

'Doing-listening' with Deranged's 'Struck by a murderous siege': An auto-ethnography of death metal vinyl consumption

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Abstract

This article deals with vinyl records from the perspective of the cultural study of everyday life. It focuses on the author's rituals of vinyl consumption, using as a case study Deranged's *Struck by a Murderous Siege* (2016). It is shown that in an era of media convergence listening to vinyl records is an activity in which a variety of media participate in 'doing-listening', a process that involves the invocation of a unique secret knowledge developed over social relationships with people and things, and memories of past experiences, through which the intertextual nature of death metal texts is revealed and the doer-listener produces his or her own culture. In that sense, the value of vinyl records cannot be estimated in advance, based on 'objective' attributes – such as size of artwork, distinctiveness of sound, aura attribution or feelings of technostalgia – but, instead, accrues through the process of co-production through doing-listening with texts.

Introduction

Most of the major aspects of music consumption – ranging from the existence of bands, the mass production of music so that it can be accessed around the world, to the

production values and the existence of genres – are contingent upon the existence of the music industry. The various recording formats that have come and gone since the advent of the mass production of music are major parts of music consumption. By 1960, ‘the LP was crowned the “core commodity” of the Western recorded music industry’ (Devine 2015: 375). Currently, after more than a decade between the late 1980s and early 2000s, during which the music industry put its faith in CDs, and in the midst of the digital revolution, record stores are once again filled with vinyl records (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013; Hayes 2006). As Bennett and Rogers (2016: 31) have observed, ‘aesthetic discourses of authenticity and coolness’ over the last twenty years might have something to do with the so-called vinyl resurgence, while, according to Straw (2009: 79–82), ‘the CD has become little more than an intermediate technology’, and what we have observed is ‘a collective abandonment of the CD as a meaningful cultural form’. However, the culture of listening to vinyl cannot be reduced to music industry decision making, to the material characteristics of the artefact, or to the pervasiveness of popular discourses that endow artefacts with meaning. Popular music artefacts, such as vinyl records, CDs or mp3s, are not meaningful until the consumers activate their meanings and insert them in their everyday lives (Fiske 1989a). This article is about what I, the consumer, make with a cultural commodity like a vinyl record from the perspective of the cultural study of everyday life. I will focus on my rituals of vinyl consumption,

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using as a case study Deranged's *Struck by a Murderous Siege* (2016). In doing so I engage with concepts such as media convergence (Jenkins 2006), intertextuality (Still and Worton 1991; Fiske 1989), prosumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Fuchs 2014) and, influenced by Giard (1998), the idea of *doing-listening*. I describe how listening to death metal can be a rich, intertextual, productive and embodied practice, thus contributing on scholarly work on the heavy metal subculture (see Weinstein 1991; Walser 1993; Harris 2000; Brown 2003). I argue that in a time of media convergence listening to vinyl records is not an activity independent from other media. A variety of media participate in the process of doing-listening, a process that involves the invocation of a unique secret knowledge developed over social relationships with people and things, and memories of past experiences, through which the doer-listener produces his or her own culture. In doing so, I critically engage with scholarly research on vinyl record consumption (see Bartmanski and Woodward 2013; Hayes 2006; Lepa and Tritakis 2016), and argue that the value of vinyl records cannot be estimated in advance, and based on 'objective' attributes, such as large artwork, distinctive sound, aura or feelings of technostalgia, but is value that accrues through the process of co-production through doing-listening. I start with a brief presentation of the methodological approach of this study. I then begin my discussion with the decision to buy vinyl records in the digital age. I describe the inter-platform journey of information

relating to Deranged's new album, the digital labour involved in this journey, and its effect on my consumption practices. I then move on to describe my experience of consuming Deranged's new album in vinyl, beginning with the practice of online shopping. I continue with my interaction with the artwork, the lyrics sheet, the cardboard jacket and the songs, and I finish with an account of how fan production continues when the music is over.

