical 'dispositif' of passion' (Gomart and Hennion 1999).

Through these relational processes, the listener actively seeks to become determined, to be taken over by the object, to become affected by the music. Even if we cannot or should not decouple music sounds from their technological mediation, music matters. The mediating technology enforces and amplifies the reciprocal enactment between subject and object, listener and music. Driven by the music, the music lover seeks to negotiate, control, direct, investigate, deepen, or prolong the affective imprint or profile of it to the extent possible. She may seek to avoid certain 'boring' sequences in the music; she may test different orientations, she may invent strategies to surprise herself; she may use the music to investigate a certain mood, and so on. The enactment of the musical object draws on all kinds of mediators, tools, technologies, intellectual competencies, and bodily practices. This

does not mean that it can be constructed at will – or even less so, that music is a simply a ‘cultural’ or ‘social’ construction – but that the competent listener, motivated by the music itself, may further develop, enrich, and calibrate its affective profile. The subject enters into an always contingent and only partly controllable two-way relation with an object.<sup>11</sup> While Hennion – primarily interested in the subjective enactment of a pleasurable relation to the music in question – has made little attempt at placing these insights in any conventional political framing, there is little doubt that the relational perspective can be extended and used to analyse all kinds of constructions, negotiations and manipulations of musical objects including the attempt to exploit them politically in diverse ways. As we shall see in the next section, Tia DeNora’s sociology of everyday music use indeed draws the relationalist inspirations in this direction.

## **Objects May Also Betray You! Or Act Differently than Expected**

Like Hennion, DeNora’s programmatic goal is ‘to propose a theory of musical affect in practice’ (DeNora 2004, 21). And just as for Hennion, the meaning of music cannot merely be read out of ‘the work itself’ but is only accessible through an in-depth investigation into particular concrete ethnographic (and technological) enactments. However, while clearly inspired by Hennion and Actor-Network theory, for DeNora, music is used for a wide range of affective purposes beyond the personal ‘ceremonies of passion’ which (primarily) interest Hennion. In fact, in one of her many phenomenologically interesting analyses, DeNora shows that music is even sometimes used merely to keep out unwanted affects – to remove distractions – in order to allow the listener to become capable of becoming affected by something other than music. But of course, most often, when music is used ‘in relation to self,’ it is in one way or other about enjoyment or enhancement of subjective capacities. Yet these may take many forms. While DeNora does not use the term ‘affect’ in the following passage, the importance of bodily affects in the interchange with the music is clear:

One of the first things music does is to help actors to shift mood or energy level, as perceived situations dictate, or as part of the ‘care of self’. For Latoya, Lucy and Deborah [DeNora’s case study interlocutors] music is an accomplice in attaining, enhancing and maintaining desired states of feeling and bodily energy (such as relaxation); it is a vehicle they use to move out

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<sup>11</sup> Or as Tia DeNora puts it, ‘[a] reflexive conception of music’s force as something that is constituted in relation to its reception by no means ignores music’s properties; rather, it considers how particular aspects of the music come to be significant in relation to particular recipients at particular moments, and under particular circumstances’ (DeNora 2004, 23).

of dispreferred states (such as stress or fatigue). It is a resource for modulating and structuring the parameters of aesthetic agency – feeling, motivation, desire, comportment, action style, energy. By this, what respondents often mean is that its specific properties – its rhythms, gestures, harmonies, styles and so on – are used as referents or representations of where they wish to be or go, emotionally, physically and so on. Respondents make, in other words, articulations between musical works, styles and materials on the one hand and modes of agency on the other, such that music is used, prospectively, to sketch aspired and partially imagined or felt states. (DeNora 2004, 53)

