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2

My Life in the Bush of Ghosts: "World Music" and the Commodification of Religious Experience

Steven Feld

Schizophonia and Its Discontents

Since the early 1980s I have been tracking "world music," a term I do not use transparently, as a benign generic gloss for human musical diversity. My interest is specifically in "world music" as a label of industrial origin that refers to an amalgamated global marketplace of sounds as ethnic commodities. Once more idiosyncratically and unevenly collected and circulated under labels like "primitive," "folk," "ethnic," "race," "traditional," "exotic," or "international" music, today's world music tells a new story, one about intersections of transnational capital, global economic niche expansion, technological ubiquity, and the contradictions of aesthetic pluralism and product homogenization. It is a story about the shaping power of a global recording industry that sees the marketplace as the actual arbiter and guarantor of musical authenticity. This is to argue that the existence of the category of "world music"—like the category of "fine art" examined by Fred Myers (2001)—derives from and is chiefly dependent on the marketplace, and not from formal genre distinctions, autonomous aesthetic qualities, or geographic categories.

Like other contemporary anthropological projects, mine owes a certain impetus to Michel Foucault's (1977) insistence that the modern world is full of categorizations experienced as normalizing routines that render things invisible but known. I find it useful to examine many invisible but known qualities of world

music through the concept of "schizophonia" (a term I do not use transparently, as a benign generic gloss for human musical diversity). Unlike R. Murray Schafer (1977), I do not concern myself with the technological process of splitting sounds from their sources. I am concerned with the larger aretological process of the splitting of sounds from sources and the relationship of these social processes to the commoditization that I have been forced to participate in what Arjun Appadurai (1996) has called "globalization."

My larger goal is to theorize how world music is mediated and tied to recorded commodities and the role of schizophonia—a decidedly classic form of modernist anxiety. World music reduces cultural equity or creates de facto anxiety that world music—whatever it is—rests on economic structures that turn it into labor. It is the anxiety that this detaches indigenous originators and stewards from their work. It is about the enrichment of global capitalism in centers of power, and the reduction of leisure and pleasure.

Alongside the production of these commodities, indeed, dialectically, production is also consumption. It is this celebratory narration and best friend. This celebration is a way of marking as cultural signs of unbounded and unlimited production of both indigenous autonomy and global capital. This move from positives, moves that signify the desirability of the new, to the blending of old and new is where celebratory consumption is synonymous with anti-essentialism, with a futurist hope or prediction of a new world.

Anxious narratives tend to focus on the negative. They emphasize how the music marketplace is full of inequalities in the areas of copyright, royalties, and access to the market. They insist that the music industry typically reproduce and amplify these inequalities. On the other hand, they also insist that the music industry enhance new connections and create new forms of recognition and t

music through the concept of “schizophonia,” a term introduced by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer (1977, 90) to refer to the splitting of sounds from their sources. Unlike Schafer, I do not use the term principally or simply to refer to the technological process of splitting that constitutes sound recording. Rather, I am concerned with the larger arena where sound recordings move into long- and short-term routes of circulation and patterns of consumption. At stake, then, in the splitting of sounds from sources is the possibility of new social life, and this is principally about the recontextualization and resignification of sounds. It is the relationship of these social processes of resignification and their relationship to commoditization that I have been following, specifically how schizophonic things participate in what Arjun Appadurai (1986) has called “regimes of value.”

My larger goal is to theorize how the experience of music is now increasingly mediated and tied to recorded commodities, but my specific interest is to explore the role of schizophonia—a decidedly nervous word, of course—in producing a classic form of modernist anxiety. This is the anxiety that world music variously reduces cultural equity or creates deeper cultural cleavages and hierarchies. It is the anxiety that world music—whatever good it does, whatever pleasure it brings—rests on economic structures that turn intangible cultural heritage into detachable labor. It is the anxiety that this detachability marginalizes, exploits, or humiliates indigenous originators and stewards. It is the anxiety that the underlying tale here is about the enrichment of global corporations, the consolidation of music ownership in centers of power, and the reproduction of the West touring the rest for leisure and pleasure.

Alongside the production of these anxious narratives, world music has consistently, indeed, dialectically, produced a much more frequent narrative, one of celebration. It is this celebratory narrative that sees world music as indigeneity’s champion and best friend. This celebratory narrative sees musical hybridity and fusion as cultural signs of unbounded and deterritorialized identities. It sees the production of both indigenous autonomy and cultural hybridity as unassailable global positives, moves that signify the desire for greater cultural respect, tolerance, and blending. Here is where celebratory discourse virtually proclaims world music as synonymous with anti-essentialism, with borderlessness, with cultural free flow, with a futurist hope or prediction of greater cultural and economic equilibrium.