Methodological approach

This study employs a methodological approach that can be described as an autobiographical case study of everyday life. It is an approach that combines autobiographical ethnography (Aull Davies 1999), with what Ries has called a 'jeweller's eye view' of the phenomenon under investigation (Felski 2002: 618), and with a cultural biography of things (Kopytoff 1986; also see Straw 2012, on music and material culture). Autobiography used in ethnography has been criticized as self-indulgent and narcissistic. However, as Aull Davies (1999: 217) points out, it is an approach that is 'not incompatible with the commitment to developing understanding of social reality beyond ourselves'. Interrogating oneself does not mean ignoring wider structures within which one is situated. In this case such contexts include the cultural industries, globalization, domestic environment, public places, the technological environment and genre, among others. It is also an approach that involves the use of

theoretical frameworks, concepts and rigorous methodological tools to produce data and critically reflect upon one's cultural practices. A clear advantage of this approach is the 'privileged access to one's own experience' (Aull Davies 1999: 222). Adopting a 'jeweller's eye view' (Felski 2002: 618) approach in investigating one's own experience, means looking closely at, and valuing, everyday life's ostensibly mundane practices, such as listening to music. Finally, Kopytoff's cultural biography of things is interested in the social life of cultural commodities. Asking questions such as 'where does the thing come from and who made it?', 'What has been its career so far [...]?', 'What are the recognized "ages" or periods in the thing's "life"?' [...] 'How does the thing's use change with its age[...]' (Kopytoff 1986: 66–67) can be useful in revealing the value added to a product such as a vinyl record through the productive activities of the listener. This methodological approach allowed me to reflect upon the way listening practices in the context of media convergence take from within, but also transcend, the narratives created by the cultural industry, revealing the dialectic between the primary texts of our culture and the lived experience in the practice of listening death metal records.

This approach was applied in a case study, namely my consumption of Deranged's most recent album, titled *Struck by a Murderous Siege*, on vinyl. Deranged is a death metal band from Sweden. An academic historical account of death metal has

yet to be produced. The few attempts to produce a coherent discourse of the development of death metal are made by death metal musicians, such as Daniel Ekeröth's *Swedish Death Metal* (2008) and journalists, such as Albert Mudrian's *Choosing Death* (2004). Deranged was formed in 1991 and has released nine full-length albums since. The only remaining original member is drummer Rikard Wermen. Deranged's style – characterized by low guttural vocals, blast beats, 'Slayer beats' (i.e. fast alternate strokes between kick-drum and snare-drum), fast tremolo-picking and trill-riffing, alongside slow and swampy passages and palm-muted riffs, is reminiscent of death metal bands from the United States such as Cannibal Corpse. In that sense Deranged does not fit in the two more established and popular death metal scenes in Sweden, namely the Stockholm and Gothenburg scenes. The decision to write about this specific case study took place in the context of a broader research project on Heavy metal and everyday life. The production of data took place after listening to the vinyl record for the first time. The research process did not involve observation or reflection upon my practices in real-time, or immediately after the event of listening took place. The reason behind this decision was to ensure that observation would not interfere with the phenomenon under investigation. Data collection and analysis involved self-observation, note-taking, memory work and reflexivity. A few days after the event I started taking down notes around events such as the arrival of the album, the unpacking

and the ritual of the first listening that ensued. I then tried to remember other instances where the album in question entered my everyday life, and I produced notes. More memory work was involved in trying to recall how and where I first heard about the album, the actors and places involved. The process of analysis was a bottom-up one. The various themes that emerged led to the consideration of different heuristic tools that could be used to produce a coherent narrative of the phenomenon under investigation. Concepts such as media convergence (Jenkins 2006), intertextuality (Still and Worton 1991), prosumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Fuchs 2014) and, influenced by Giard (1998), the idea of *doing-listening*, proved the most valuable for this task.