Music is used to deliberately regulate one's affective economy in a number of situations ranging from the more prosaic to the intimate and erotic: to set one up for the day or for a certain task, to let off steam, to relax, or, contrastingly, to get oneself going, and to handle everyday exigencies. As DeNora makes clear, her interlocutors exploit their understanding of the parallels between certain definite musical properties and certain definite 'modes of agency,' 'felt states,' or 'corporalities' they hope to obtain. To this end, they use music 'as a resource or template against which styles and temporal patterns of feeling, moving and being come to be organized and produced in real time' (DeNora 2004, 111). The production of 'patterns of feeling, moving, and being' is ontologically constitutive:

music is doing something more than re-presenting or simulating bodily patterns and bringing them to mind; it is providing a ground or medium within which to be a body, a medium against which the body comes to be organized in terms of its own physical and temporal organization (for example, as it springs from the ground in a way that is entrained to the musical pulse). So, aligned with and entrained by the physical patterns of music profiles, bodies not only feel empowered, they may be empowered in the sense of gaining a capacity. (DeNora 2004, 124)

A body which feels empowered is indeed an empowered body. A different body. This should not be misunderstood: it is not that music affects the mind, which then affects the body. If anything, it is the inverse: music has a direct affective impact that circumvents conscious control. It may take over willing bodies in distinct settings of enactment; this was both Plato's concern and also the desideratum of practitioners

of ritual musics across the world.<sup>12</sup> It is thus mind – conscious control – which is secondary. One feels this derived or secondary character of conscious processing when, for instance, one's gaze is drawn by an object of attraction (or horror), but one forces oneself not to look. In such situations one's sense of conscious control works as a mere post hoc disciplining of a more primordial bodily entanglement with one's surroundings and with other bodies. The body has its own affective life that functions in conjunction with other bodies and with objects that take hold of it or which it is attached to, attracted to, or repelled by. Music is one such object. When affected by music, one cannot escape its hold on their body even if they may choose to suppress that hold, not to give in to it, not to act it out, or not to let it effect the change it capacitates.

These strong affective capacities are also what makes music suitable for an 'ordering' of social situations. DeNora's interest in collective aspects of affective politics clearly sets her apart from Hennion. This interest includes, moreover, what DeNora calls a 'micropolitical' dimension, a negotiation of 'intersubjectivity, co-subjectivity, the virtual and the tacit':

Such matters emphasize the rich domain of the precognitive, embodied, emotional and sensual bases of social action and order as it is produced by reflexive aesthetic ordering activity. These issues are broached by considering actors themselves as they may be seen to mobilize musical materials in an attempt to define the parameters of social scenarios, to provide cues for crafting agency in real-time social settings. Examining this issue helps to show how music is a device of social occasioning, how it can be used to regulate and structure social encounters, and

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<sup>12</sup> Again, this should not be confused with any form of objective or musical determinism. Like Hennion, DeNora remains relationalist: 'There is thus little point in producing an abstract taxonomy of what music will do; certain patterns may emerge over time within particular settings or relationships, and these may be specified with degrees of precision, though they are always in process. A stimulus–response model of how music works is simply inaccurate because it elides the meaningful and interpretive acts of music recipients as they draw upon music's affordances as part of mundane musical practice' (DeNora 2004, 125). The object is co-constructed by the subject but only because the subject is sensitive and responsive to its affective affordances. The two poles cannot be separated. Sometimes certain particular forms of enactments or ways of listening becomes institutionalized (as in the setting of the classic concert for instance), yet in reality we exploit a number of different processual music-networks of shorter or longer duration. DeNora's criticism of Adorno leans on these thoughts. Though Adorno is no determinist in the strong sense, he still – not least when it comes to the impact of the cultural industrial product – largely disregards or neglects 'mundane musical practice'; that is, the concrete enactment of musical sounds whether at home or in the cinema or concert venue. What is important here is that even the process of becoming determined by music is something that the music lover actively seeks and contributes to. It is, when it succeeds, a circular process: the more active the subject, the more it is affected (see also Hennion 2001).

how it lends aesthetic texture to those encounters. (DeNora 2004, 110)

One of DeNora's investigations into the 'rich domain of the precognitive, embodied, emotional and sensual bases of social action and order' (DeNora 2004, 110) focuses on the negotiation of music in erotic settings. Music is often an active participant in these encounters, used in the negotiation of pace and emotional tonalities, changed and calibrated along the way as degrees of intimacy are agreed upon, negotiated, or broken off, (often) without overt verbalization. DeNora's interlocutors enact particular musical profiles that afford the possibility of anticipating, assuming, and living out desired – and often gendered – behavioural roles in an intimate context, to divide emotional and sexual labor, distribute initiative, activity and passivity, and so on. A negotiation as to what music to put on is in reality a struggle over which bodies should be produced and how in each specific situation.

