

# Anti-Orpheus: narrating the dream brother

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## Abstract

*Jeff Buckley seemingly resisted entrapment by the 'Oedipal' myths of family, corporate rock, and the cult of dead celebrities, as well as the branding of his image and identity, but his rebellious, self-mythologising anti-narrative simulated the phantom narrative he opposed. In a postmodern context, Buckley's impossible search for absolute artistic authenticity, integrity and originality, given his ambivalence about his ethereal voice – the signature of his father – found expression in hybridised ambiance, modernist collage, and postmodern pastiche.*

## Introduction

When Jeff Buckley disappeared beneath the surface of the Wolf River, an offshoot of the Mississippi, while singing along to Led Zeppelin's 'Whole Lotta Love' from a ghetto-blaster on the river bank, he metamorphosed into the myth he'd resisted vigilantly all his life and merged inexorably into the hyperreal. The son of 1960s cult star Tim Buckley, who predicted his own early death, Jeff Buckley, though abandoned by his father before his birth, ostensibly opposed the crippling 'Oedipal' narratives of family, multi-media conglomerates, the star-maker machine, and the cult of dead music celebrities, while being seduced and compromised by the very same forces. He styled himself a rebel from the entertainment industry and the celebrity business, though his rebellion was mostly an unconscious, romantic pose. It was assumed while inevitably trading on his father's name and enjoying at least some of the fruits of the corporate cornucopia, a type of complicity that may always undermine rock's status as revolutionary, as Simon Reynolds and Joy Press suggest.<sup>1</sup> Jeff Buckley's gesture of romantic revolt opposed an industry that would find a ready ally in his mother, with whom he had broken off communication before his death, whose posthumous releases of her son's work were accompanied by 'the sound of barrels being scraped' ('The Best' 2003, p. 8).

In a sweeping, famously enigmatic critique of therapeutic culture, political economy and contemporary society turned pathological, Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* attacked the misuse of legitimating social narratives, of the kind Buckley resisted, by the family as well as by state and commercial apparatuses and the psychoanalytic establishment<sup>2</sup> to define, delimit and determine all forms and expressions of desire in the libidinal economy. This approach is useful here for its broad mythic application of a species of cultural critique.<sup>3</sup> They advocate the free play of the 'transcendental unconscious' and a mode of practice termed 'schizoanalysis' to provide an oppositional response to master narrative entrapment (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 75), though there is an unexplored romantic basis to their own optimistic desire to locate a transcendental, ahistorical freedom

from all constraint. Jeff Buckley's ostensible resistance to narrative entrapment, of the kind designated 'Oedipal' in Deleuze and Guattari's account, was perhaps doomed from the beginning. In his career, Jeff Buckley searched impossibly, through a kind of transcendental anarchism or a mimicked 'dance insane' (as he called it in 'Dream Brother') to narrate a similarly oppositional, anti-heroic, anti-oedipal non-narrative or post-narrative, and to outmanoeuvre the historical, emotional and existential pasts inevitably conjured by musical memory, and especially the memory of his father and his father's generation.<sup>4</sup> Narrative's postmodern disappearance, however, is itself a narrative, as Jameson (1991, p. xi) points out, resembling what Lyotard (1984, p. 27) calls in another context the 'return of the narrative in the non-narrative'. In many ways, Jeff Buckley became a cipher within the narrative he ostensibly fought against, creating an alternative narrative that unintentionally simulated the phantom narrative he opposed.

While Jeff Buckley never claimed an affinity to Orpheus and suggesting too close a parallel between man and myth would be distortion, Jeff Buckley's narrative is orphean in that the genesis of his fledgling, romantic myth was a nearly divine voice, ethereal and elastic, soaring above personal tragedy and drowned in its prime. In addition, his flirtation with musical, biographical and photographic reflection and mimicry suggests the play of simulacra in the final moments of the orphean ascent from the underworld. Indeed Buckley, as his associates noted, sometimes behaved as if he almost believed himself to be shielded from harm by his extraordinary artistic gift. However, his narrative is decidedly anti-orphean and anti-oedipal, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, in his professed but compromised opposition to the trappings of corporate rock; in his songs' multiple references to watery death that appear both to flirt with and taunt orphean associations; and in his desire to underplay his iconic voice – his paternal inheritance turned to more than symbolic capital in his mother's hands – in the blond noise of 'grunge' and in an impossible search for authenticity. Moreover, while he desired to outmanoeuvre the myth that he was fated for an early death, in some of his best-known songs he embellished that myth.

Jeff Buckley's pure voice, with its remarkable range, even when nearly drowned by the soon-to-be anachronistic stylings of garage-band 'grunge'<sup>5</sup> or semi-petrified punk, echoed his father's. Moreover, the younger Buckley's disdain for music industry packaging, while subtly and not so subtly embracing it, had the nostalgic whiff of hippydom's and his father's anti-establishment rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> The political ideology of "'avant-garde" alternative rock ... sedimented' in the 1990s, Georgina Born contends, as performers began to be valued exclusively on whether they craved commercial success more than the affection of their local audience (Born 1993, pp. 273, 283).<sup>7</sup> Jeff Buckley was signed by a major label, Columbia, who with his participation crafted a career launch with a distinctly indie-label cast via 'integrity-associated college radio', perhaps from some perspectives the ultimate deception of the faithful: 'it was anti-hype that was also subtle hype' (Browne 2001, p. 236). He knew that others saw his life as being governed by fixed stars, and that as long as he stayed alive he successfully shucked off the banal myth of his early demise, yet he was driven by both an iconoclastic recklessness – musical, recreational and professional – that also resembled his father's, and a desire to defeat everyone's expectations. He fought, while also contributing to and clearly profiting from, the creation and branding of 'Jeff Buckley' as a commodity, a cult, an image, and a play of simulacras, until his tragic, watery death made him potentially a marketer's (wet)dream, a nirvana of sales spiking into the stratosphere of heavy, then light metal sales awards, followed in

Buckley's case by a wake of posthumous live recordings. In his relentless and doomed search, in a postmodern context, for an original genre and an authentic voice to give full expression to his gift, which like that of a cyber Orpheus seemed half divine, Jeff Buckley sometimes became narcissistic and mannerist in his shape shifting, seeking to camouflage or even symbolically murder his iconic voice, the inherited signature of his father, in hybridised ambience and postmodern pastiche.<sup>8</sup>

Buckley was well aware that the power of his story and image could engulf and outlast his music, and to a degree that has happened. In his struggle for authenticity, a signature identity, and originality in the work of art in an age of digital reproduction, he hoped to locate both a distinctive, idiosyncratic musical idiom, between the American troubadour and the more recent triple-s (sensitive singer-songwriter) tradition, with equal parts of grunge, post-punk and world music, and also a quality which his biographer David Browne describes as that of 'the sullen male chanteuse who sang as if he were older, wiser, and more heartbroken than he appeared' (Browne 2001, p. 146). Buckley fetishised utopian authenticity; yet, finally, he seems to have isolated the source of his art in the steady impermanence of parodying, performative ventriloquism. His sound collages exemplify postmodernism's effacing of the boundary between high and mass culture (Jameson 1991, p. 2), but they often jerk from postmodern parody<sup>9</sup> into narcissistic pastiche or 'distracted auto-reference' (Baudrillard 1993, p. 82). This essay argues that Jeff Buckley's compromised strategies of resistance to a variety of narrative enclosures and his impossible striving for originality and authenticity, indeed his heroic struggle to avoid being narrativised or mythologised, ended in a simulation of one the greatest myths of all, that of the man with godlike powers who dies young, failing in his quest to locate both his dream brother and an authentic, identifying expression in a period when art has disappeared into simulation.