Buying vinyl records in the digital age

Inter-platform journey and digital labour

Media convergence refers to the phenomenon whereby content flows 'across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (Jenkins 2006: 2). Audience members and media companies are key actors in this process. Companies motivated by profit hand out fan bait (Caldwell 2011), and fans motivated by passion or the desire to perform their identity, circulate the freely given by companies, or illegally obtained through peer-to-peer exchanges, content. Media convergence facilitates a participatory culture that

celebrates audiences' ability to use the Internet to co-create their culture. These are concepts that have close links with, and build upon, De Certeau's (1984) theorization on the practice of everyday life, and Fiske's (1989a, 1989b) discussion on consumer production in the cultural field. According to De Certeau (1984) people are not passive dupes within the strategies designed for them by the powerful actors in society. Instead, they formulate their own tactics which result in appropriating and using resources that do not belong to them, within structures not designed by them, to achieve their own purposes of pleasure and meaning-making. These tactics can be either conscious instances of resistance, or unconscious instances of resistance brought about by virtue of each person's distinct life trajectory. Associated with these theorizations is the concept of prosumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010), which refers to the blurring of the lines between consumption and production. As a critique to the slightly celebratory picture of participatory culture that Jenkins's and Fiske's discourses produce, we could juxtapose Terranova's (2000) and Fuchs's (2014) discussion on the social factory and digital labour. According to Terranova, work has migrated from the factory to society. Everyone using digital technologies could be a cultural worker working for free. Whether people derive pleasure from using new media to connect, build communities, play or participate in the production of their culture does not change the fact that by doing this they produce surplus value, either as unpaid workers or as being packaged

into a prosumer audience commodity (Fuchs 2014). In this context, the idea of participation has been further criticized by Dean (2005) as a form of ideology, concealing the processes of unpaid labour and surveillance. Finally, scholarship in the study of fan cultures has pointed out that the expansion and enforcement of copyright protection represents a significant industry imposed limitation on the potential for fan resistance and audience production (Bettig 1996).

My initial contact with Deranged's latest album took place in an environment of media convergence (Jenkins 2006) that involved free labour (Terranova 2000) voluntarily provided by fans of the band. I listened to the album a couple of months before I bought a physical copy of it. I first listened to a song that the record company, Agonia Records, released in the form of a YouTube lyric video to promote the album. The digital media marketing strategy of the company also includes a Twitter account, used to publish band news and to circulate YouTube content, Myspace page, Instagram, Bandcamp, Facebook and the company's website. The success of the marketing strategy chosen by Agonia records depends on the cooperation of death metal fans. It is a strategy that assumes that fans will volunteer labour in the form of circulating media content such as videos in their online social networks, or endorse it by viewing it and liking it. The YouTube video works as 'fan bait' (Caldwell 2011) aimed at luring death metal aficionados in taking on the promotional campaign for the album. The more

inter-platform the character of the promotional campaign – the more platforms the video reaches – the better for the record company. The video in question, ‘Reverent decomposition’, started its inter-platform journey that ended on my computer screen, in the headquarters of Agonia records in Poland. Agonia records posted the video on its YouTube (video-sharing company in the United States) channel on 13 September 2016. News about the release of the video was posted on the US metal news website Blabbermouth.net on the same day. Blabbermouth’s capacity to churn out news – which is at the same time the source of its competitive advantage¹ – relies heavily on the reproduction of record companies’ press releases and other promotional materials. The video was picked up by one of my old music-listening friends, who currently lives in Greece, who shared it on Facebook, another US social networking company. My friend was excited about the release of a new album by Deranged and wanted to share his enthusiasm and pleasant news with his friends. I watched the video on my computer in Brighton, United Kingdom. The song made me excited about this release.

Consuming the album in an environment of media convergence

Digitization and functional convergence (Flew 2002) allow for efficient storage and dissemination of media content online. Integral part of this process is, once again, digital labour by music fans. After the album was officially released a friend of mine downloaded it for free and gave me a copy. I listened to it first on my computer using

the VLC media player. I then transferred it to my mp3 player, an old ZEN Stone Plus and listened to it a couple of times when I was outdoors, commuting and walking in the city. These first couple of listening sessions were what I call *trial sessions*. During those sessions I listen to an album superficially, without looking up the lyrics on the Internet, and in the context of other activities (e.g. shopping). Their function is to allow me to evaluate whether the album has the potential of offering lasting, rather than short-lived, enjoyment. If I decide that it does, then I will probably purchase it.