The heated micropolitics that emerge in the struggle over the playlist in the late hours of a party could be another example. Again, this is a struggle over social order, about what kind of party one wants to have and how long one wants it to go on. At stake is not merely whether or not there should be dancing, but also how to dance, who should dance, how long yet to dance – or whether entirely different bodies should be anticipated and explored, say bodies made for singing along together, for enthusiastic camaraderie, for amical – and less rhythmic – forms of intimacy and entrainment, or maybe even bodies who prepare themselves to go home, who fall into more calm or even sleepy undulations or even, as the music is finally turned off, start to re-individualize.

Finally, though DeNora's focus is on music in everyday life, she clearly has an ear for the coercive implications of music in overtly political and commercial contexts. She investigates, for example, the role music plays in stimulating 'impulse' purchases:

Market researchers describe many of these impulse buys as 'experiential purchases', that is, purchases accompanied by emotional reactions such as 'sudden desire to purchase, feeling of helplessness, feeling good, purchasing in response to moods and feeling guilty'. Key to the concept of the 'experiential purchase' is that the arena where desire is formulated as desire 'for' something is the in-store environment. The emotional dimension of shopping and the unplanned purchase is thus of major interest to market researchers, who suggest that up to 60 per cent of all purchase decisions are not premeditated but arise as a result of in-store browsing. (DeNora 2004, 134–135)

It is clear why the use of musical affects in the creation of 'order' is especially important in such a setting, characterised by 'impulse,' 'sudden desire,' 'unplanned,

on-the-spot spending,’ or simply the wish to ‘feel good’ through spontaneous acts of consumption. Yet, whether it attracts spontaneous buyers or not, the retail stores use music actively in numerous ways to achieve their goals. For one, they all use music selectively and distinctively to brand themselves, instrumentalizing music for its sign-value, using it to attract the segment of the population that identifies with the genre in question: a customer may – affectively, passively – recognize themselves in the played music, just as the music may repel someone belonging to a segment for which the product sale is not intended.

Yet, DeNora never limits herself to analyses of mere sign-objects. We do not participate in musical cultures if we do not like the music. In the last instance, it is the specific texture, orchestration, rhythmic structure, and other material parameters of the music that do the affective work. The music largely carries the textual or cognitive input of the song and its secondary social and cultural connotations. Ideally, for the commercial enterprise, the consumer is brought into a certain mode of corporeal being associated with the genre of music and with a certain material universe – say, enacting a romancing, partying, exclusive, materially wealthy, successful, or ‘cool’ body. In this sense, music is also used to provoke impulse purchases, and to boost experimentation and imagination leading to additional attachments and additional sales. For the same reasons most of the stores play music in the dressing room area:

All the managers we interviewed told us that they commonly observed customers engaging bodily with the music. In Euphoria, the manager told us it was common to see the young male customers ‘singing and dancing in front of the mirrors’. In Babe, young women frequently danced, especially in the changing rooms when they were trying on outfits. In Directions, ‘People dance around the store, especially when they are trying on stuff’, the manager told us. (DeNora 2004, 144)

Many clients dance in front of the mirror. This dancing further animates and encourages consumer fantasies. It helps the customer imagine themselves in the setting where similar music is played and where they will show off the clothing they’re auditioning.