### Dream brothers / dream letters

As Wallace Fowlie writes in *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet*, Jim Morrison, in his Dionysian revels – his songs and their performance – paid homage to the spiritual, poetic and chemical explorations of Arthur Rimbaud with whom he shared many talents, a self-destructive romanticism, and a young man's blues (Fowlie 1993, pp. 80, 122–3). As in the often autobiographical poetry of Rimbaud, whom Morrison nearly portrayed in a film of his life, the Doors' lyrics often celebrate mythic journeys through a celebratory derangement of the senses and the gifted artist's blissful amorality. Morrison could 'leverage' his connections with Rimbaud, Céline, Artaud, Huxley, the Amerindian shamanistic tradition, and the Beats – and, perhaps, had he known it, the overdetermined narratives of his Parisian demise – in order to legitimise and promote his art. Like Bob Dylan and Richard Fariña, who drew from some of the same sources, Morrison wanted to belong to a great American tradition beginning with Walt Whitman, his electric body singing the song of the open road. Fariña, a close friend of Thomas Pynchon and a singer who, like Janis Joplin's fiancé Seth Morgan, would have relished the promotional dynamite of his James Dean-like demise after his first novel was published (Hajdu 2001, p. 289), persuaded Dylan to fuse his experimental 'literary' writings with his song lyrics, just as later Dylan and journalist Kenneth Allsop persuaded John Lennon to do likewise (Turner 1999, p. 60).

Buckley, while a fan of 1960s rock, of Dylan and of Rimbaud, claiming to have read all of his poetry (Browne 2001, p. 102), had an ambivalent relationship with

mythic narratives, and lived in often unromantic postmodern times. For Buckley's generation, Rimbaud is probably best known from Leonardo DiCaprio's portrayal in *Total Eclipse* (1995) of a handsome wastrel, with a fondness for absinthe and an omnivorous sexuality, who happened to write poesy. Similarly, for a subsequent generation, the post-Morrison Doors may be remembered as aged rockers whose twenty-first century swan song degenerated into the all-too-familiar spectacle of a public rendition of the 'Sue Me, Sue You Blues'. The self-mythologising Lizard King, who had called the Doors 'erotic politicians', had his own Oedipal problems with a strict father who only reconciled with his famous son's memory many years after his death (Sugarman 1989, pp. 80, 101). However, Morrison became a kind of surrogate father to Danny Sugarman, his biographer, even taking him to visit Tim Hardin, whom Tim Buckley idolised, as an object lesson in the perils of celebrity heroin addiction (Sugarman 1989, pp. 137–9). In the Oedipal mini-drama within 'The End', part hobo journey across America and intimate suicide note, Morrison softly curses in a matter-of-fact tone, 'Father . . . I want to kill you' (Morrison 1991, p. 112). Jeff Buckley, who was probably far more wounded than Morrison by his own father's invisibility and silence, never so explicitly dramatised the scene of his own psychic liberation. The year after Buckley's death, perhaps to cut Morrison, mythic reptile aristocrat and surrogate father, down to size, the psychedelic diva Grace Slick, in her memoir of a single, unerotic coital encounter with Morrison, describes the underwhelming dimensions of the king's working mojo (Slick and Cagan 1998, pp. 165–6), though she frankly admits wishing she'd kept notes to allow her to narrate more fully her meeting with a myth who scaled new heights of celebrity decades after his death.

Jeff Buckley's genius, as well as his search for an original genre (see below), linked him more closely than anything to his dream of his father, a father who wrote him a publicly delivered 'Dream Letter'. Jeff Buckley's desire to sidestep centre stage and disappear behind the house lights fed a Dylanesque or Garboesque mystique, a well-known gesture recalling Morrison donning beard and fat-suit in his final anti-rock star days in Paris, and Lennon withdrawing to child-rearing, self-medication and TV. These strategies are generously interpreted by fans as disdain for capitalist ideology. As Anthony Elliott points out, however, Lennon, in his construction of rock star celebrity as private citizen, continued writing and making music throughout the much-debated Dakota years (Elliott 1999, pp. 132–5), such debates usually hinge on assessments of Yoko Ono. In Elliott's analysis, she enabled Lennon to 'narrate his life as a *recovery from loss*' (*ibid.*, p. 70), though a creative engagement with loss permeates his work. In death, and in his death's unprecedented public mourning, Lennon represented the widespread cultural response to death, and its rationalisation, decontextualisation, commodification and trivialisation (*ibid.*, pp. 144–53). Long before Lennon was gunned down and George Harrison attacked by deranged fans, however, the Beatles had become uncomfortable when their infatuation with African-American popular music and their pop star dreams collided with their admirers' violent, messianic adoration and vilification in the context of a culture in which murder is a category of celebrity.

When Jeff Buckley appeared on stage in April 1991 at a tribute to his father, dead from a heroin overdose in 1975 at the age of twenty-eight, before an audience of his father's friends and colleagues, many of whom didn't know of his existence, it seemed like the Second Coming (Browne 2001, p. 136). Organisers were wary of the self-aggrandising posturing of a rock star runt and were therefore amazed to discover a gifted prince in exile. Jeff Buckley would not be allowed the indulgence taken by his