Deciding to buy vinyl in the digital age

After having listened to the mp3 version of *Struck by a Murderous Siege* a few times I decided that I liked it enough to buy a physical copy, so I stopped listening to the digital version of the album. The decision to buy it on vinyl is in line with my music-consumption practices since the mid-1990s, whereby vinyl records have consistently been my preferred format. The appeal of vinyl has recently been the object of scholarly interest in the context of the revival of the vinyl in the twenty-first century. Scholarship has offered different accounts of the drivers behind the resurgence of the vinyl record, and processes taking place both at the macro- and the micro-levels have been identified. These drivers include the attractiveness of the larger cover art, the involvement associated with the ritual of listening, the tangibility of the medium, technonostalgia and retro-technologies, and aura attribution (Lepa and Tritakis 2016). Hayes (2006)

observes that young people who turn to vinyl records are motivated not only by a desire to resist mainstream music culture, but also by the more sensorial aspects of listening to vinyl, such as handling the record, the turntable and enjoying the large cover art. He also discusses representations of listening to vinyl in popular cinema, and observes that the vinyl is situated in discourses of nostalgia and authenticity, and vinyl enthusiasts are constructed as music *connoisseurs*. Being a vinyl record collector is often associated with having a more refined taste than mainstream music audiences (Bennett 2009: 482). In that sense, being a vinyl collector represents a form of distinction (Shuker 2010). The role of the DJ culture in electronic dance music has also been identified as one of the drivers behind this resurgence (Lepa and Tritakis 2016; Bartmanski and Woodward 2013). As far as more macro-level determinants are concerned, we should consider the music industry's imperative to survive in the digital age. Digitization threatens the cultural industries' efforts to impose artificial scarcity (Hesmondhalgh 2007; Jones 2002). Thus, it could be argued that the music industry sees in the vinyl a defence in the face of this threat. The vinyl is a medium for music dissemination that does not lend itself to expropriation by fans. As Bartmanski and Woodward (2013: 7–8) point out, the 'LP format appears to be a special, often carefully curated object', in addition to the fact that 'most current releases are seldom mass scale'. As we have seen, fans might buy vinyl records because they believe that there is inherent and exclusive value in the

physical artefact itself. The value might be exactly that not everyone can own one, as opposed to mp3s, so it gives the fan a sense of distinctiveness. The value might also be that the vinyl collector is a category that has been invested (partially by the music industry itself) with the meaning of the 'investment' (Bartmanski and Woodward 2013: 9). As Bartmanski and Woodward (2013) and Lepa and Tritakis (2016) suggest, the appeal of the vinyl might also depend on the wider media environment within which an old artefact, such as the vinyl, obtains a unique *aura*.

The idea of authenticity as well as the meaning of the *connoisseur* ascribed to the vinyl collector are both ideas that underlie my fascination with vinyl. I have always participated in the discourse according to which the vinyl is a more authentic form of audio reproduction, as well as a more exclusive format than CDs and later on mp3s. At the age of fourteen my best friend informed me that 'true fans buy vinyl'. I can also identify with Hayes's (2006) participants who are fascinated by the larger cover art as well as the ritual of vinyl listening. Thus, the fact that the new Deranged album is available on vinyl is something that satisfies my consumerist desires. The existence of independent extreme metal companies that can afford to produce vinyl versions of underground bands is predicated on the rekindled interest for vinyl records. However, this does not make me merely a consumer, member of a target audience, whose practices are governed by the decisions of the music industry. Moreover, the pleasures

that I derive from consuming a vinyl record, as I demonstrate in the remainder of this article, cannot be reduced to claims of authenticity, exclusivity or a form of fetishism of the physical object. The pleasure of consuming vinyl records cannot be known in advance.

Doing–listening

Giard talks about women’s knowledge that passes on from generation to generation, unnoticed, and effects practices of cooking that involve memories, moves, smells and knowledge of how foods should look, making cooking a practice that is productive in innumerable ways, underlain by a rich history of social relationships. According to Giard (1998: 157):

doing-cooking is the medium for a basic, humble and persistent practice that is repeated in time and space, rooted in the fabric of relationships to others and to one’s self, marked by the ‘family saga’ and the history of each, bound to childhood memory just like rhythms and seasons.

