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傳播 / 溝通的物性觀：形式與物的媒介認知論

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研究主旨

本計畫所指認的傳播的「物性」，即是正視媒介與環境互動過程中，因為媒介的形式、通路、功能設計、存在環境，以及使用者的使用習慣、偏好、意識所形成的媒介特殊定位，可視為一種「媒介生態學」的理論建構。就作為一種傳播/溝通的認識論 (epistemology) 而言，本研究主張的是傳播的「物質論」 (materialism)，也就是傳播媒介有特定的「物質性」 (materiality)，此物質性具有型塑特定傳播/溝通行動的特性。本研究的主要目的，即是藉由文獻整理、歸納，以及個案討論的方式，耙梳物質論相關研究，並探索其運用於觀察既存傳播/溝通現象的可能性。以這個「物性」的主架構出發，本研究將分析聚焦於與流行文化工業相關的商品傳銷方式中，所彰顯的物 (object) 的隱喻。以下先就「物質論」在西方思想體性中的歷史轉變，提供以下的探討。

相關文獻整理

物質論在歐洲的思想史中，已有相當長的理論傳統。Judith Stamps 探討物質論的歷史脈絡發展，將物質論歸納為一個主要的認識論 (epistemology)，即由感知經驗 (sense experience) 出發看待真理 (truth) 的一種人本思維 (human-centered doctrine) 相較於唯識論所堅持的終極真理 (final truth)，物質論強調真理是官能的 (sensual) 意識的 (sensible) 產物。人是感知的動物，感知能力有限的人，面對浩瀚無窮的世界，無法掌握真理的全部，所謂的真理因此是人經驗、感知、或直覺所建構的結果。人必須承認自己的限制，並謙虛的將所謂真理定位為一種假設，即以人有限的感知去體驗其所能掌握的世界的一種結果。如果有人宣稱他能掌握所謂終極的、先驗的真理，那也只是在特定的歷史條件下經由政治的手段所達到的教條式真理 (Stamps, 1995, pp. 16-18)。

物質論的觀點，使其信奉者常是站在主流權勢階級的對立面。伊比鳩魯 (Epicurus) 在西元前三世紀時即反對任何形式的命定論 (determinism)，並將人生存的價值，寄託在今世的享樂與體驗中。對宗教所鼓吹的「來世」觀，伊比鳩魯則持抗拒的立場。對他而言，神是遙遠且被動的，因此對神我們「無求無懼」。真正的喜樂，在於克服對於死亡及來世的恐懼。伊比鳩魯的現世觀，成了啟蒙時期科學對抗神權政治的武器。伽立略 (Galileo) 抗拒羅馬教廷對於全知全能上帝創造自然的權威看法，而強調科學研究對於自然現象的觀察不應受任何先決的真理觀所影響。物質論者在不同的時代中、不同的領域裡，皆在對抗一種先驗的真理觀。因為堅信真理不是一種特出的、先驗的知識，而是一種世俗的、經驗的，且偏狹的知識，知識也因此是俗世的、開放的、尋常的 (*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, p. 240, 304; Stamps, 1995, pp.9-10)。

物質論的觀點在西方世界進入現代社會後，為資本主義社會提供了兩種截然不同的看法。基督教文明崇尚以靈修來換得來世的救贖，強調精神上的提升是追求絕對真理的必要條件。因此刻意壓抑現世物質的享樂。而資本主義與工業文明為西方世界帶來的財富與進步，除了促成市民社會 (civil society) 的興起，

也衝擊到基督教會的救贖觀。物質論者挑戰基督教義的禁慾規範，將物質的囤積與享樂合理化為人今世積極奮鬥的目標。樂觀論者如亞當斯密（Adam Smith）或邊沁（Jeremy Bentham），認為逸樂是所有人類自然且合理的本性，資本主義所追求的財富與功利，不但不是罪惡的，而且是解放的（見 Smith, 1988; Guillory, 1993）。

相對於亞當斯密及邊沁在物中看到人性的解放，馬克斯則在物中看到人性的壓迫。馬克斯的物質論以歷史的角度出發，批判資本主義社會中的功利觀念所導致的物質現實，即階級剝削與勞力物化的現象。馬克斯認為，知識是物質生產過程與意識交溶後所形成的結果。在一個社會中，掌握財富生產的人通常也掌握知識的生產。在資本主義社會中，勞動已成為一種定義人思考與情感的實用語言。理想的狀況下，人應該在愉悅中自主的勞動，生活也因此有實質的意義。然而歷史所呈現的真實圖譜是，西方社會長久以來皆受特定階級宰制，對於勞動條件的掌握也因此不在勞動階級的手中。在資本主義社會中，這種勞動異化的現象更趨嚴重。資本家的宰制不但使得勞工無法掌握自己的勞動生產，更蒙蔽了勞工智識與情感的發展，勞工不僅無法體認自己的生存意義（即所謂的自我異化），也孤立於其他人，以及整個自然世界之外。勞工長久處在一種階級利益壓迫的社會型態下，其自然演變的結果是，生產的意識演變成為一場資本家意識與勞工意識間的階級鬥爭。

馬克斯的歷史物質論觀點，強調生產決定意識，也賦予資本主義一個「階段性」任務，即資本主義社會所潛在的結構性問題，如階級剝削、勞動異化、生產過剩，會使得資本主義在走到山窮水盡後，為另外一種新的社會型態所取代，即所謂的共產社會。然而問題也在於馬克斯的歷史物質史觀賦予「生產決定意識」一種普世的特質——即勞工階級自我體認其悲慘的處境是舉世皆然的，而歷史的轉變也是必然發生的。這種過於化約的普同觀點，與物質論的前提，即強調人感知周遭世界過程中的特殊與多樣性，有著立場上的衝突。

即便如此，馬克斯的物質史觀啟發了後世批判思潮對於西方工業文明及高度資本主義結合所形成的「現代性（modernity）的批判，特別是消費文化（consumer culture）滲透日常生活中成為主導人意識這個現象。「物化」（reification），如名詞所示，強調的是人的主體意識受到物的主體意識的操縱。藉由包裝、廣告、行銷使得商品的交換價值或符號價值取代使用價值，成為西方馬克斯主義物質論批判的新主題。有別於馬克斯化約的將意識的產生等同於特定的勞動及生產關係，新的物質史觀強調人的存在意識與生活環境之間存在著特定的文化型態，藉著這個文化形態的中介（mediation），人的生活產生意義而特定的階級宰制也才得以維繫。在觀察資本主義社會為什麼能「永續發展」，而沒有如馬克思所預期的終究導向衰亡，西方馬克思主義學者認為，消費文化的形成，扮演了極重要的角色。流行服飾、攝影、廣告、電影、廣播等為刺激消費慾望而產生的商品或刺激商品購買的手段，成為維繫高度工業化、高度資本化社會中宰制意識型態合理存在的主要利器。¹