father of inventing yet more colourful pasts in the media, but at this concert he was the 'mystery white boy', as he named his 1995 tour. He was instantly recognisable by his father's profile, uncannily, even by his posture, gestures and mannerisms, but especially by the diamond clarity of his voice. Jeff Buckley was ambivalent about participating in the tribute and performed symbolically neither to murder nor to praise his father, but simply, as he said, 'to pay my last respects' (Sweeting 1997, p. 22), having missed his father's funeral. Yet, in a weird Oedipal transposition, from the ashes of his father's grave arose the beginnings of Jeff Buckley's career. There he met Gary Lucas, former guitarist with the 1960s version of the 'alternative', Captain Beefheart's Magic Band, and eventually the co-writer of two of Jeff Buckley's best-known songs, 'Mojo Pin' and 'Grace', the latter also the title of his first studio album, widely hailed as a masterpiece. In a gesture belying the raw psychic wounds of his father's abandonment, the inevitable resentment about the premeditated betrayal of a child, Jeff Buckley sang his father's 'Once I Was', addressed to a former lover. Hearing a recording of 'Once I Was' at the age of six, played for him by his mother, was the first time he'd ever heard his father's voice, and in this context its lyrics read almost as a requiem for self-serving hedonism's capacity to destroy personal relationships in the 1960s: 'Sometimes I wonder for a while/Will you ever remember me'. Jeff Buckley was doomed to remember Tim Buckley, and as he said of the concert later, 'In a way, I sacrificed my anonymity for my father, whereas he sacrificed me for his fame. So I guess I made a mistake' (Browne 2001, p. 138). Was the mistake the inevitable, public parading of an old hurt, the risk of being heralded as a Tim Buckley clone, or the dangling possibility that he would be forever a footnote in his father's extensive discography?

A posthumous dialogue between father and son is engendered in another of the pater's songs that Jeff Buckley sang at the tribute. It more directly addresses Tim Buckley's ex-wife and child. 'I Never Asked To Be Your Mountain', from 1967's *Goodbye and Hello*, one of the first rather disjointed, imagist songs he wrote alone (Underwood 1990, p. [3]), seems heartlessly callow in its misogynistic self-justification, though it, like 'Once I Was', disarmingly acknowledges its speaker's 'lies'. 'I Never Asked To Be Your Mountain' is an extended, self-lamenting excuse or rationalisation that recalls 'my child/wrapped in bitter tales and heartache'. It imagines the tales told the child by the bitter, abandoned mother about his 'scoundrel father', and it concludes with an offer for the narratee or listener, 'as I die', to 'drink my lies . . . titled "I'm drowning back to you"'. Another of Tim Buckley's songs of loss and anguish, and one similarly marked by images of death and dreams, is 'Dream Letter', a song clearly addressed to Tim Buckley's abandoned son. The speaker, in nostalgic mood, invites his departed lover into his dreams and asks whether 'my child' is a 'soldier or is he a dreamer/Is he mama's little man/Does he help you when he can?/Oh honey does he ever, ever ask about me?' Tim Buckley concludes in a powerful live recording of the song made in London in 1968, sombrely, 'oh what I'd give to hold him'.

Jeff Buckley's 'Dream Brother' at least partly replies to 'Dream Letter'. It begins with a signature guitar part that imitates the ragas beloved by Tim Buckley. Couched in a brooding, third-person, dream vision – 'There is a child sleeping near his twin' – Jeff Buckley's song shifts at line five to direct address. The singer confronts a lover who gave up a woman with 'butterscotch hair' to kiss another. The singer asks the dream brother not to 'be like the one who made me so old', 'the one who left behind his name'. He pleads, instead, for the dream brother's nominal presence, "Cause

they're waiting for you like I waited for mine / And nobody ever came. I feel afraid and I call your name'. In addition to the suppressed primal scream of the lost child made prematurely old, however, the song rises above the worst sentimental pop kitsch and sympathises with the dream brother's talents and aspirations: 'I love your voice and your dance insane / I hear your words and I know your pain'. The deserting father has been reconfigured as a perfect, agonised other, a brotherly equal. Here, the child is father to the man, and 'Dream Brother' is a dream letter of forgiveness to a youthful but faithless parent, driven by the furies of his genius, the dangerous licence of the times, and the Russian roulette of the fame game to behave like a 'scoundrel'.

The postmodern, post-Lacanian reinterpretation of psychoanalytic tenets relating to the essential psychic disruption and duality of identity by professional contrarian and theoretical trickster Baudrillard, precariously balancing the provocative, the playfully profound, and the just plain silly, may have a bearing on Buckley's song and its account of his difficult relationship with the memory of an unknown father: 'we are born in the dual state and each of us is haunted by his own twin, the true resolution of the Oedipus complex no longer being the separation from the mother and father, but the separation from the original twin. That double has to be exorcised, conjured away, if one is to be oneself. . . . We're haunted by this phantom twinning. . . .' (Baudrillard 1998 p. 94). Baudrillard somewhat romantically transposes the Oedipal tragedy as a psychomachia, reconfiguring the interpersonal conflict in terms of simulation and simulacra. This somewhat reductive postmodern reading of the Oedipal narrative rehearses the necessity of parting from the phantom twin, whether by symbolic murder or exorcism. Whatever the merits of Baudrillard's formulation, Buckley's song appears to enact a type of psychic exorcism with astonishing maturity and grace. The song concludes with an image of ominous foreboding in light of subsequent events. The speaker leaves the dream brother 'Asleep in the sand with the ocean washing over'. The image evokes the figure of Orpheus.

## Anti-Orpheus

The tribute to Tim Buckley was perhaps Jeff Buckley's first public attempt to exorcise the wraith of his Orphean father, his voice singing eternally on nine studio disks. Jeff Buckley had to oppose the myth of Orpheus because it rendered him a simulator of his father's voice, and excluded him from the comradeship of the contemporary alternative rock context that disdained virtuoso, prima donna posturing, even by a Kurt Cobain, Eddie Vedder or Chris Cornell. In addition, the raw, take-no-prisoners 'grunge' ethos, like that of punk, was partly a corrective to music industry slickness, and looked askance at someone who could effortlessly burst forth into an immaculate, Farinelli-like 'Corpus Christi Carol' or morph into a male Edith Piaf. Jeff Buckley's songbird, choirboy chops clashed with the code of the street. In addition, the 1970s heavy metal formula of ethereal, butterfly lightness shifting abruptly into crashing, leaden thunder – itself an electrified echo of acoustic folk blues – was by the mid-1990s a cliché that rendered grunge a moment of unintentional postmodern parody. Tim and Jeff Buckley galvanised audiences with their image, musical taste, and elastic, seraphic voices. As Jeff Buckley sang in his ethereal account of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah', David's singing was pleasing to God.