In the remainder of this article, I demonstrate how memories, the ‘personal touch’, the ‘knowledge [...] of tiny secret practices’ originating in social relationships from my childhood, and ‘an entire relationship to things’ (Giard 1998: 201) that the music industry does not codify or specify, interact with the primary materials of culture, in this case Deranged’s vinyl version of *Struck by a Murderous Siege*, and advance the production of popular culture. In this process, I demonstrate how a popular music

object, like a vinyl record, acquires ‘meanings that raise [it] above [its] mere status as “object”’ (Bennett and Rogers 2016: 32). This is reminiscent of what has been termed an *ecological approach to listening* (see Herbert 2012), which refers to music listening as an experience that is ‘the sum of a network of interactions, including environment, sound, acquired patterns of response, current mood, prior knowledge, etc.’, making the experience of listening to music ‘personal, relational, and situational’. Doing-listening attempts to capture the productive aspect of the listening experience (the extension of the meanings and feelings associated with a music artifact), which is the result of resources accumulated over the years (embodied cultural capital), rather than the reactive aspect of music listening (music as a stimulus generating affective responses). Furthermore, doing-listening aims to convey other productive aspects of listening to music, such as actively researching the intertextual character of musical texts.

Online shopping

Traditional media companies have adapted their practices to the digital age. One of the manifestations of this process is the use of the Internet for digital distribution of cultural commodities (Hesmondhalgh 2010; Morris 2014). The purchase of the record took place online on Amazon.co.uk. Amazon's success has been attributed to its patented 1-click innovation from 1999 which reduced the number of clicks necessary to make a purchase (Simon 2011), an innovation that, from a Technology Acceptance Model

perspective (see Agarwal et al. 1998), increased the ease of use and secured a superior market position for Amazon. Although I do find shopping on Amazon relatively easy, there are aspects of the online shopping experience that I dislike. Buying a physical copy from a physical record store means that I own it from the moment I have paid for it. There is a sense of finality that in the case of online shopping is postponed until the moment the record is delivered, which can be several weeks after the purchase. Buying records online also comes with the stress of the record arriving damaged or not arriving at all. At the same time, I derive pleasure from the anticipation; waking up every day hoping that this is the day the record arrives.

However, online shopping is productive not only in terms of the emotions, the stress and anticipation that it provokes, but also in terms of data generation (Van Dijck 2009). By using my account to buy Deranged's new album on Amazon, I generate information regarding my preferences. This information is collected, analysed and subsequently used by Amazon to advertise to me products that seem to fit my consumer profile, a profile that I have produced through consumption practices such as browsing and buying.

The artwork

When the album arrived, the first thing I did was to examine the cardboard jacket and the vinyl to make sure they were not damaged. I was happy to find them in perfect

condition. I spent some time investigating the cover art. *Struck by a Murderous Siege* has a cover that I found very attractive, because it is very detailed and there is a lot to be discovered. I tried to work out if the cover tells a story. The album title works as a caption, the linguistic message that offers guidance on how the image should be read (Barthes 1984). In this case, the iconic message stands in a relation of complementarity with the linguistic message. The title of the album works as a *relay*. There is a murderer loose wreaking havoc in a big city. His threatening figure looming over the city and holding a knife connotes that the city is under siege. The red colour of the sky is denoting that the scene we are witnessing is taking place at dusk. 'Dusk' alongside another sign, that of the 'urban environment', connotes 'danger'. Another sign is activated with the assistance of the album title; the colour 'red' is its signifier and 'blood' is its signified. Thus, while the album title overall acts as a relay, in the case of this connoted message it works as *anchorage* (Barthes 1984), guiding the reader away from all the possible signifieds of the colour 'red' to the one that serves the wider message. There are many other signs that contribute to the overall message. Police helicopters are roaming the sky, so the police are after him, and they also look for his victims, which we can be seen dumped in the sea by the city. I paid attention to all the details: the corpses in the sea, and the crow preying on one of the victims. I looked for

signs on the city buildings that could provide me with information on the identity of the city. I spent some time admiring Deranged's logo.