由迦立略到西方馬克斯主義，物質論處理的問題，是人的意識與環境間的相對關係，以及環境對人的意識產生何種影響。物質論因此帶有特定的政治意涵，即藉由詮釋特定時空中，特定形式的物質在社會被使用的方式、流通的情形，或特定型構的物質現實被賦予的意涵，闡明意識形成的過程。

傳播媒介的物質性意涵，在科技高度發展的今天，顯得格外重要的原因是：媒介藉由影像、聲音、傳輸方式，以及消費場域等，已經成為社會意識形成的主要「環境」。

回顧大眾傳播媒介的發展，約與整個西方現代性的形成並駕齊驅。由早期的便士報 (penny press) 到今天結合電腦、電信以及廣播的整合型數位傳播科技，人們使用媒介傳遞訊息或溝通意見的方式以越來越多元化。然而不同的科技形式間的差異，往往影響訊息內容被設計的方式，也因此影響了人的經驗建構。美國歷史學者 Daneil Boorstin 即主張人的經驗現實 (experiential reality)，在影像媒介發達的今天，已經有了戲劇性的轉變。傳播理論對 Boorstin 最不陌生的，應該在於他指出了新聞媒介中「假事件」(pseudo-event) 的存在。Boorstin 認為，自 19 世紀晚期以來，人類社會已經經歷了一場「圖像革命」(graphic revolution)。這場圖像革命的主角，自然是大眾傳播媒介。媒介所大量製造的影像，已經產生了認知上的影響。媒介創造出的事先經過安排的假事件，意在滿足立即報導的目的。這種假事件積累的結果，是人的日常生活經驗成了影像建構的經驗 (Boorstin, 1992)。Boorstin 所憂慮的，即是傳播媒介所捏造的圖像現實被物質化為替代性社會經驗。

主要問題意識

物質論對於傳播研究最重要的供獻，應在於將研究的焦點，由傳播的內容、機構轉移到傳播的媒介與環境這個面向上。

基於物質論所重視的個別媒介特質，物質論的觀點如何被用來觀察現今的傳播/溝通現象？本研究對於個研究問題，則是落實物質論於適用觀察本土傳播/溝通現象的問題意識。鑑於物質論是一種討論知識如何形成的「認知論」

(epistemology)，本研究計畫考量傳播/溝通研究的特殊屬性，將物性觀點的討論設定在「物」的概念建構上。

「物」(thing) 在此泛指東西、物件、財物，或可被擁有的個體。傳播/溝通行動中「物」的意涵，可在媒介的產品成為人們擁有的財產或收藏中彰顯。迪士尼於 1937 年發行的卡通影片「白雪公主」，在經過逾六十年無數次的映演後，至今仍是迪士尼機構「版權所有，盜版必究」的註冊產權。此物以商品的形態，又衍生了許多周邊商品，如玩偶、童話書、錄影帶、服飾等。這些周邊商品，是兒童的擁有物，當它們不再大量生產後，也是老兒童們懷舊收藏的「古董」。

傳播/溝通的功能雖是為了增進瞭解、守望環境、告知訊息、或娛樂，但在傳播/溝通本身成為一個有目的的、特意塑造的消費行為後，傳播/溝通的另一功能是「產權擁有」(property ownership)。社會學家 Scott Lash 就指出，在資

訊科技發達的今天，「智慧財產」(intellectual properties) 將成為媒介理論另一個重要的課題 (2002, pp.81-82)。傳播產業的發展，在機構的經營與擴張上，如何為產權的擁有創造有利的條件成為傳播產業創造範疇經濟 (economies of scale) 的一個重點。美國在八 0 年代至九 0 年代幾次大規模的傳播機構產權轉移或合併，皆與影音產品的擁有有密切的關係。八 0 年代末期日本新力公司先後併購哥倫比亞唱片公司及影片公司，利之所在除了哥倫比亞優越的製作能力外，也在於其倉庫裡積累數十載的音樂、影片資料所再生的邊際效益。而跨國唱片公司近幾年陸續登陸台灣，在唱片市場上除了感受到音樂取風的全球化外，消費者也有機會接觸到更多中、西老音樂的「重新發行」(reissues)。這些例子都說明了傳播/溝通的過程中，物的擁有、讓渡，或價值的再生、再創造不只是媒介的副產品，這個過程已經成為傳播/溝通行動之所以發生的前提。

對於傳播/溝通的物質意涵，政治經濟學的研究在過去已累積相當的成果(見 Mosco, 1996 ; 馮建三, 2003)。往昔政治經濟學的媒體研究師出伸張社會公平正義之名，將分析重點放在傳播媒介在社會中的「結構問題」，如產權擴張、跨國間文化的單向輸出、以及文化產品的宰制意識型態。商業化傳播內容的「商品」價值，與生產、行銷機構的營利或政治目的被劃上等號。然而來自文化陣營的批評，則使得批判政治經濟學也開始有了「文化轉向」。體察媒介文本在社會流通與經濟動因間複雜的交互影響，政經學者如 Golding & Murdock (1991) 認為媒介商品的「文化形式」(cultural forms) 分析也是重要的。媒介文本的「多義性」特質，生產機構的經濟動因或許不能完全控制，但是生產者策略性的介入 (strategic interventions) 文本的意義形成過程則仍扮演了關鍵性的角色。此可視為對政治經濟學「經濟決定論」的適度的修正。

但問題也在於，是否傳播/溝通過程所產生的「物」，可以在生產者的商品化動機或消費者的「文本意涵」建構中窮盡其解釋。不管是政治經濟學或文化研究，對於「物」的文本化 (textualization) 向來強調的是行動者 (agent) 在文本意涵建構過程中的驅動角色，比較不注意的是傳播/溝通的「物」，如一部電影、一首歌、一個錄音紀錄等，在其社會流通的過程中，所產生的主體性意涵。政治經濟學向來視媒介的產品為「商品」，而將此商品定位在協助落實特定資本交換關係或鞏固階級權力的功能性角色。而文化研究則重視文本意涵和消費政治中主觀的文化經驗。兩者之間認知的鴻溝如何消弭，雖已超出本計畫欲處理的範疇，但本計畫主張，對於傳播/溝通過程的「物性」的探討，有助於釐清政治經濟學及文化研究因為認知論的立場差異所形成的論證「死角」。

這個「死角」，即是媒介產物在流通於不同的社會空間中所形成的「價值型構」(regimes of value)。傳播/溝通媒介生產的「物」，流通廣泛且存在於不同的社會空間，並有不同的價值論斷。物與環境、物與使用者、以及使用者與環境間的複雜關係，無法化約為簡單的經濟決定或多元文化論。「價值型構」的概念，由人類學者 Arjun Appadurai 提出 (1988)。Appadurai 認為，如同人有不同的社會經驗，物也有不同的社會經驗。物從生產、銷售、到使用以至於作廢，經歷