Rainer Maria Rilke writes in *Sonnets to Orpheus*: 'We do not need to look for other names. It is Orpheus once for all whenever there is song' (Rilke 1993, p. 11). In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells of Orpheus's descent into the underworld to sing for the

release of his beloved Eurydice: 'the cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears, for they were overcome by his singing. The king and queen of the underworld could not bear to refuse his pleas' (Ovid 1955, p. 226). Eurydice is released on the condition that Orpheus doesn't gaze on her until they have ascended beyond the gloom of the underworld, but pining Orpheus mistakes the dawning light of the world for full daylight, also forgetting that Eurydice is still in darkness. His backward glance condemns her to a second death, and Orpheus is inconsolable. He has mistaken the simulation of daylight for its reality, and in dejection he pursues another object of desire: 'Orpheus preferred to centre his affection on boys of tender years, and to enjoy the brief spring and early flowering of their youth: he was the first to introduce this custom among the people of Thrace' (*ibid.*, p. 227). A bi-curious Orpheus enrages the Ciconian women who hear his songs charming birds, animals, and trees, and they attack, though even a stone hurled at Orpheus 'was charmed by the blending harmonies of voice and lyre, and fell at his feet, as if to ask pardon for so daring an assault' (*ibid.*, p. 246). The women howl in order to drown out Orpheus's music in the ears of the stones that begin to strike and bloody the poet, before the women tear him apart. His limbs are scattered into rivers swollen with weeping, but his head and lyre fall into the river Hebrus, finally washing up on the shore of Lesbos, the face and head unchanged by the sea. In *The Vital Illusion*, Baudrillard, in one of his provocative, ex-cathedra pronouncements authorised by a denial of expertise or interest, and a reference to peasant credentials and a desire to expose illogical premises, thereby betraying a certain romantic nostalgia for irreducible essences and stable meanings, writes that in the future, when commodification and simulation have engulfed everything, even death will be 'redesigned' as a leisure activity (Baudrillard 2000, p. 11). But in the myth Orpheus dies a violent death, though it allows him to join Eurydice and his singing continues forever.

When Jeff Buckley's drowned body was recovered from the Wolf River after days of frantic searching, he was unrecognisable. He was identified partly by the Altamont T-shirt he was wearing, thereby recalling the Rolling Stones' concert since widely mythologised as the note of doom ending a decade of peace and love, rock and recreation, during which the Hell's Angel could lie down with the hippy, successfully disguising organised crime's unholy alliance with corporate rock, for a mess of outlaw credibility on the one side, and an unlimited supply of beer on the other. Buckley's violent doom, wrapped in and accompanied by the retro vestiges of the decades to which he seemed to feel that he owed a generational fealty, appeared irreconcilable with the divine nature of his voice as if his gift would protect him from harm. As his lawyer George Stein recalls:

His death was so hard to believe because he was so godlike in his talents. You couldn't believe his life could be snuffed out. That he was mortal. His talent was so immortal. And to get those two in the same body and soul was a dichotomy. He was so vulnerable with a lot a baggage and problems to work out and at the same time he had this ascendance, talent beyond even him. Maybe he was even grappling with that. A perfect talent in a human being who was flawed like all of us. There was a tendency to think, well, if the talent's perfect, then Jeff has to be completely perfect . . . (quoted in Cyr 2002, p. [56])

As if anticipating his watery end, a number of Jeff Buckley's songs, like those of his father, make free-floating references to water. Tim Buckley's oceanic imagery and singing sometimes conjure a cosmic and orgasmic return to the Great Mother, an *in utero* Eden, argue Reynolds and Press (1995, pp. 185–6). In particular, in his improvisations in 'Starsailor', Tim Buckley's voice 'incarnates his lust for some kind

of eroto-mystic apocalypse' (*ibid.*, p. 186): 'Buckley's voice(s) ooze like plasma, coagulating in globules, filaments and tendrils that bifurcate then reconnect, forming a sort of honeycomb of vocal *jouissance* – a grotto of glossolalia. Buckley's eerie vocal polyphony lies somewhere between babytalk, orgasmic moan, and the shattering ecstasies of mystical rapture' (*ibid.*, p. 187). Jeff Buckley picked up shards of his father's trope, but in his songs the 'Neptunian fantasies and water-worship' of psychedelic rock (*ibid.*, p. 185), invoking a return to sub-oceanic gardens of childish delight, are sea-changed. Perhaps as a result of personal tragedy, a pharmacological shift to narcotics and designer drugs, and the prevailing 1990s retro-culture of despair – we missed the 1960s and are doomed to repeat them – the Aquarian lullaby becomes in Jeff Buckley's work a love song to death. 'Mojo Pin' equates the memory of the beloved with 'pearls in oysters' flesh', but the singer seeks chemical solace for her early torture. The romantic, melancholy title track from *Grace* anticipates a journey to death, somehow conducted by the moon and clouds, though the singer is 'not afraid to die'. Death will carry him away from a 'fading voice' and the pain of existence, and a weeping woman who is enjoined to wait in life's fire presumably till she can join him. The singer narcissistically and quietistically meditates on mortality and the dissolution of the self till finally 'I feel them drown my name'. In this piece of retro-psychedelia, watery 'ego-dissolution' does not replace, but instead coexists with 'ego-mania' (Reynolds and Press 1995, p. 160). 'Grace' is a lullaby to the sorrowful beloved, already mourning the singer, and a love song to death's watery dissolution, as well as a maudlin, self-pitying auto-elegy.

### The work of art in the age of digital reproduction

While Rilke's Orpheus taught that 'Song . . . is not desire', but 'reality' (Rilke 1993, p. 7), Rilke acknowledged the power of the Orphean narrative: 'through him/arise the symbols where we truly live./And, with tiny footsteps, the clocks/move/separately from our authentic time' (*ibid.*, p. 24). For Rilke, the timeless, transcendental realm of music and myth simply packs more reality. He does not separate image, illusion and reflection: 'will you tell me how a man can enter through the lyre's strings?' (*ibid.*, p. 7). In the postmodern condition, when popular culture and especially pop music, containing its own hook or encoded advertisement and increasingly used in marketing for its nostalgia capital, exemplifies for many 'the ephemera of the present' (Born 1993, p. 278), such holistic legitimation is an exotic memory. In an age of simulation, the search for the authentic, even the trace of the 'real', is doomed. Moreover, in an age of mechanical reproduction, writes Baudrillard, following Benjamin, reproduced art has no 'aura': 'what is lost is the original, which only a history itself nostalgic and retrospective can reconstruct as "authentic"' (Baudrillard 1994, p. 99). The desire to disguise this state of affairs and 'hold this simulation at bay' (*ibid.*, p. 81) results in frantic over-production: 'When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality – a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity' (*ibid.*, pp. 6–7). As Baudrillard suggests, much popular culture still seeks the impossible reality of eternal Orphean song, an exotic memory showing 'where we truly live', in an age of simulation.