The lyrics sheet

The next stage was to take out the lyrics sheet. I was happy to discover that all the lyrics are printed therein, and there is information on writing credits and photos of the band members. I noticed that, sadly, there is no 'Thanx List'. I looked at the band members' photos and then I moved to the writing credits of each song to see who wrote what. I discovered that all the music is composed by guitarist Thomas Ahlgren, who has been with the band for almost a decade. I thought that Ahlgren has been in the band enough time to have embodied his own interpretation of the band's style. This embodiment has probably happened through playing the old songs, the objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977) that embodies the compositional style of Deranged. After years of practice this cultural capital has infused Ahlgren's muscle memory, his own habitus, and, effectively, his own *compositional predispositions*. Rikard Wermen, the drummer and the only remaining original member, was involved in all the arrangements. I realize that this information is important to me; it inadvertently affects the way I will experience the album thenceforward. In order to perceive this moment as part of a more or less coherent history of fascination with this band, I need to know that there is a constant, something besides Ahlgren's acquired competence, which keeps the trademark

'Deranged sound' alive. Wermen's contribution to the song arrangements, alongside his instantly recognizable drumming style, provides me with this constant.

Lyrics credits are shared between Wermen and the bassist, Anders Johansson, and there are also lyrics based on letters by various serial killers such as the Son of Sam (David Berkowitz), the B.T.K. killer (Dennis Rader), and the Toy-box killer (David Parker Ray). The band has also allocated vocal patterns credits (shared between Wermen and Johansson), which made me remember Cannibal Corpse, a band that I always considered to have had a big influence on Deranged. In Cannibal Corpse's album *Gallery of Suicide* (1998) the band had also allocated vocal patterns credits. That was the first time that I considered vocal patterns as part of song composition in death metal that deserved to be acknowledged.

An olfactive and visual prosumption of the vinyl and jacket

The cardboard jacket of the record has a message too. The method of reading this message is olfactive. The odour of the jacket mobilizes a cultural memory that is part of my idiolect (Barthes 1984: 46–47). This is the next stage of my prosumption of the record. I removed the vinyl from its sleeve. I smelled the inside of the jacket, searching for the distinct musty odour of cardboard that old records have, to no avail. This is a habit I have had since high school, and I developed it alongside my childhood friend Nick. I cannot remember who started it, but every time we would take a record out to

listen to we would take a sniff of the jacket. The smell is missing from Deranged's new album, but the memory of the smell of old records is recorded in my memory. I remembered some albums I acquired in the late 1990s from an older friend who exchanged his records for CDs, and all his records had that distinct smell of damp and plastic coming from the plastic protective outer sleeves. I also recalled a specific record store in Athens (Art Nouveau Records) where I used to buy records when I was in high school. It was in a basement and the moment I would walk in I would be hit with the musty smell of the windowless underground shop, a smell that after a while would trigger an anticipation for a potential great musical discovery.

I then looked at the grooves and investigated the label. I checked to see if there were any interesting engravings on the vinyl around the label. There is none other than mundane pressing-related information. I remember that many years ago I loved when I would discover messages engraved around the label, such as 'WATCH OUT FOR TERRORIZER', on Morbid Angel's *Altars of Madness* (1989), or 'IS NICK HOLMES THE NEW ANDREW ELDRITCH?', on Paradise Lost's *Gothic* (1991). Those messages used to constitute a much sought-after conversational currency (Silverstone 1989) during meetings with my friends, because they were obscure pieces of information about our favourite bands.

Doing—listening with songs

Listening to the album, after having engaged with the cover art and whilst reading the lyrics, is a profoundly intertextual (Fiske 1989b) experience enabled by media convergence. The primary texts are the lyrics, the images and the music. My past experiences activate meanings encoded in those texts, and even allow me to discover new meanings. Alongside the audio equipment that includes my turntable, its software, my computer and my speakers, and the actual record, there is a variety of other media that participate in this process of meaning-making (Hall 1992). These other media, as I demonstrate, include search engines, such as Google, and online encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Metallum, the online repositories of collective intelligence (Jenkins 2004).