的是不同階段的價值型構。在每個不同的階段中，物的使用投射出的是不同的社會群體、組織，或個人在使物產生特定價值（valuation）過程中的著墨痕跡。物有其做為商品的型構，也有其商品價值耗盡，而文化價值成型的另一種型構；而不同的型構在同一時間點上也有並存的可能性。（Appadurai, 1986）。而 John Frow (1995)也指出，對於文化價值的判斷，應考量不同評價社群（valuing communities）間的差異。「價值型構」概念的優點，在於正視不同生活經驗的社群彼此差異之所在。但在瞭解差異之同時，仍然尋求溝通、比較的可能性。

Dick Hebdige 在 *Hiding in the light* (1988) 中強調，文化價值或意義的詮釋，不可偏廢「物」在價值或意義具體化中扮演的重要角色。「物」中介了資本主義社會中生產者累積資本以及使用者滿足特定欲求的關係。以義大利的國寶速克達為例，Hebdige 認為此物在不同的年代裡不同的設計理念與廣告行銷手法，可以看出作為一種符號與功能兼具的商品，速克達在不同年代裡為不同社群使用時，所產生迥異的價值意涵。

計畫執行與產出ⁱⁱ

鑑於以上的討論，本研究在執行階段，已完成論文繕寫、發表的部份，是將研究問題定位在台灣的流行音樂市場近年來興起的一股老歌重新發行的風潮。台灣流行音樂的產值，自 1997 年的銷售數字高峰，且位居全球第 13 大音樂銷售市場，萎縮至 2004 年只值原有市場規模的四分之一，這樣的劇烈轉變，使得各大唱片公司紛紛採用較保守的發行策略，運用既有的老唱片版權優勢，推出各式的「精選集」、「復刻板」、甚或「混音版」，企圖以此降低資本投入、以及維持唱片銷售數字，平衡因盜版、網路非法下載所造成收益損失。本研究特以此為主要觀察對象，藉由銷售數字調查、以及業界業者的深度訪談，剖析目前唱片業者的困境，且探討在唱片業者如何不斷的藉由各種形式包裝老音樂、重新給予老歌新的歷史定位，甚至結合新的數位創作科技，將老歌的旋律融入新的流行舞曲曲風等手段，重新為老歌注入新生命。

這些手段，或許對於老歌或無法從中收取版稅的創作者而言，形同一種剩餘價值的再剝削。但本文較嘗試以文化人類學的路徑，來討論歌曲本身的社會流動所形成的空間上以及時間上的文化意涵。此意即將流行歌曲這種媒介形式，視為具有主體意涵的物，並強調此物在不同的價值型構利用下，所可能產生的介於產業、科技、文化意涵間複雜的互動關係。

本文的初稿已在崑山科技大學主辦的「媒體科技創意產業與文化顯意國際學術會議」中發表，該會議屬跨年出版計畫的第一步。本文的後續改寫，將被考慮納入中、英文的專書出版。（全文見附件）

An Object-oriented Approach to Music Reissue and Remix

The article centers the discussion of pop music on the prevailing trend of remixes and reissues in the crisis-driven Mandarin pop music industry to propose an object-oriented approach to music. The widely-felt economic uncertainty due to audio piracy these years has resulted in a significant increase in the number of reissues and remixed albums by the TNCs-dominated Mandarin phonograph industry. These practices of product recycling and remake connote a form of exploitation. Yet beyond such economic exploitation, the article argues that what we are also witnessing is the increasing social mobility of pop music, since the extended life cycle of musical products through redistribution and creative appropriation also substantiates various social circumstances of pop music's valorization. From tracing the social trajectory of pop music's journey through time and space, we can map out how pop music's condition of existence objectifies a complex relationship of trade, culture, and technology.

Key words: Mandarin pop music, culture industry, reissue, remix, object

由復刻版、精選集、混音版談流行音樂的物性觀

本文藉由討論台灣唱片工業近來密集發行歌曲混音版、復刻板、與精選集等作法，嘗試提出一個以「物」為主體的分析取徑，來詮釋國語流行歌曲跨時空的社會意涵。近年來因為音樂盜版與下載問題之嚴重，導致跨國集團主控的本土唱片公司，藉由密集重新發行老歌的方式，企圖開源節流，以挽救唱片銷售的頹勢。這種文化商品的資源回收與再製形同一種經濟剝削，但本文企圖超越經濟剝削的觀點，強調這種作為所導致的結果，是增加了特定流行音樂作品的「社會動性」。音樂產品的生命週期因為這些再次傳佈（如復刻與精選）與創造性挪用（如混音）而延展，且此延展使得流行音樂的價值定位能因其存在的不同社會情境而有不同的形貌。藉由追蹤流行歌曲如何在不同的時空中為不同的機構所用，本文強調我們可以具體呈現文化工業中商業、文化與科技間複雜的互動關係。

關鍵字：國語流行歌曲、文化工業、復刻、混音、物

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An Object-oriented Approach to Music Reissue and Remix

The Discovery

In 2003, EMI Music Hongkong released an album entitled *Pathé 100: The original Shanghai divas collection, Redefined*. The album collected 11 remixed dance-style music featuring six well-known female singers, or “divas” as they were called, from the pre-Communist Shanghai.

In the arrangement of the British DJ Ian Widgery, the eleven old songs originally recorded between the 1930s and 1949 were transformed into lounge music mixing jazz, trip-hop, abstract hop and down-tempo. Widgery’s rendition altered the core melodies of each song, with vocals sampled from the original recordings and mixed in the newly created rhythm tracks. Bai Kwong’s low and sultry singing in “Waiting 4 U” is accompanied by the low-key, murky trip-hop melody. In Li Xiang Lan’s “If only....,” the somber electronic drums contrast Li’s high-pitched bel canto singing, “A spring breeze touched the winter night, sent ripples across the still waters of my heart.” Bai Hong’s “Listen up” is brought out in thumping rock tempos while she sings, “Listn up! The night is cold and the dew is on the ground.” Against the backdrop of the pulsating beats and electronic soundsapes, the divas’ vocals sound distant, like ghostly echos surviving time to haunt the rhythm both funky and nostalgic.