Anxious narratives tend to focus more sharply on economics and power. They emphasize how the music marketplace is structurally founded on historical inequities in the areas of copyright, royalty structures, ownership regimes, and access to the market. They insist that the industry is currently organized in ways that typically reproduce and amplify these fundamental inequities. Celebratory narratives, on the other hand, tend to pay more attention to how pleasure and participation enhance new connections and close old gaps. They emphasize new possibilities, new forms of recognition and the potential for respect they bring. In short,

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embedded in both anxious and celebratory narratives of world music is a fraught cultural politics of nostalgia, that is, each is deeply linked to the management of loss and renewal in the modern world. And they each involve complex suspicions and idealizations about notions like resistance and survival or tradition and heritage. My project is devoted to untangling some of the strands of suspicion and idealization that bind anxious and celebratory narratives. It is in this mutualism and interdependence, this play “from schizophonia to schismogenesis” (see Feld 1994) that I locate the social core of the “world music” story (see Feld 2000).

My Life in the Bush of Ghosts

I now turn to a specific “world music” story to ask what questions schizophonia might open up about the sonic circulation of religious practice. What, in other words, does schizophonia have to say about religion in the “world music” marketplace? What does it have to say about the commodity phase, when material objectification of religious sounds and practices in “world music” recordings achieve particular recognition and value? What role does the incorporation of religious sounds play in world music’s larger stories of recontextualization and resignification? I concentrate on the LP/CD *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (*MLBG*) and the trend it helped establish, namely, the material incorporation of spirituality and religion—particularly the sounds of religious discourse—into the Western musical avant-garde’s well-established primitivist project.

World music was not quite a newly emergent market category when *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* was released on LP in February 1981. But the LP certainly heralded a great deal of what was to come in the 1980s and 1990s under the banners of “world music” as well as “world beat” and “ethno-techno”—the two subgenre terms that most overtly celebrate exotic alterity as danceable hybridity. The LP is a unique collaboration between British and Scottish art school rockers—trained visual/conceptual/performance artists concentrating on music. Brian Eno’s work with Roxy Music, Robert Fripp and solo projects, and his work with U2, David Bowie, and Laurie Anderson clearly established him as an avant-garde electronics and ambient pioneer influenced by Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage. David Byrne emerged as well as leader of the hugely popular pop group Talking Heads. *MLBG* was recorded in 1979 and 1980, when Eno was producing two other LPs, *Remain in Light* and *Fear of Music* for Talking Heads. On *MLBG* a whole world of pre-digital ambient atmospherics, electronic effects and multi-track processing, and prominent bass and percussion dance grooves mix with the “found sounds” of radio shows and ethnographic field recordings. The radio segments come from call-in shows featuring indignant hosts, politicians, evangelists, and Christian preachers. The ethnographic recordings come from three LPs, one a compilation about Islamic vocal practice, another of African American spirituals from the Georgia Sea Islands, and the third an anthology of popular Arabic singers. In October

1990 *MLBG* was re-released on CD in the style of many pop LP re-releases, the LP. A twenty-five-year anniversary

Now put yourself in the place of this recording online at Amazon.com. The pages contain consumer reviews. I’m in commentary then running on was titled “Why is Qu’ran [*sic*] in Brazil, writes: “This album is my favourite [*sic*] is not on this CD! I have a vinyl version. If you don’t know the bass line is great!”

The next consumer review, dated 2006, titled “A glimpse at the future—strongly appreciated the CD but where along the line, one track on the CD is a nice track, but the original LP which contained a recording of ‘Algeria’ (LP notes). I’m assuming the track was available in these charged times but very Arabic, I don’t know what verses fit something ‘inflammatory?’) It practices at the suits at Warner Bros/Sire with

Notice the connected foci in the track (bass line) and industry suspicion (Sire). Notice, too, that the musician mentioned and thus not imagined in the edit. The suspicion is that either the Muslims whose voices are included in the industry management, or both, have comments, criticisms, and concerns? Some were pulled, and a new edition was added as sixth track, titled “Qu’ran,” was deleted track appeared.

The deleted “Qu’ran” piece was with excerpts from the first track of *Voice in the World of Islam*, published in 1976. It was the first in a six LP set (currently available as three CDs) edited by the Horniman Musical Instrument Collection of the Danish Folklore Archives in “Recitation of Verses,” and in the list

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1990 *MLBG* was re-released on CD, the eleven original tracks intact, plus, in the style of many pop LP re-releases, a twelfth bonus track not previously found on the LP. A twenty-five-year anniversary deluxe edition was issued in March 2006.