I put the album on the turntable, position the stylus and sat on my chair with the lyrics sheet in my hands. The act of setting the stylus on the vinyl is a fast and confident, but at the same time eloquent, performance. It is an act of embodied cultural knowledge. Part of this knowledge is what Latour would call a *prescription* (Johnson 1988), a competence delegated by a technology back to the user. Lepa and Tritakis (2016: 18) have noted that the use of the vinyl 'requires complex knowledge and behaviour on the side of users not regularly accustomed to it'. I have noticed the behaviour of friends who do not possess this competence when trying to operate a turntable. Their body language, what Goffman (1959) has called the less easily

governable aspects of a social performance, is a manifestation of this absence. Their hands would tremble, they would move back and forth, unsure of where to position the stylus. Eventually they would drop it clumsily on the vinyl. None of these things happen in my case. The stylus was smoothly positioned and seconds later the opener, 'The frail illusion of osteology', one of my favourite songs on the album, started playing. The third riff includes a 'pick squeal' (i.e. pinch harmonic), a technique that I instantly associate with Deranged's music. Listening to it again brought a smile to my face. At that moment, I participated with Deranged in what Carey (2009) has called the *ritual form of communication*; I found comfort in the security of a discourse that is already known to me; my already held idea of Deranged was confirmed.

I continued listening, reading the lyrics, and after a while I started singing along. While I was listening to the second song, 'Hello from the Gutters', whose lyrics are based on the Son of Sam (and whose main riff also includes a pick squeal), I started thinking about Benediction, a British death metal band that wrote a song on the same topic called 'Jumping at Shadows', included in their sophomore album *The Grande Leveler* (1991). I found myself comparing these two songs, and thinking that no band will ever be able to write a better song than Benediction on this topic. Upon reflection, my attitude towards 'Hello from the Gutters' changed after I read the lyrics. Before I had read the lyrics I thought it was a very good mid-tempo death metal song, with some

good hooks. After I read the lyrics which mobilized my cultural memory/knowledge of Benediction, the Deranged song started to mean something different, that is, a song about the Son of Sam that is inferior to the one that Benediction wrote on the same topic.

I then began to wonder whether the murderer figure on the album cover is a reference to any of the serial killers mentioned in the songs. I put the lyrics aside and I did a Google search on those three serial killers. I ended up on Wikipedia and read a bit about them. I read about their lives, their crimes, their arrest and their sentencing. I was shocked by Berkowitz's disturbing communication with the police, which made me understand for the first time why many death metal bands have written songs about him. The Internet users that contributed the Wikipedia content that I read played the role of intertextual enablers (Fiske 1989b: 65), extending the meanings of the primary texts of the album. I then realized that the backside of the lyrics sheet, on which I did not pay much attention, has pictures of all three of them. These pictures can be seen as what Straw (2012: 234) calls *paratexts*, namely texts aimed at 'teaching listeners the skills and dispositions required for their satisfaction'. I then went back to the album cover and tried to see if the figure resembles any of the murderers addressed in the songs, and I noticed no apparent resemblance.

I went back to the lyrics and kept listening and reading. During the third song – one of my favourite songs on the album – I began to evaluate Johansson’s lyrics next to Wermen’s lyrics, and I thought that Wermen’s are unconventional and chaotic, while Johansson’s are more structured and ‘catchier’. Listening to the fourth song I started thinking that the arrangement around the lyric line ‘Filthy. Horrid. Hatefull. Rotten’ is similar to the ending of the chorus of ‘Cast Down’ by Slayer (2001). The first song on side B is another song I like, about the B.T.K. killer. B.T.K. stands for ‘Bind, Torture, Kill’, which reminds me of the Suffocation song ‘Bind, Torture, Kill’ off their self-titled album (2006). The homonymous song is a song that I appreciated for the first time when I listened to it on vinyl, as that listening coincided with reading the lyrics. I found it extremely catchy, so I played it for a second time before I moved on to the next one, the song inspired by the Toy-box killer (i.e. ‘Toy-box Torture Chamber’). This one has the most disturbing lyrics, matching the disturbing nature of the crimes. The song is sung in the first person which makes the depraved and misogynistic character of the lyrics even more disturbing to read, so I decided that I will probably not be reading the lyrics of this song again. This is a common practice with songs I enjoy, but I dislike the lyrical content. I continued listening to the album, occasionally air-drumming, playing air-guitar, and singing, until it was over.