Like most other pop music compact discs appealing to the Asian consumers, the album enables the listeners to watch and read no less than listen. The case is jacketed in an envelope with the cover featuring a caricatured portrait of Chow Hsuan, the most well-known diva in China during the 1930s. The portrait shows Chow in a typical 1930s-style bashful look, whose willowy eyebrows and cherry lips appears both flirtatious and innocent. On the side of the portrait is a line of words writing, “Chow Hsuan Chill Out!? Electronic Bai Kowng!? Jazz Li Xianglan!?” The thick booklet that came with the disc introduces Chow Hsuan as “China’s number one singing movie star, she had a life that somewhat parallels Hollywood contemporary Judy Garland in both its professional triumphs and personal tragedies.” Bai Kwong’s songs were “often far from sunny and have a trait that is both melancholy and sensuous, at time possessing an almost Edith Piaf “je ne sais quois.” Yao Lee’s girlish voal quality “displayed in her 1930s recordings changed as she grew older, maturing into a more sophisticated sound...and as good an example of Shanghai jazz as any recording of the 1940s.” Written in both English and Chinese, the booklet paid each diva with posthumous reverence, as if she was the embodiment of the nascent

modernized Chinese pop culture.

The songs of the Shanghai divas reemerged as “invaluable discovery,” according to the booklet’s introduction, for their being salvaged from the brink of obsolescence. In the press release, EMI Music Hongkong claims that they discovered the mother shells of these divas’ recordings, along with a thousand others, in an obscure corner of the Gramophone Company’s vault in India. These mother shells were housed in there since the early 1950s, when Pathé moved from Shanghai to Hongkong following the Communist took over China. The new Communist regime soon confiscated all privately-owned record companies. As there were not any production facilities available in Hongkong during the 1950s and 1960s, all mother shells had to be sent to India for vinyl pressing, including those from the Shanghai era. This explains why the recordings turned up in Indian. The Hongkong office describes these acquisitions as a “wonderful surprise,” and could not wait to dust off these relics and bring them back to light “with brand new faces.” The results were the remixed album and another 5-CD box set reissue called *Pathé 100: The Originals*.¹

Scott Lash suggests that the idiom of the trademark is the secret of the brand. And branding is pivotal to the accumulation and power in the information order. Trademarks are “the syntax of natural/social/technoical relations congealed in property.” A trademark materializes intellectual labor and affixes meanings to an array of goods. (2002, p.196) Advertising and promotional campaigns for the remix album and the reissue valorize the trademark of Pathé as if it essentializes the first golden age of the Mandarin pop songs.

Pathé was the first record company in China. It was established in 1903 and recorded the first Peking opera phonograph as early as the 1905. In 1934, the takeover of the French Pathé by the British Gramophone Company brought the Shanghai subsidiary to its new corporate mother. The British Gramophone kept the Pathé label, and initiated a series of experimentation in song writing by combining popular Chinese with Western trends. Pathé recruited reputed song writers and producers such as Lee Ginhuei, Lee Ginkuang, Chen Ge-Hsin, Yao Min, Yen Hua. Their works meshed such diverse genres as Chinese folk, regional opera, classical European, swing jazz, tango, and rumba. Performed by such legendary songstresses as Chou Hsuan, Lee Shanglan, Bai Kwong, Yao Li, Chang Lu, and Bai Hong, these so-called “Shih-dai Chu” (Songs of the contemporary) lured the then modernization-crazed Chinese urban listeners to dance halls, movie theaters and loud speakers installed outside the grocery stores to idolize China’s first generation of pop idols (Liu, 1997;).

¹ There are two other series came out following the first reissue since then. They are *Pathe 100: The series 1* and *Pathe 100: The series 2*. EMI Music Hongkong are planning to reissue some other recordings in the near future.

It was the time of the Shanghai divas. Their songs, combined with the movies tailor-made for their singing, defined China's artistic avant-garde and established Shanghai as the "Paris of the East." It was estimated that more than 50,000 recordings came out of Pathé before 1949.

Pathé's golden age soon ended with the change of the political regimes. For three decades, the Communist China was sealed off from contact with anything Western, particularly popular culture. Some Pathé divas such as Bai-Kwong, Li Xianglan, Yao Lee, and Chang Lu escaped from the Communist China, while others remained there. Pathé changed its label to EMI Music Hongkong. (The new EMI was created out of the merger between Gramophone Company and Columbia Graphophone in the 1950s). But the new record label could no longer resume the role as the trend leader of the Mandarin pop songs. The Pathé era of Shanghai became a thing of the past.

The 1990s marked an era of internationalization of the Mandarin pop songs. The music department of the six major TNCs, Warner Music, EMI, BMG, Sony-Columbia, Polygram, and MCA-Universal have all made successful inroads in the South-eastern Asia, with branch offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, and Hongkong. As the South-Eastern Asia was being incorporated as an indispensable market of the globalizing TNCs, EMI also landed on Taiwan in the mid-1990s. It bought out several local labels and made Taiwan the regional headquarter of the Mandarin song production, seeking to take off from Taiwan to China to reclaim its lost corporate territory after four decades' leave of absence.

Giddens (2000) suggests that globalization is essentially a stretching process. In the process the social system is unbounded and reordered across time and space. Giddens terms it a time-space distantiation. For Giddens, the global extension of the capitalist economy have contributed a great deal to this process, in which a complex relationship of local involvement and interaction across distance was brought about by the global activities of business corporations. China's first golden age of pop had already been a creation of the transnational corporations. Before the Communist government confiscated privately-owned assets and turned the phonograph industry into a state-owned enterprise, Pathé and Victor were two of the most prolific record labels. Decades after, while Victor has faded out, the transformed EMI managed to ride on the tidal waves of China's open door policy. Among a new generation of various products of Mandarin pop songs in the styles of lyrics, R&B, rap, hip-hop, folk rock, and dance, the "redefined" Pathé divas bridges over the elapse of time and brought two generations of the Westernized pop to meet in one album.

From production, marketing, distribution to consumption, *The Pathé 100* album is a paradigmatic transnational commodity. EMI did not produce the album. Instead, EMI commissioned an independent music label called Schtung Music (also based in

Hongkong) for production. Sichtung hired Ian Widgery from England to engineer the remixing work. Widgery is a reputed DJ/song remixer in England. He had founded an independent label "Million Dollar Record." He also remixed songs for the hit singles sung by Bwitched. The production crews included musicians and sound engineers from England, Shanghai, and Hongkong. EMI released this album in Hongkong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and China.

As EMI has more than 1000 mother shells in this discovery, most of which were preserved in pristine state and more than 70 percent of which have never been published in any other format since the original press, the Hongkong office was toying with the idea of starting a new label to engage in revamping old Shanghai pop songs. The goal was not only to promote these songs in Mandarin-speaking markets, as the executive producer Fai Hung Chan expressed, but also to introduce these music to the global market.