Jeff Buckley fetishised the authenticity of the work of art in an age of digital reproduction. He respected the American folk tradition and the down-at-heel, dour



wisdom of songs like 'Satisfied Mind' or 'Lost Highway', but he also desired to realise a vision of something truly unique. This fetishising of authenticity, whether of hard-living dust bowl honesty or something muse-inspired, led Buckley to anguished vacillation. Instead of issuing a recording of inspired covers to fill the gap between recordings of original compositions, for example, he toured the world, exhaustively paying dues, growing an audience, honing his craft, and melding his band. This was largely unnecessary, even counter-productive, despite his record company debt, and its goal undermined by his obsessive and ultimately energy-wasting and self-defeating obsession at all costs to avoid repeating himself. Thus, in an effort to become a hard-working minstrel and build a band, he endlessly tried to break the mould of his songs and make every rendition original. His hatred of repetition made for shows that were equal parts inspiration and self-indulgence, and also for torment and entropy in the studio. Rather than honing and polishing a good musical idea, he wanted to follow the dreaming muse of his genius down every rabbit hole. He particularly despised the notion of making 'Grace 2'. As one of his musicians remembers, much rehearsal time was devoted to endless improvising or 'play[ing] catch in the dark' (Matt Johnson, quoted in Browne 2001, p. 250). As a result, while trying to perfect his much-delayed second studio album, partly stymied by the widely hailed near-perfection of *Grace*, he waffled, even near the end of his life writing a whole new batch of songs for another attempt at putting something in the can that he could be proud of. Almost as if he were preoccupied with his musical legacy and perhaps haunted by that of his father, while working on his second major record, a man in his late twenties, Buckley didn't want to take a false step. He seemed equally wary of the blasphemy of 'faking' absolute artistic commitment, for which Cobain condemned himself in his suicide note (Brite 1997, p. 178), as if he were already contemplating a kamikaze rock narrative trajectory, leading from hit single to voice of a generation, and concluding with dinosaur jukebox tour or youthful corpse.

The much-touted merits of the CD upon its introduction – its flawless reproduction, indestructibility, and even shimmering jewel box – were both a challenge and a curse for an artist like Jeff Buckley so wedded to a romantic notion of performative authenticity. The medium's apparent capture of the acoustic utterance of tongue, larynx and diaphragm, was an inspiration for an artist aware of his extravagant talents and a lodestone for the relentless improviser, ostensibly set free to workshop forever in the studio's musical wonderland. Baudrillard, in a suggestive flight of hyperbole, describes the paradox of even hi-fi as inviting the 'technological perfection and sophistication of music to the degree where music has disappeared' (Baudrillard 1993, p. 85). The icy medium readily controls, totalises and engulfs the music, he seems to suggest, with all the heart of a photocopier. Two of the warmest and most tender performances on the *Grace* CD, however, 'Hallelujah' and 'Corpus Christi Carol', were spliced together by the producer from different takes. Unwilling to create an obvious successor to *Grace* and seemingly ambivalent about producing incandescent masterworks and also about whether he was a force of nature and an heir of the 1960s cult rock gentry tethered by garage musicians, or just a singer in a rock and roll band, Buckley often gave way to the freeway traffic of rambling improvisation. Some of the uncharacteristically tentative vocal performances on *Songs To No One 1991–1992* performed with erstwhile Svengali Gary Lucas, including the home recording of 'She Is Free' on which the producers later overdubbed a rhythm and blues horn section's descending hook, show how awkward and leaden an uninspired Buckley could be.

Performance, Buckley seemed to feel, best captured his shifting directions, and his ideal studio record would create the simulation of performance, with a nostalgic notion of direct communication with an audience at its heart, somewhat awkwardly positioned within the realities of commodity exchange in a pure zone of hyperreality (Baudrillard 1993, p. 150). His extended, improvised performances are perhaps best captured in the two-chord bacchanalia of 'Kanga-roo' on the *Last Goodbye* EP, or in the inspired reconfiguring of 'The Way Young Lovers Do', on *Live at Sin-é*, a bristling, bitches brew of jazz-inspired scat vocalisations. The liner notes to *Sketches for My Sweetheart The Drunk*'s promise of additional posthumous live recordings, juxtaposed with e-offerings of concert paraphernalia, ostensibly gratify fans' demands for more and better alternative versions of his best-known songs. This overproduction, over and above the question of the artist's wishes (Browne 2001, p. 344), feeds the perception, often generated in popular music, that the best recordings were never released. This myth was exploited, probably with tongue in cheek, by Lennon, referring to the Beatles' work. Whether it was studio jams of rock and roll standards, bogus 'gems' like 'What's The New Mary Jane', or disinterred and embalmed demos like 'Free As A Bird',<sup>10</sup> the promised Shangri-la of buried Beatles' treasure was never found. Buckley's unenthusiastic reaction to the recordings for what would be issued as *Sketches for My Sweetheart The Drunk* produced by Tom Verlaine, prompted the seasoned art house rock road warrior to issue him a warning. Cassandra-like, Verlaine predicted that if dissatisfied with the material, Buckley should erase the tapes, or somehow, someday they would surface in record stores (Browne 2001, p. 317).

If the *ur*-genre of the music of an artist like Buckley is the performative, approached best through free-form sonic landscape painting, then its masterstroke will contain a good deal of unholy hybridity, cherry-picked from the lexicon of Western and 'world' music. Moreover, the resulting bifurcated perception of Buckley as a versatile cabaret singer fronting a discordant indie metal band perplexed programmers trying to slot his music into radio and video formats. Buckley's search for the generic zeitgeist in his vocal explorations, however, often resulted in collage. Beginning with a standard, or one of his own best-known songs, he typically shifts into a jazz-inflected scat, conjuring instruments, animals, and the other-worldly. *Sketches for My Sweetheart The Drunk*, the sketchy 'follow up' to *Grace*, is dedicated to the memory of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, whose spiritual qawwali music Buckley loved, and the 2001 release of his Paris Olympia concert includes a duet with Alim Qasimov, who soars above a rather pedestrian song, while Buckley seems reluctant to fly free perhaps out of an understandable deference to a powerhouse talent or from a sense of intimidation in the presence of someone so comfortable and flexible within a well-established traditional idiom. It was partly Buckley's discomfort with his own American musical traditions and more than a slight embarrassment at his hair-rocker, air-guitar influences that led to some of his brave innovations and failed experiments. Even dueting with Alim Qasimov, however, was not such a risky venture at a time when 'world' music has been branded, trade marked and globalised, and the 'world' itself has become a popular music genre.