Now put yourself in the place of a consumer who goes to purchase or preview this recording online at Amazon.com. Like many websites, Amazon’s product pages contain consumer reviews. When I visited the site I saw that the first write-in commentary then running on the *MLBG* page was dated July 16, 2004, and was titled “Why is Qu’aran [*sic*] not in this CD?” The reviewer, from São Paulo, Brazil, writes: “This album is excellent, but a song called Qu’aran [*sic*] (one of my favourite [*sic*]) is not on this CD! Political reasons? I don’t know. Fortunately I have a vinyl version. If you don’t know this song, try to find [it] in vinyl, the bass line is great!”

The next consumer review, dated March 19, 2004, from Oklahoma City, was titled “A glimpse at the future—but thumbs down to WB/Sire.” The reviewer strongly appreciated the CD but withholds a five-star ranking “because, somewhere along the line, one track on the album has been changed. ‘Very, Very Hungry’ is a nice track, but the original LP contained a track in its place called ‘Qu’ran,’ which contained a recording of ‘Algerian Muslims chanting Qu’ran’ (as the original LP notes). I’m assuming the track was removed for political reasons—understandable in these charged times but very disturbing nonetheless. (Since I don’t speak Arabic, I don’t know what verses from the Qu’ran the Algerians were chanting—something ‘inflammatory’?) It practically amounts to censorship, and I’m incensed at the suits at Warner Bros/Sire who (I’m sure) approved the change.”

Notice the connected foci in these reviews on autonomous aesthetics (great bass line) and industry suspicion (blaming the corporate lawyers at Warner Bros/Sire). Notice, too, that the musicians who created and benefit from the CD are not mentioned and thus not imagined to bear any responsibility or authority in its re-edit. The suspicion is that either the copied and contained voices—the Algerian Muslims whose voices are included without their knowledge or permission—or industry management, or both, have made trouble. So what is driving these comments, criticisms, and concerns? Sometime in 1994 all copies of the CD reissue were pulled, and a new edition was put into circulation. On it, the CD’s original sixth track, titled “Qu’ran,” was deleted, and in its place the original CD bonus track appeared.

The deleted “Qu’ran” piece was a mix of Eno and Byrne’s techno dance grooves with excerpts from the first track of an ethnographic LP recording, *The Human Voice in the World of Islam*, published by Tangent Records in the United Kingdom in 1976. It was the first in a six LP anthology on music in the world of Islam (currently available as three CDs) edited by two ethnomusicologists, Jean Jenkins of the Horniman Musical Instrument Museum in London and Poul Rovsing Olsen of the Danish Folklore Archives in Copenhagen. The original LP track was titled “Recitation of Verses,” and in the liner notes Jean Jenkins, who made the recording

in Algeria in 1970, writes: "Verses of the Qu'ran by members of a religious brotherhood. This is part of the regular Friday religious observance." But on *MLBG* Eno and Byrne credit the track as "Algerian Muslims chanting Qu'ran." This, of course, makes clear that they neither read the liner text of *The Human Voice in the World of Islam* nor grasped the critical point, enunciated there and widely known, that in Islamic practice the Qu'ran is considered a text for recitation, quite inappropriate to imagine or render as sung vocal music or music for dance (see, e.g., Nelson Davies 2002).

The Context Changes

Whatever one thinks about Eno and Byrne's grooves, technological prowess with tape loops, hybridophilia, or sloppy liner notes, the global contextualization of their editing work changed radically precisely eight years after the LP's publication. For in February 1989, in what V. S. Naipul famously called "the ultimate extreme in literary criticism," Salman Rushdie was condemned to death by the former Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The issue: a character in Rushdie's then new novel, *The Satanic Verses*, was modeled on the Prophet Muhammad, and his transcription of the Qu'ran, quoted in the text, with touches from Rushdie, is portrayed in an unconventional light. The novel was banned in South Africa and India, burned in several locales, and caused riots in others. Forced into hiding, Rushdie published, in 1990, an apology in which he reaffirmed his respect for Islam. But Iranian clerics did not repudiate the death threat; indeed, an aide to Khomeini offered a million-dollar reward for Rushdie's death.

In 1993, in an event that generated international publicity, Rushdie's Norwegian publisher was attacked and seriously injured outside his home. An overlapping incident also generated international publicity. In January 1994 designer Karl Lagerfeld and the House of Chanel officially apologized to Muslims worldwide after it was revealed that three of their dresses, worn in a prime-time tele-spectacle by supermodel Claudia Schiffer, featured texts from the Qu'ran embroidered in gray pearls. Chanel was forced to destroy all the dresses as well as related photographic images and negatives, and urged private makers or holders of photographs and videos to destroy any existing images of the dresses.