As a transnational commodity produced and marketed by a transnational corporation, *The Pathé 100* album characterizes what Giddens says a circumstance of temporal and geographical copresence, because with all the production, marketing and consumption labor involved, and the enriched historical implication of the 1940s' divas' "lending" of their voices, the temporal lapse has been wiped out and geographical boundaries are no longer the issue.

The Pathé 100 album brings out a set of important issues. These issues are not related to the meaning of the music texts themselves, nor the industry that produce them. These issues concern the "social presence" of music: When pop becomes old, where did the old record go? And how does the society in general, and the phonograph industry in specific, deal with the old stuffs? If most popular music are "disposable" in the eyes of many, and their value lies in the subjective, aesthetic "experience" they enlighten in the mind of the listener, rather than the function of their usage, what is there to be problematize behind the experience of the old music's revival? Between "junks in the way" and "invaluable discovery," what are the criteria involved in the selective work of the culture industry? How do we make sense of the musical objects' change of cultural category, ranging from a piece of lyric that becomes "classic" to a vinyl plate that becomes the object of collected item? These questions bring the attention from the industry that produce and disseminate music, or the consumer who listen to it, to the subjective, however complex, cultural experience of musical object as it travels across different contexts or networking of space and time.

These questions are particularly significant in the current information order, as the supply of "new" cultural products seems failed to catch up with the voracious demand of networks of distribution or channels of exhibition. When the aesthetic

value of a cultural product is no longer judged by its unique existence at one place in one time, the “distinctiveness” has less and less to do with singularity of presence, and more to do with the minor variations of packaging and availability in different commodity formats and under different circumstances of appreciation (Lofgren, 1997; see Straw, 1999). It is these variations that hierarchies of legitimacy and appeal is constructed. They, as Lofgren argues, are part of the “cultural thickenings of...belonging.” (quoted from Straw, 1999). The trivialities involved in making a piece of cultural product “work” can squarely be used to describe today’s pop music scene. Old compact discs could turn up in the clearance sale of the local supermarket; or been filed and catalogued in the museum of recording industry. While still in use, their diverse fates of circulation or preservation brought about their different marks of value. Between bargained commodity and enclaved object of collection, it is the social “scenes” where they made their appearance that confer them with different economies of musical legitimacy.

The following discussion builds upon *The Pathé 100* album to analyze two practices of value recreation at work in the current pop music industry. The “scene” against which these two practices takes place is the troubled Taiwanese phonograph industry, where bootlegged compact discs and illicit digital downloading have taken a lion’s share of the revenue loss of the phonograph production economy. My concern, however, is not the crisis itself, but two corresponding practices in response to the crisis and their implication for the current condition of the culture industry. They are music remix and reissue. Although both are conventional practices of the transnationalized phonograph industry, their more than frequent use by the local phonograph industry in recent years deserves us to examine the objective implication of music listening. Such an objective implication propels us to juxtapose music with a thing, and ask what works this “thing” perform in its social journey as commodity.

The Technology

Since the early part of the last century, producing and disseminating popular music has been an industrial phenomenon. Although music’s industrialization has been commonly associated with music’s “degeneration” as an organic cultural form, Simon Frith suggests otherwise. He argues that the “industrialization of music” cannot be understood as something that happens to music, but describes a process in which music itself is made. In other words, pop music should be seen as a final product of the industrial process, not the raw material. And the process of pop music making fuses capital, technical, and musical arguments. (Frith, 1997, p. 50)

Technological change as an aspect of the industrialization has a profound effect

on the creative process of music and the way judgments were made of it. Alan Durant (1990) suggests that this factor correlates with changes in ways of making, distributing and thinking about music. From analogical recording to digitalization, the creative procedure has, over the years, gradually emphasized the synthesizing capacity of the machines. Pop music creation in the digital age has taken on the character of a mode of mechanical reproduction, as the technology to “store,” “simulate,” and “replay” turns a piece of musical work into quotable “excerpts.” For instance, the interlocking network of digital technologies has made possible the coordination of musical instruments and computers. This interface enables musicians to use pre-set sounds (natural or synthesized sounds stored in memory and loaded from disk) and to layer, or combine, such sounds to create new musical texture. Sampling, as it is called, represents a new form of musical collage in which originality and creativity is cast in new light.

Creatively, *The Pathé 100* album is a work of sampling combining digitalized synthesization and collage. To present the divas in redefined tunes, their vocals, originally recorded on the 78 rpm discs (the most advanced recording technology according to the 1940s’ standard) were extracted from the background musical accompaniments, transformed into and stored as digital data, and remixed with the other synthesized huqin or violin sections, drums, newly-created patterns of electronic sounds, and background vocal harmony. Although the divas’ vocals appeared to be promoted as the protagonist of the album, in substance, their vocals are in a sense “appropriated” rather than preserved. The original singing section are abridged for specific parts, with which the producer timed their replay according to the newly-created rhythms. Such as in Bai-Kwong’s “Autumn Evening,” “I live for the night” is the only line of lyrics repeated throughout the melody—the role of singing has been reduced a sort of cadence. Besides, the divas’ vocals are embellished with various audio gimmicks such as mechanical vibratos, reverberations, scratches, echos, and repeats. The only element from the original recording that is left intact is the monophonic sound quality of the divas’ singing, which contrasts the polyphonic synthesized soundscape to be emphasized as an index of time lapse.

Sampling in many ways represents a radical, albeit postmodern, cultural practice that challenges the established concept of music making. A generalized view against it is that it dehumanizes music playing and, particularly, leaves authorship in jeopardy. While in “original” music making, composition and performance are two distinctive processes, and studio recording is at most technical support that corrects mistakes to bring out the best performance quality. Digitalization levels their differences and reduces the mystique of creation to an act of keyboard manipulation. Such machine protocols as MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), sequencer,

synthesizer, and sampler take out the craftsmanship in music, leaving the programmer as musician who retrieves, quotes, alludes, or simulates piecemeals of stored rhythms, beats, sound patterns, vocals, and timbres of existing works.

Sampling triggers ethical controversy particularly for its infamous parallel with “theft.” In sampling, it was the recording, not that idea, that gets copied.

Nevertheless, such music forms as acid house, rap, and hip-hop owe their reputation to sampling. Rap musicians deliberately use sampling in an oppositional manner to contest the capitalist notions of public and private property (Porcello, 1991; in Hesmondalgh, 2002, p. 207) Sampling opens up new textural possibilities for music for it allows for new forms of collage (Frith, 1987; Hesmondalgh, 2002, p. 204; Durant, 1990). Alan Durant (1990) argues that sampling represents a new musical literacy in the sense that with it, a whole public domain in musical culture is preserved and is available for reverential, ironic, comic or critical reference. Andrew Goodwin went so far as to distinguish three types of functions for sampling. The “realist” sampling simulate a particular instrument sound; a short-cut in production. In modernist sampling, juxtaposition of “quotes” serve to ironize or satirise excerpted material, undermining or redefining its established connotations; or it alludes to identify with a particular tradition. Postmodern sampling bears formal similarity to modernist sampling, but juxtaposes materials in a network of “texts” which refuse any position of judgment on them. In postmodern sampling, the listener has only a tissue of fragmented references which exemplify a culture saturated with sounds but which prevent interpretive fixities or certitudes. (Goodwin, 1988; quoted in Durant, 1990).