One of the strands of Buckley's ideal genre rested in his enthusiasm for iconoclastic mimicry. His famous rendering of Edith Piaf's 'Je N'en Connais Pas La Fin' is touching but nevertheless a parody, a kind of aggressively hetero camp, the half-lit torch songs of the great chanteuse of the past being a drag queen staple. Singing this classic in performance, beautiful and unavailable, macho and androgynous, Buckley gestures to the extreme elasticity of his heterodox gift, but simultaneously simulates a

simulation, a recording of a recording, highlighting the utter absurdity of his stance. Similarly, Buckley was a meta-interpreter whose 'covers' of other artists' songs were often covers of covers (Browne 2001, pp. 146, 166). *Grace's* version of James Shelton's 'Lilac Wine' replies to Nina Simone's mournful, gospel-inflected version of the love song with orchestral-sounding solo piano accompaniment. Buckley's higher-pitched homage is a feminine answer to her husky, soulful interpretation. *Grace's* famous 'Hallelujah' covers, not Leonard Cohen's, but John Cale's journeyman-like reading of the song. Buckley's posthumously-released *Olympia* recording includes a few moments of Buckley's virtuosity and his clearly under-realised aptitude for comedy. Buckley's friend Chris Dowd remembered a youthful Buckley resembling 'Robin Williams playing the guitar' or producing radical comic juxtapositions such as 'Elvis singing the Doors' (Browne 2001, pp. 109, 110). In performance, he could be 'a human jukebox' (Penny Arcade quoted in Cyr 2002, p. [65]), often blending heavy metal and his early interest in comedy sketches by the likes of George Carlin, as when in an early 1992 live recording of 'Mojo Pin' on *Songs To No One 1991–1992*, his vibrato wobbles into a gargle, as if the singer can't restrain himself from comic sound effects.

Recalling exuberant experiments with a record player, while gesturing to the influence of one of the gods of 1970s stadium rock, Buckley in the *Olympia* concert twitters a speeded-up chipmunk rendition of Led Zeppelin's 'Kashmir'. The audience roars in recognition and appreciation of what could have been a more sustained parody. This performance, however, is less parody than fragmentary pastiche. While showcasing Buckley's comic potential and showmanship, it sadly demonstrates his arrival at a feared dead end. *Sketches for My Sweetheart The Drunk*, while lacking the comic delight of 'Kashmir', also plays the endgame of pastiche. In his studio follow-up to *Grace*, recorded for Columbia, the fabled folk label, Buckley, perhaps to distance himself from the eclectic soup of *Grace* and his father's long shadow, brought in Tom Verlaine to produce, though at the end of his life Buckley was preparing to return to *Grace's* producer, Andy Wallace, to re-record the songs. The result of the sessions, which might have been sublime art house rock, seems to founder in its strangely sanitised, regular punk beats. The ominous, doom-laden beat of 'Yard of Blonde Girls', for example, is redolent less of Iggy Pop's messianic, fascist chic or the clarity and inventiveness of Television's *Marquee Moon* than of a rather mechanical simulation of the narcotic throb of the Factory's house band. The old leather jacket has become a straitjacket, and the recording disappoints, a disappointment hardly ameliorated by the inclusion of similar alternate takes of some songs. Though Buckley soars in the extended hypnotic coda to 'Witches' Rave' and the demo of 'Jewel Box' has potential, the work is still very much in progress. The well-intended but doomed attempt by Buckley's heirs to locate Buckley's original vision for 'Sketches' had to be abandoned, its place supplied on the now double CD by a plentitude of drafts, demos and sketches, that more loudly announce the absence of the lost object of desire.

### The simulated image

Jeff Buckley hated hearing he resembled his father, though as Browne points out, he quietly and carefully sleuthed every detail he could uncover about him and could perform perfectly most of his father's songs (Browne 2001, pp. 110–13). Like his father, Jeff Buckley disdained easily accessible middle of the road pop, wondering as his father had in a brief 1970 article in *The New York Times* 'if music is really relevant to people or if it just supports a fashionable movement' (Buckley 1970, p. HF 4). Jeff

Buckley knew that his own media image, stroked by celebrity journalism and the oxymoronic 'entertainment news' was as much composed by photographs and videos as by his music, and he resented attempts to style him merely as either a clone of his father or a pair of good cheekbones. He, like Hugh Grant, had a 'period face', a visage vaguely conjuring a 'missing past' or a 'lost reality' (Jameson 1991, p. 19), to a generation too young to remember, part of an ahistorical cultural retrieval of history as style. He turned down offers to appear in ads by Gap and Prada, and he studiously side-stepped national exposure on late-night TV talk shows. He declined acting roles and even commissions to write movie theme songs. He was mortified to be named in 1995 as one of *People* magazine's '50 Most Beautiful People in the World', but the apotheosis of his encounter with fame was a contrived media frenzy perhaps orchestrated by rock's reigning, self-styled kinderwhore, Courtney Love (Browne 2001, pp. 265, 316).

As the photographs in the collection by Merri Cyr, *A Wished-For Song, A Portrait of Jeff Buckley*, show, however, Buckley was media savvy, and loved the camera as much as it loved him. In fact, he had a wished-for if burdensome image and reputation and was much sought after in New York well before he'd made a record. Cyr writes of the quality of his image, and the bifurcated quality of her photos of him:

there are not that many typically considered 'beautiful people' who are really very interesting to photograph. Jeff had a fantastic beauty, rare and originating on an energetic level. It's got nothing to do with the meat of a body, and it's beyond talent. Maybe his high burn rate made him shine all the more brightly, seducing people to match an ephemeral brilliance, or by the same token a vast darkness. Whatever you might call it, it became an actual and visible expression in the photographs. They are a mixture really, half reflection and half projection . . . (Cyr 2002, pp. [6-7]).

The *Grace* cover, however, shows his face in half profile, indicating his resemblance to his handsome father, and he wears a bedazzled princely coat, as if mimicking the glittering Graceland Elvis of the Las Vegas years (Figure 1). He somewhat coyly looks away from the camera as if not quite ready for his close-up, but all the while preening. His gaze is directed downward, away from the period microphone as well as the camera's eye, as in a number of his publicity shots. He appears self-absorbed, perhaps like Narcissus who falls in love with the reflection of his image, though knowing 'The thing you are seeking does not exist' (Ovid 1955, p. 85). This image of Jeff Buckley projects an enigmatic, brooding, but stylised melancholy, though he claimed its appeal for him was that it showed him listening to music (Cyr 2002, p. [17]).