Moreover, independent of these attempts to induce wish phantasies or appeal to the desire for positive social attention, recognition, or status in the consumer, music also has a direct energizing effect or may work as a form of affective ‘tuning’ of the customer. In the clothing store, DeNora continues,

through its links to bodily conduct, music’s relationship to the ‘motional’ and emotional aspects of agency are often visible. One of the most obvious topics in this regard is the connection between musical tempo and movement style. At Babe, fast-paced music is used to create activity and also to reinforce

activity, to match fast flow. There, and in other stores, the staff we spoke with believed that fast music encouraged fast shopping. At sale time, when it is host to greater numbers of customers and more goods crammed into the shopping space, Mistral uses faster-paced, snappier music, the kind that may serve as inspiration and template for snappy bodily movements and – implicitly – snap decisions. In this regard, consumption behaviour can be understood – at least sometimes – as a kind of dance. (DeNora 2004, 144)

The intense affective energizing of the consumer's body brought about by music – again, contingently and often unwittingly – may contribute in its own right to bringing the consumer to the counter. Music is used to encourage 'snappy' movements through the store that, ultimately, might lead to a 'snap' purchase. Yet, undoubtedly, there are many such forms of affective choreographies that we as consumers play our part in – often, to be sure, together with the staff of the store.

All of this speaks to the way that music can 'order' an affective scene. As 2,500 years of theorizing have made patently clear, music's capacity to do this kind of social-affective ordering is profound and unique. Hence Plato's fear of music's power to shape subjects, Rousseau's celebration of music's affective capacities, and Adorno's critique of the cultural industry as well as his insistence on the power of 'serious music' to create critical subjectivity. Recent scholars have pursued other contexts to reveal music's role in organizing affective scenes, including in explicitly political contexts but also far beyond.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this critical overview has been to describe the rich tradition of theorizing links between music, affect, and politics in music studies, broadly defined. In doing so, we have elaborated on how contemporary approaches to affective politics in music studies should be read in dialogue with theoretical work on music and aesthetics for at least 2,500 years. Our analysis reveals that the highly influential writings on music and aesthetics by Kant and Hegel are perhaps better understood as anecdotes than as the bedrock of aesthetics and music research, and that there is a long tradition of interpreting links between music, affect, and politics that are rooted in embodied engagement and cross-disciplinary research, which underscore the affordances and agencies that function in diverse arrays of musical and aesthetic objects. This was already clear in Aristotle's and Plato's writings, as well as in those of Al-Farabi, Qian Sima, Tinctoris, Descartes, Herder, and Rousseau. Our analysis further shows how developments in music sociology from Adorno, the Birmingham school, and more recent work by Hennion and DeNora have elaborated on how musical affects shape bodies and orchestrates social relationships. Listened to along these lines, music does its political and social work through its sonorous materialities that matter within specific socio-cultural contexts; this conception invites us to listen

carefully to how ‘the music itself’ matters culturally in practice. We should therefore move past outdated binaries between musical texts and contexts if we want to understand how music matters socially, culturally, and politically, and scrutinize how musical sounds afford and render audible and affective social and political bodies, within and across contexts.

Perhaps, then, the affective turn has not been a turn after all? As we suggested in the opening to this essay, perhaps it is instead a return, or turn back, as what Arielle Aïsha Azoulay (2019) calls ‘rewinding’ or ‘unlearning’, to long-standing epistemologies that were never founded on body-mind, sentiment-reason, nature-culture, or other dualisms, and which consequently give affects, sentiments, and sensory experiences a completely different place than post-Enlightenment epistemology allows for. Cosmopolitics that arise from Amerindian or African matrices (for example, the Afro-Brazilian epistemologies of Bantu origin that inform several music traditions in Brazil, as well as Yoruba epistemologies modelled on *aché* in Cuba) do not need to find ways of ‘reintegrating body and mind’ or ‘sentiment and reason.’ These frameworks afford valuable ways of thinking the contemporary world, where it is becoming increasingly clear that politics have as much to do with passion as with reason. However, part of that story will be told in the next special issue of this journal, entitled ‘The Affective Politics of Music in Latin America’ (vol. 7 no. 2).

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