Whatever category that *The Pathé 100* album falls into, its sampling of the 1940s’ divas’ vocals demonstrates that music today is not only to be understood as a combination of cultural symbols that substantiate a creative mind, nor only a cultural “text” over which diverse meanings are contested or negotiated. Indeed, a piece of music also represents a piece of “property.” Its component parts, ever since its moment of creation, are potential “raw materials” opened up for future usage. Durant points out that current legal argument seeks to balance two conflicting interests regarding sampling: on the one side is the legal right of an author or producer to exploit intellectual work, which calls for restrictions of copyright; on the other side is a public interest in preserving a freedom to quote, allude to, and draw on things in the public domain. Both represent conflicting interests over its usage. Whether it is opportunistic cloning or creative collage, infringement of rights or democratization of sound, digitalization enables music to be borrowed, quoted, and simulated. It gives music a material outlook.

The Reissue Boom

In his pessimistic critique of the capitalist economy, Theodore Adorno uses the term “pseudo-individualization” to characterize the mass produced, standardized capitalist production, whereby the “same” products are made to seem different by the use of individual “gimmicks” (in Goodwin, 1992, p. 76). Reissues play up the gimmicks of time lapse and breath new and different life into same old stuffs. In an industry where massive circulation depends on a faster rate of new product turnouts and turnovers, reissues constitutes an alternative economy of product recycling.

Yet the alternative sometimes turns mainstream. Burnett (1992) observes that reissues appeared to have peaked in the early 1980s in the United States, which led to a substantial decline in the number of new releases. The reissue boom at that time was related to the new compact discs as an emerging distribution medium, which justified the major companies’ commitment to preserve old music in new materials. Since production costs were generally recovered when originally issued and royalty terms also favored the companies, reissues were considered more profitable than new releases.

Similar reissue boom is also taking place in Taiwan in the recent years. The advancement of distribution medium also constitutes the major cause, but this time it is the compact disc that is threatened to be replaced. The economy of the phonograph industry in Taiwan has been experiencing a long-term recession, which has led to a reliance of the major record labels on back catalogues for profits. It is estimated that music sales from rereleasing old materials has accounted for almost half of the revenue of the phonograph industry (Wu, in interview).

One explanation for this peculiar phenomenon is that new technology has made the industry losing grip of the youth listeners. Although pop music has always been the lingua franca of the youth culture, and the market considers them the mainstay of revenue. These years teen-age listeners are less and less willing to “pay their due” by purchasing compact discs (Kuo, in interview). Instead, audio piracy is becoming a major source of cheap, or free, music. The peer-to-peer file-sharing software and bootlegged compact discs evade the existing production and distribution system, making record providers a reluctant source of complimentary music.

Audio piracy has certainly dealt the Mandarin pop song market a strong blow. Over the last fourteen years, the general output value of Taiwan’s music industry went up and down as if taking on a roller coaster ride. Between 1991 and 1997, when digital downloading has not yet impacted the local market, the general market value almost doubled. The impressive growth has made Taiwan the thirteenth biggest music market in the world, and the second in Asia. Yet the upsurge of record sales was followed by years of drastic decline. By 2003, audio piracy has seriously stricken the the general output value, resulting in a shrinkage of the market to only one-fourth of

its size during the prime time.²

While teen-agers seem to have abandoned the compact disc market, adult listeners fill in the vacuum. Reissues particularly appeal to adult listeners' nostalgia for the old tunes from the pre-compact disc era. Due to this, major record labels fed the market by rereleasing old Mandarin or Western pop songs from the pre-compact disc era, wishing to aim at the adults between the ages of 25 to 45 who still make collecting a major hobby. Old works from such pop stars as Queens, Elton John, Nana Muscouri, and the indigenous pop singers from the 70s and the 80s were rereleased in drove. Sometimes, reissues gave deceased pop icon more than rewarding posthumous careers. Between 2000 and 2004, there were at least fifty reissued albums dedicated to the loving memory of Teresa Deng, who died of athema at the age of 46 in 1996.

Yet the profit reaped from the adult listener's nostalgic sentiment covers only a segment of the revenue generated from record reissues. Relatively new but popular recording artisits, who have only three or four hit albums, are also credited with reissues. For these so-called "best selections," the record company would pick hit songs from different old albums, adding up two to three new works as bonus to go with the old ones. Plus brand-new packaging and concentrated promotional stunt, more than occasionally the "best selection" albums even outperform new releases. For instance, Virgin record(a subsidiary of EMI Music Taiwan)released an album entitled "Beautiful Episode" for Elva Hsiao, a female singer specializes in R&B and adult lyrics, before her contract with Virgin expired. The album collected 24 songs by Hsiao from the four albums previously released by Virgin. Hsiao's album soon became number one selling album in July 2004.

The "best selection" strategy has become a floatation device for the sinking record company. Major record labels pitched the strategy to reconcile with, rather than confront, the rampant bootlegged compact discs and illicit digital downloading. In the slogan "added volumn, not added price," reissues are considered a safe bargain, since the production costs were slashed, and consumers gain at least two-CD worth of songs at the price of one. The strategy turned out to be effective for the record company to create instant selling hikes. In January 2004, five major record labels churned out 17 "best selection" albums before the Chinese New Year looking to tie in to the shopping spree during this national holiday. Reissues became major record companies' panacea

² According to the estimate of IFPI, in 1991, the market value stood at 223 million US dollars. By 1997, the number surged to 427 million US dollars. Yet the sales number took a drastic downturn after 1998. In 2000, the estimated output value dropped to 283 million dollars. And by 2003, only 132 million US dollars worth of recording products were sold.

to inflate the dollar volume before the sales for the fiscal year ends with deficit.

Reissues can be seen as a “flexible” strategy of operation by the transnational corporations. Drawing on David Harvey’s characterization of the neo-Fordist strategies of flexible accumulation, Michael Curtain suggests that major media corporations began to reorganize their operations so as to become more flexible in manufacturing and more responsive to local markets. Consolidation and conglomeration not only turned big corporations bigger, they also made them more decentralized in management to adapt for the fickle local markets. This means that the TNCs would focus their efforts mainly on controlling the channels of distribution, rather than the creative processes. Curtain suggests that this strategy leaves room for niche markets, as these previously considered undeserved markets are valued and incorporated in the globalizing maneuvering strategy.