The dust jacket of Cyr's collection features a tinted photo of Buckley as a psychedelic, Wildean dandy gone to seed (Figure 2). His hair is unkempt, and his women's fur coat with jaunty decorative feather is joined at the collar by a safety pin, but his eye sockets are dark caverns. His head is tilted down, perhaps in this instance designed to project his declaration to Cyr taken as the epigraph for her book: 'I'll be your muse'. His look in this photograph recalls the grandiose, slightly ominous, androgynous dissipation of Brian Jones, or Gram Parsons and Keith Richards' elegantly wasted, band of gypsies déshabillé; however, Jeff Buckley's was a second-generation and second-hand psychedelic hobo's rag-tag image, conjuring a waif emerging in harlequin dress up from his mother's closet. On the cover of *Last Goodbye*, a Japanese promotional EP, there is a photograph of Buckley by Hideo Oida. Buckley, whose eyes are closed, as if he were sleeping or conversing, gestures with his hands (Figure 3). He is garbed in dust bowl threads, like a latter-day dharma bum, his clothes



Figure 1. Photograph of Jeff Buckley by Merri Cyr used for the cover of the *Grace* CD (used by permission).

and hat perhaps the booty of a flea market spree. Yet given his oddly dramatic posture and the photograph's composition, the image strangely juxtaposes a deathly passivity, as if the spirit abandoned the body as the shutter clicked, with the elegance of manufactured insouciance, the wan look so popular at the time of heroin chic. It is a Walker Evans shot by a Bruce Weber, the hobo aesthetic as fashion statement. In Jameson's phrase, it exemplifies the postmodern 'pastiche of the stereotypical past' (Jameson 1991, p. 21), though it also carries a disconcerting deadness or the aura of what Baudrillard calls the 'irreal' (Baudrillard 1993, p. 23), as if a star from the 1930s or 1940s were reanimated in a shadowy half life, with a hint of CK androgyny. The image has the quality of the photographs of Jim Morrison that made him a star all over again years after his death. Such images don't riff on the play of signifiers in a post-referential field;<sup>11</sup> rather, they gesture to an impossible authenticity and integrity, stopped between the lost memory of the real and simulation.

### Mythologising the end

It sometimes seems that Jeff Buckley's death has been left to narrate and mythologise his life. As Greil Marcus has written about the circulation of rock media mistruths, 'when an event takes place outside the strictures of power, it is swallowed by the imperatives of history, which are partly the imperatives of myth' (Marcus 1995, p. 42). In his death, Buckley, who sometimes mocked dead rock stars from the stage so conscious was he of the baleful myth of his own predicted early demise, inadvertently joined the 'stupid club' of rock stars who died young. Kurt Cobain's wise mother warned him not to join the club before his suicide.<sup>12</sup> However, Jeff Buckley's was neither a death by chemical misadventure nor apparently a suicide, though the folly of

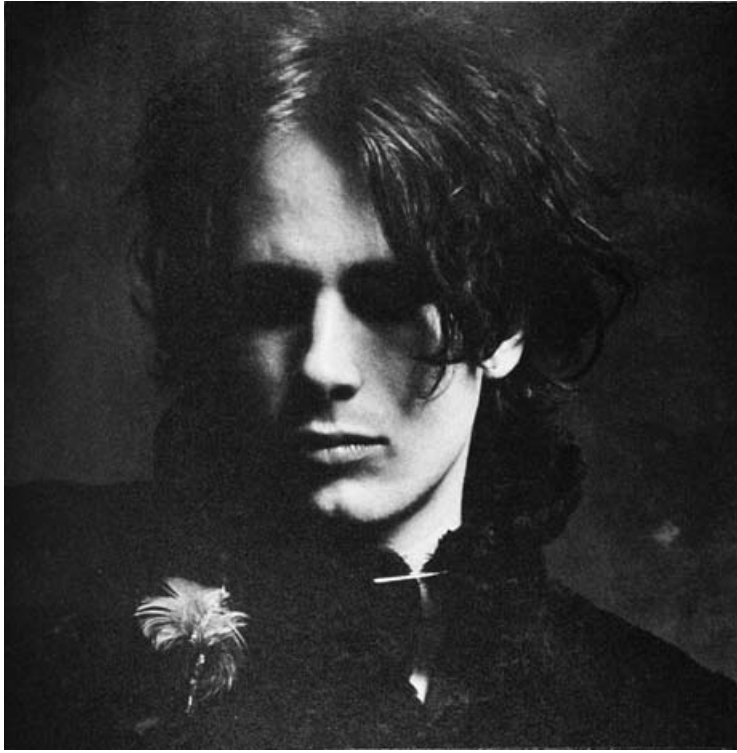


Figure 2. *Dustjacket photograph of Jeff Buckley by Merri Cyr from Cyr's A Wished-For Song, A Portrait of Jeff Buckley (used by permission).*

floating fully clothed and even booted in a notoriously dangerous river with freak undertows, about which he'd been warned years before, has led to speculation.

With his alternative rock sensibilities and the freight of his heritage, Buckley, as Rilke wrote of Orpheus, might have occasionally been tempted to consider that '[o]nly he who has eaten/poppies with the dead/will not lose ever again/the gentlest cord' (Rilke 1993, p. 19). Buckley was fatally attracted to doomed divas like Piaf, Billie Holiday and Judy Garland (Browne 2001, p. 166), as well as, as he wrote in an overblown journal entry, 'the mountainous drama of life itself locked in a sticky blowjob with death' (quoted in Browne 2001, p. 297). Clearly emotionally fragile in the months before his death, and plagued by chronic insomnia, alarming mood swings approaching the severity of bi-polar disorder (Browne 2001, pp. 326–30), and at least an acquaintance with his father's killer, heroin – one of his best-known songs, 'Mojo Pin', is named after a syringe – Jeff Buckley had every reason to want to live. Still, in the themes of his songs, as well as in his wrestling with the myth of his father,<sup>13</sup> he repeatedly shadow boxes with loss and death. Buckley's early song-publishing company was Death Machine Music, and the images in the songs on *Sketches for My Sweetheart The Drunk* are full of deathly 'foreboding' (Browne 2001, pp. 113, 347). 'Grace', its lyrics originally assembled from Buckley's notebooks, asserts 'I'm not afraid to die'. One of his most successful, lilting, jazz-inflected songs, 'Lover, You Should've Come Over', begins with 'funeral mourners/Parading in a wake of sad relations'. But the speaker wonders if he is 'just too young' to understand loss, though Buckley himself was already safely past the *bildung* narrative. In 'Eternal Life',



Figure 3. Photograph of Jeff Buckley by Hideo Oida used for the cover of *Last Goodbye*, a Japanese promotional EP (used by permission).

another song from *Grace*, the death references allude to the African-American voodoo-blues of Son House's 'Death Letter' and Robert Johnson's 'Cross Road Blues'. In the latter, Johnson, who deeply influenced Buckley, sings of a meeting with the devil at the crossroads,<sup>14</sup> and in 'Eternal Life', resembling Johnson's 'Hell Hound On My Trail', Buckley shouts 'Eternal Life is now on my trail/Got my red glitter coffin man, just need one last nail'. Here, grunge meets the devil at the Delta Motel. In one of his last songs, 'Nightmares by the Sea', the singer, whose 'drowned' lovers arise after dark 'from their coral graves', invites the listener to 'stay with me under these waves tonight'. In the wake of his death, Buckley leaves a qualified masterpiece, increasingly cluttered by the mixed legacy produced by the omnivorous marketing of his image and music, with a promised but carefully regulated outpouring of B-sides, out-takes, demos, and especially live recordings, as if somewhere there is to be located the equivalent of the definitive version of 'Dark Star' in the Grateful Dead archive.<sup>15</sup>