Continuing the production

The production of ideas and pleasures around the latest Deranged album did not stop after the listening session, or subsequent listening sessions. It rather continued in different ways, some ephemeral and other more permanent, when I would not be listening to the album. In various occasions the stories, riffs, vocal performances and drumbeats, as well as the ideas that the album provoked would colonize my thoughts. In one occasion I would be at work, sitting at my desk at the university replying to e-mails, and the contagious chorus of 'Reverent Decomposition' would spring to mind, accompanied by the image of myself sitting at home next to my turntable looking at the album cover. For a moment I would be distracted and I would start using my index fingers and feet to drum on the desk along the music playing in my head (a practice that has annoyed my colleagues in the past). Bull (1999, 2007) has talked about how mobile stereos, such as Walkmans and iPods, allow the listener to transcend space, how the listener shields themselves from the immediate surroundings, and how their music-induced thoughts and emotions allow them to colonize immediate space. Bull's discussion is a debate between the idea that the culture industry colonizes our imagination and mediates everyday experience, and the idea that listeners make do with technological commodities, and use them to fit their own pleasure-seeking purposes. In my case we see an instance of recreating a domestic experience of music listening, mentally in a different space. The spaces of leisure and work are collapsing into one

another, and very briefly my mood colonizes the mundane workplace and the practice of attending to e-mail correspondence. It would not be a hyperbole to argue that this represents an instance of poaching (De Certeau 1984), whereby I participate in a leisurely activity when I should be working. Indeed, this is an instance that raises several questions, ranging from the desire to escape alienating tasks, to the contradictions of capitalism whereby escaping alienation requires texts produced by the same system that causes alienation in the first place, and so forth. However, in this case what is also worth noting is that the consumption of cultural commodities is productive in a variety of ways, even after listening is over. It continues to be productive by changing moods, allowing the listener to transcend space and mediate a variety of experiences.

Production continued in more permanent ways too. On several occasions I would go online and talk about the album with my old music-listening friends on Facebook. Furthermore, listening to *Struck by a Murderous Siege* Deranged ‘properly’ – that is, from the vinyl, reading the lyrics and the imagery – revitalized my interest in the band’s back-catalogue. Maybe albums such as *Plainfield cemetery*, which I did not enjoy upon their release, are worth re-evaluating. How does the new album live up to what I consider Deranged’s best albums, namely *Rated X* (1995) and *III* (2000)? Upon my decision that it is a very good album, one of the very best in the band’s discography,

I decided to protect it with a good-quality plastic exterior sleeve. I have not bought protective sleeves for many years, so from time to time I end up recycling the sleeves I already have. If I buy an album that I think is worthy of a sleeve, I will try to find an old album that maybe is less worthy of one and re-purpose it for the new album. In that sense, *Struck by Murderous Siege* has changed since I purchased it, not simply in semiotic terms (Fiske 1989b), but also in a material sense.

Conclusion

What I described is an experience of vinyl consumption that cannot be reduced to technostalgia, following music industry trends and discourses around collectability, aura attribution, or even seeking to improve fan credentials. Listening to an album can be an auditory, visual, olfactory and tactile experience, which brings people in connection with their personal biography (past experiences, friendships, old habits, childhood memories) and the broader culture (links with other bands, cultural events, the transformation of culture). 'Doing-listening' involves listening through personal, secret practices, drawing on memories of past experiences and a wealth of cultural knowledge to activate a variety of meanings in a cultural commodity, as well as to co-produce the commodity by adding meanings that were not there in the first place. I demonstrated that the value of a vinyl record cannot be estimated in advance. Vinyl records might indeed be endowed with characteristics, including the larger artwork, collectability and aura attribution, which increase their appeal. However, these attributes do not necessarily guarantee the derivation of pleasure, and certainly not the derivation of any specific kind of pleasure. Instead, the value properties of a vinyl record are often determined through its use, and the value added (or not) through the productive activities of the

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doer–listener. I have also demonstrated that the phrase ‘listening to vinyl’ can be a reductionist one. Doing–listening is an experience that involves a variety of analogue and digital media, and the vinyl is one node in the media network participating in this process. Furthermore, doing–listening to death metal in this environment of convergence reveals the intertextuality of death metal texts. Deranged is connected to other death metal bands through their shared interest in specific cultural texts, such as serial killers and their media representations. The rich media environment enables the doer–listener to obtain information on these texts and more easily activate the various meanings encoded in an album.

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