Curtain did a good job to demonstrate the globalization/fragmentation dialectics at work in the current corporate expansion politics. Nevertheless, such flexibility could represent a double-edged sword when the innovation of music is the issue. Curtain suggests that big corporations are more willing to invest on more specialized music forms these days so as to explore fragmentary markets. A natural extension of this observation can be led to validate the claim that conglomeration does not necessarily exclude innovation. But similar pursuit also results in Taiwan’s reissue booms, where the transnationals exploit channels of distribution “at the expense” of the creative processes.

Put it simply, the increasing number of music reissues is a flexible strategy of the TNCs in response to the crisis economy of the shrinking market demand. And such flexibility often connotes short-sighted opportunism. In the past two decades, the phonograph industry of Taiwan has been transformed into what scholar Taen Dow Lee terms a “production, marketing and promotional sub-sector of the transnational corporations.” It went from a rather self-contained, ma-and-pa industry before the 1980s, to industrialization and conglomeration of the 1980s, to rapid internationalization during the 1990s (Wang, 1999). Before the late 1980s, roughly 12 major companies, mostly locals, dominated the sales of Taiwan’s phonograph industry. Transnationals remained marginally connected to the local market only in terms of importing products or authorizing franchise. Yet, as transnationals slowly built up brand reputation with their products and came to grasp the distribution system, their involvement in the local market evolved from authorization to strategic alliance, and ultimately on to consolidation. By 1995, the six transnationals, Polygram, EMI, BMG, Warner, Sony-Columbia, and MCA-Universal have all landed in Taiwan with branch offices. In 1997, the merger of MCA and Seagram brought Polygram to MCA-Universal, reducing the number of transnationals in Taiwan to five. Throughout

the wave of consolidation in the 1990s, most of the 12 local record labels were either bought out or became affiliates of the transnationals. The only major local label that still remain intact from consolidation is Rock Record.

The impact of the TNCs to Taiwan's phonograph industry provokes contradictory view points. Optimists hold that the transnationals improved the Mandarin pop music both in terms of production value and circulation. Taiwan had exported a limited amount of musical products to the other Mandarin-speaking markets such as Hongkong, Singapore, and Malaysia before the 1980s, and the bootlegged cassetts of Taiwan's pop singer Teresa Deng were widely circulated in China. But it was the TNCs who saw the potential of Taiwan in terms of its enriched creative and marketing personnels, and who expanded the circulation of the locally-produced pop songs with its cross-regional networks of distribution. Besides, the transnationals expanded the pool of creative talents by incorporating composers or performers from the other Mandarin-speaking societies such as Hongkong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and the United States—a healthy sign of the internationalizing Taiwanese Mandarin pop songs.

Pessimists, on the other hand, see the ownership transfer as a loss of cultural autonomy. Lee suggests that the transnationals' exorbitant marketization logic has seriously jeopardized the diversity and originality of the indigenous creation. As soon as controlling the local market, the TNCs blew the production and marketing costs out of proportion, making salability a prerequisite for music production. In order to expand circulation to areas other than Taiwan, producers were encouraged to feed the market with "ahistorical" and "de-territorialized" works (Lee, 1998). Besides, the TNCs maximize product turnouts in exchange for maximized circulation. Resorting to what Denisoff called "the buckshot theory of record releasing," the production firms overproduced albums by first-time recording artists, hoping that a few of their records will become big sellers and return enough profit to cover the costs of the numerous low-selling records. (See Burnett, 1996, p.73) This has resulted in a faster rate of product turnover and filled the phonograph market with "one-album singing sensation." Innovative song writers or talented performers found themselves marginalized because their "local savors" are not consistent with the mainstream production trend favoring "music without frontiers." Lacking real devotion to managing the local market, the TNC-dominated phonograph industry prefers making idols to making music, for the former can stimulate purchasing impulse. Even though occasionally committed to localization, the TNCs' effort is nothing more than showcasing their compatibility to "the local alternatives" by packaging them as "spectacles" for the listening minority. (Lee, 1998)

All this has added up to a faster product turnout rate and even faster rate of

elimination. Besides the external factors of illicit downloading or copying, many speculators attribute the worsening phonograph economy to the short-sighted management of the TNCs, which, to some extent, justifies the cause.

In view to the recession that would not seem to pass, the publishing policy of the TNCs turns even more risk averse. Companies such as BMG and EMI significantly reduced the number of contracted artists and new album releases, and put more focus on managing existing back catalogues. This is particularly the case for EMI Music Taiwan, whose repackaging of back catalogues has become a core strategy to maintain its volume of circulation and market share (Chou, 2000).

As early as the mid-1980s, Simon Frith (1987) suggests that the age of manufacture for the music industry is over. In the handling of the transnationals, the profit structure of music publishing is organized less around making new music than the creation of rights (also see Bennett, 1992). As each music represents “a basket of rights,” the task is to exploit these rights for various commoditization purposes. While Frith interpreted this exploitation mainly in terms of licensing the musical product’s right of usage to movie soundtracks, sponsorship deals, or advertising—its spatial dissemination across media, exploitation is also the case on a temporal basis. In the reissue boom in Taiwan, reaching back in time constitutes no smaller part than spatial dissemination in the general keeping of the circulation economy.

What we are witnessing today is what Bernard Miegge terms “erratic state of affairs,” in which clashes between two modes of music distribution economies are taking shape. If industrialization and conglomeration consolidate a corporate economy built upon networks of distribution, which reap multiple times of profit from a single text, the corporatizing music control is, nevertheless, challenged by the technological nemesis of digital downloading. In the words of Ren Jiang-ta, formerly a founder of an independent record label “Crystal”, digital downloading announces the coming age of “tap water” music, “A click of the mouse is like a turn of the faucet. Music gurgles out at the disposal of its downloaders.” (*The United Daily*, 2004/5/13, A4) Like it or not, the TNCs ultimately have to find ways to reconcile with the digital downloading technology. And for the time being such reconciliation will not compromise its profit structure building upon the existing marketing and distribution system.

Out of this state of affairs a visible trend is the greater mobility of a piece of work in a greater variety of “scenes” of reproduction and consumption, both spatially and temporally, legally and illegally. Whatever is attempted by the corporate owner to control the social use of music, there are also unintended consequences that escape its designated route. In other words, rather than talking about how the big corporation “objectify” music as commodity, what we should be dealing with is how music objectify a network of relationship linking trade, technology, and culture.