In the liner notes to *Sketches for My Sweetheart The Drunk*, Bill Flanagan writes, 'Jeff would have hated for his death to be romanticized. He hated the morbid fascination with artists who die young, and mocked it every chance he got' (Flanagan 1998, p. 5). This is a heartfelt but perhaps disingenuous, even naive, reading of the hugely conflicted relationship between 'Jeff Buckley' as inevitable brand, image and archive, and the mythic narratives he ostensibly opposed. Just as the myth of his

projected early demise propelled his career when he was alive, so the mythologising of his death and the small industry marketing Jeff Buckley memorabilia since his death have influenced his legacy; dead celebrities sell T-shirts, CDs, and the endless replay of their own narratives. As the dour Proteus says in David R. Slavitt's free translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, about reflection on Orpheus's demise: 'death is often a help to a poet's career; remorse prods us back to look at the work again, to discover it really was interesting' (Virgil 1990, p. 142). Jeff Buckley, only a few years after his tragic death, is inevitably viewed against the horizon of the cult of dead rock celebrities, as one with Promethean talents, Dionysian inclinations, and a trace of Icarus. Opposing the various Oedipal and Orphean narratives that threatened his genius, Buckley inadvertently created a self-mythology. As Proteus says of the story of Orpheus: 'Myths are so vulgarly literal, but frequently, so is the world' (Virgil 1990, p. 141).

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## Endnotes

1. See the critique of rock as a revolutionary art (Reynolds and Press 1995, pp. 2–18), in a text suggesting that the male rock rebel (with applause) is engaged in a fruitless attempt to channel testosterone.
2. For Baudrillard, postmodern interest in psychoanalysis, since the death of Lacan, has reached a dead end; moreover, 'what psychoanalysis has to say about mythology is an abuse of metaphorical language' (Baudrillard 1993, pp. 83, 102).
3. As Anthony Elliott argues of the relevance of psychoanalytic theory for contemporary cultural critique in *The Mourning of John Lennon*: 'Psychoanalytic theory complicates conventional thinking about narratives of the self, biographical self-continuity, and the symbolic thread of life, and thus it is a powerful tool for rethinking the relations between celebrity and contemporary culture' (Elliott 1999, p. 8).
4. Frederic Jameson writes: 'music also includes history in a more throughgoing and irrevocable fashion since, as background and mood stimulus, it mediates our historical past along with our private or existential one and can scarcely be woven out of the memory any longer' (Jameson 1991, p. 299).
5. The ubiquitous though despised term for the Seattle-based sound arising from a hybrid of musical and cultural influences, and positioned as anti-mainstream and anti-macho, despite the big hair and beef cake posing of Chris Cornell and Eddie Vedder. See Reynolds and Press's discussion of grunge, and particularly the music of Nirvana, as 'the sound of *castration blues*' (Reynolds and Press 1995, pp. 96–99).
6. Jeff Buckley was never more like his father than when he eviscerated the music industry. For Jeff Buckley, anti-establishment rhetoric was both a blow against a paternalistic industry and a last battle against his father's lifelong enemy, as if he were his father's knight errant, jousting against an edifice hostile to art. Tim Buckley's exploratory jazz recordings, audience-disdaining performances, and contempt for the mechanics of media promotion, led to a number of near-death experiences for his career. Burned by hostile reviews for *Lorca* and *Starsailor* and facing plummeting revenues, Tim Buckley turned to rock-oriented albums, in the process alienating his older folk audience and his newer jazz audience, and not even making headway in the charts due to the explicit nature of his lyrics.
7. When the king of indie rockers, Kurt Cobain, appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in a T-shirt emblazoned 'Corporate Magazines Suck', he had the best of both worlds, nailing to the wall his radical credentials for the mass market. Jeff Buckley, too, was an ambivalent rebel with a major label contract. He appeared to be a fragile hobo while he had a 100,000 dollar advance in the bank, though one that had to be repaid to Sony through CD sales, and in David Browne's account he behaved like an independent prima donna with Columbia while they put millions into his career and gave him



- considerable artistic freedom, though his label finally controlled the development and marketing of his career (Browne 2001, p. 286).
8. Jameson reads pastiche as depthless parody: 'Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs ...' (Jameson 1991, p. 17).
  9. For Linda Hutcheon, as for Jameson and Jean Baudrillard, parody is a makeshift and deeply conservative aesthetic strategy arising from alienation. While Hutcheon reads parody as a potentially transgressive Bakhtinian 'intertextual dialogism' (Hutcheon 1985, p. 72), she recognises its 'aesthetic institutionalization' and the way its 'transgressions ultimately remain authorized' (*ibid.* pp. 72–5). For Jameson, parody, 'the play of random stylistic allusion', is depthless and affectless, a sign of 'the high modernist ideology of style' and of the rigidity of its codes (Jameson 1991, pp. 17–18). For Baudrillard, parody is the aesthetic of a 'world controlled by the principle of simulation' (Baudrillard 1994, p. 123). In a period when 'art has become fashion', the artist plays 'a game with the vestiges of what has been destroyed' (Baudrillard 1993, p. 95). He suggests that parody is a type of postmodern narcissism lacking the qualities of the mythic or the imaginary (*ibid.*, p. 83).
  10. See Anthony Elliott's perceptive discussion of this song and of the postmodern Beatles (Elliott 1999, pp. 154–78).
  11. See Roland Barthes's influential Saussurean reading of myth as a play of signifiers evident in the culture of everyday life and traditional mythology in his early post-structuralist classic *Mythologies* (Barthes 1972).
  12. Courtney Love had worried about 'the Cobain curse', and recalled that he had always been 'a closet deathrock' (Brite, pp. 121–2).
  13. 'The myth was that he was conditioned to be his father', explains Merri Cyr (quoted in Browne 2001, p. 348). This fed the general perception of Buckley as emotionally fragile, damaged goods, the result of the instability of his upbringing. He recognised the expectation, and both was drawn to it and mocked it: 'Onstage, Jeff would often make cracks about dead rock stars, pretending to shoot up or breaking into spot-on mimicry of anyone from Jim Morrison to Elvis Presley' (Browne 2001, p. 11).
  14. Marcus's rhapsodic account of this song and of Johnson's emotive power attempts to rescue his work from anthropological 'socialist realism' (Marcus 1995, p. 146).
  15. A compilation box set of five promotional EPs, *The Grace EPs*, issued in 2002, promises 'new liner notes and additional rare photos'. Within the box set, *the Grace e.p.* includes a nearly twelve-minute long 'bonus track', that was 'recorded live to a used cassette', not included on the EP's first issue. A piece of free-form, improvised electronica, this track, entitled 'Tongue', presumably one of the last buried treasures from the archive of a great singer, does not even have a vocal.

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