The Object

The above two sections both deal with the appropriation of popular music, both in terms of its creative and industrial processes. Although both cases are built upon the observation of the Mandarin pop cultural industry, they are generalizable cultural practices since Asian market today has been incorporated into the global capitalist economy. From sampling age-old songs in new melody, to republishing old music materials in various formats, they both have to do with the fact that in the globalizing culture industry, music as works of art takes on the character of a thing. Alec McHoul defines the conditions of existence of cultural objects as “things” by the possibility that their “propriety,” the ‘proper’ or inscribed or intended function can be reappropriated, turned to a different use. Therefore, according to McHoul, cultural objects are marked “by the fact that they can always come to mean things, to be recognized, to be used, to be known, to be governed, and cared for in *at least two* (frequently more) different cultural systems, different assemblages of production and recognition.” (McHoul, 1997; quoted in Frow, 2002, p. 282).

Popular music as things? It of course does not mean that we can compare the thingness in music to that of a concrete object, such as a portable CD player. McHoul suggests that one major distinction between a naturally-occurring object and a cultural object lies in intention. We may read the non-intentional object as though it were intentional, such as a regular teacup is readable as an aesthetic object (accordingly, portable CD player could potentially be a cultural object). Functional crossover of objects to a different level of cultural hierarchies is common, the key to this transformation lies in whether there are rooms, spaces, or positions in the society to accommodate their newly-gained status.

Music listening has commonly been associated with an experience of spiritual elevation, or joyfulness, or a gesture of social rebellion. And an entire industry built upon creating, marketing, and selling this experience always seems to emphasize the novelty and transcendence of the experience. The Chinese saying has it, “favoring the new, loathing the old.” Pop music industry retires products in a speed paradigmatic of a postmodern commodity turnover. While this fast turnover rate is why pop is pop, underneath the glossy surface of obsolescent trendiness are trivialities of technical gimmickry that preserves, rather than eliminates, music. Today’s pop music as a product that delivers experiences can be duplicated in different listening or textural contexts. A song can be inscribed in different materials (vinyl plate, cassette tape, or CD), disengaged from its original track sequence and mixed in with other songs into a new sequence, or sampled for specific rhythmic and vocal components from the

original recording. Out of these diverse usage, the song can be marked or recognized for its novelty, for its renewable campy sensation, or simply as a tribute for its aging. In these social circumstances of valorization, what we are dealing with is no longer the “experience,” but the complex procedure that “objectify” that experience. In other words, rather than asking about a song’s “unique” cultural experience, what seems to be more relevant for us to ask is “what work does this song perform in its social journey as an exploitable object?”

From the above discussion, we can deduce a simple, albeit often neglected, principle at work in the contemporary culture industries, that is cultural products have lifecycles. Media economists speak of “commodity” lifecycle by emphasizing the exchangeability of cultural products for financial profit. But, commodity might represent a “phase” in the entire lifespan of a cultural product. In the words of Arjun Appadurai, it is “a certain situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature.” (1986, p. 13) Often times, commodity might represent a certain situation in a certain period of time that cultural products “assume.” The social condition of its existence might bring a cultural product to circumstances other than commoditization. And, sometimes, when the exchange value exhausts, the cultural product continues to exist as a thing. Following Michael Thompson, there is a disjunction between economic decay and physical decay. When an object reaches zero economic value, it still continues to exist as a common household utensil, an item of collection, or simply as waste. Among these objects that live out their lifecycle as commodity, some “continue to exist in a timeless and valueless limbo where, at some later date it has the chance of being discovered.” (Thompson, 1978, p. 9) The manner in which durability and transience are imposed upon objects is not a random process, nor is it controlled by any social or economic institution. The moment of “discovery,” in the case of the divas’ revival after been buried in the storage room of the record company for decades, manifests cultural and economic implications far more than the simple and unwitting act of discovery.

Cultural anthropologists who take a subjective view toward material culture suggest that we can properly delineate a cultural artefact’s social journey by adopting a biographical approach (Appadurai, 1983; Kopytoff, 1983; Brown, 2001). Igor Kopytoff suggests that we should treat cultural artifacts as if they have a life history of their own. Rather than assuming that big corporations produce or control popular music, or that popular music is passively set in motion only by the economic institutions that “own” it, we should, in the words of Arjun Appadurai, “explore the conditions under which economic objects circulate in different regimes of value in space and time.” (1986, p.4) In other words, rather than focusing on how business

corporation exploits music, we are talking about is how music renders possible different forms of exploitation. These forms can be social or economic, corporate or personal.

Popular music has been studied in ways which often emphasize changing music styles over time, or, in the approach of cultural studies, as a field over which meanings, ideologies and desires are struggled over. But for Will Straw, a material cultural analysis asks us to consider the way in which “objects occupy space, and accumulate; the ways in which they travel, and follow lines of passage which take them around the world.” (Straw, 1999) Before cultural artifacts are texts and meanings, they are also “things” which “have arrived from somewhere else and bear the marks of this somewhere-ness.” Straw’s Canadian background makes him particularly sensitive to the situation of dependency in the Canadian scene of pop cultural consumption. The fact that the “gateways” through which music with subcultural aura, commonly marked for their resistant, transgressive value, were imported from the United States made Straw pay special attention to a recognized connoisseurist value bound up with these cultural objects. To Straw, the trajectory of cultural commodities as they come into Canada “is shaped by the collective investment in the marks of origin which they bear, and by the capacity of those engaged in importing them to make strategically effective conversions of capital and legitimacy.” (Straw, 1999)

In this article, what I have been seeking to make case for is that such effective conversions of capital and legitimacy is in part controlled by transnational record labels, who exploit back catalogues through reissues and remix to realize profits. But such exploitation, as I also demonstrated, is an anxious response to the crisis state of the phonograph economy, in which exploitation is no longer the exclusive right of transnational corporations. Audio piracy as an act of “grass root” exploitation sends a warning sign of the TNCs’ losing control of the phonograph economy, which in turn stimulates the TNCs to further exploit the relics of pop culture. Between disposable commodity and invaluable discovery, the selected items of pop songs, pop albums, or sections of the pop lyrics have experienced what Appadurai terms “commodification by diversion.” They are “things” removed from their specified paths and their values are placed in unlikely context. The diversion is always a sign of creativity or crisis, whether economic or aesthetic. The pop culture industry’s feeding off the past has certainly made clear this contradiction.

Scott Lash argues that in the seemingly chaotic global information order, where old social structures of the manufacturing order is replaced by a configuration of signal, media, monetary, migrant and technological flows, it becomes more impending for us to speak of the autonomy of the object. “The more we monitor the object, the more the object escapes our grasp.” Transnational flows of capital, flexible

accumulation, illicit digital downloading, and the greater erratic state of cultural production due to the interlinkage of cross-regional cultural economies have configured a world of uncertainties, where misplaced cultural objects earn their second life. Out of these uncertainties, the six Shanghai divas stride across time and stage yet another comeback performance.

Divas never die, they just go lounge.

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