The seriousness of these issues was shockingly rekindled more recently by the violent murder of renowned Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam on November 2, 2004, at the hands of Islamic radicals. Van Gogh was a well-known provocateur, an outspoken opponent of Islamic extremism, and had repeatedly received death threats after the TV transmission, in August 2004, of a short film, *Submission*, which criticized the mistreatment of Muslim women. This film was a collaboration with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali who fled to Holland in the early 1990s, became a political scientist, and then a member of the Dutch Parliament. She publicly renounced Islam in 2002, after which she also received numerous

death threats and had to be protected. Van Gogh reveals passages from the film in which the critique of the film was meant to provoke death threats.

In the light of the Rushdie "Qu'ran" track was deleted and the track was deleted as an act of protest, from an Islamic or Islamic or LP's initial release and led to a some European editions of the censorship dictated by the reconscience of the artists themselves remained unclear and unobtainable. Warner Bros. answer inquiries. The 2006 repackage includes a new booklet of *Ocean of Sound* (1995), and a booklet, in keeping with all previous editions, in which the "Qu'ran" track. Indeed, his taking those who made the original track, the contentious dimension of the new flurry of publicity and praise for the music.

But the silence was finally broken by the Dahlen of *Pitchfork* magazine, about the decision to remove "C" blasphemy by an Islamic organ to the track's removal. Byrne regarding to get accused of all kinds of things, "the best we can." Lest this be taken as only contributes to deception by the track was completely removed from many if not most LP issues through the CD re-release in 1990 and

Before turning to the question of the spiritual, a few remarks are worth noting here that the LP was not a world. In August 1981 (seven months after the critical review, written by Jon I. Lurie in the *New York Times*).

Pareles writes that, "My Life in the City" of tape editing and rhythmic editing, born questions about context, and argues that Eno and Byrne's use

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death threats and had to be protected twenty-four hours a day. In the film Van Gogh reveals passages from the Qu'ran written on the bodies of women; this technique was meant to provoke discussion of whether the texts were hostile to women.

In the light of the Rushdie events of 1989–1993 it is hardly surprising that the "Qu'ran" track was deleted and *MLBG* reissued by 1994. Indeed an earlier wave of protest, from an Islamic organization in the United Kingdom, followed the LP's initial release and led to a prior but more limited withdrawal of the track on some European editions of the LP. But was this unique act of "world music" self-censorship dictated by the record distribution company's legal department, by the conscience of the artists themselves, or both? The answer, until quite recently remained unclear and unobtainable. Neither Eno nor Byrne had ever spoken about the track deletions. Warner Brothers and Sire were silent as well and refused to answer inquiries. The 2006 republication, however, rekindled the question. The package includes a new booklet with extensive liner notes by David Toop, author of *Ocean of Sound* (1995), an authoritative work on ambient music. But Toop's booklet, in keeping with all previous writing, continued the erasure of the story of the "Qu'ran" track. Indeed, his new liner text only added to the confusion by mistaking those who made the original field recordings. It seemed, once again, that the contentious dimension of musical appropriation would be forgotten amid a new flurry of publicity and praise for Eno and Byrne's "pioneering" work in "world music."

But the silence was finally broken, in an interview David Byrne gave to Chris Dahlen of *Pitchfork* magazine, posted online on July 17, 2006. When questioned about the decision to remove "Qu'ran," Byrne indicates that questions posed about blasphemy by an Islamic organization in 1982, shortly after the LP's release, led to the track's removal. Byrne recalls his conversation with Eno in this way: "We're going to get accused of all kinds of things, and so we want to cover our asses as best we can." Lest this be taken for a statement of artistic responsibility, Byrne only contributes to deception by leading readers and listeners to imagine that the track was completely removed from the LP in 1982. In fact, the track remained on many if not most LP issues throughout the 1980s, and then appeared on the initial CD re-release in 1990 and was not completely deleted for several more years.

Before turning to the question of the recording's role in the commodification of the spiritual, a few remarks are in order about its reception history. It is important to note here that the LP was not entirely greeted by celebration in the pop music world. In August 1981 (seven months after publication) *Rolling Stone* published a critical review, written by Jon Pareles, presently chief popular music critic at the *New York Times*.

Pareles writes that, "*My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* is an undeniably awesome feat of tape editing and rhythmic ingenuity. But, like most 'found' art, it raises stubborn questions about context, manipulation and cultural imperialism." Pareles argues that Eno and Byrne's uses of snippets of radio evangelism, preaching, and

exorcism constitute “falsified ritual.” “Blasphemy is beside the point,” he writes, “Byrne and Eno have trivialized the event.” And, he goes on, “You’d think if Algerian Muslims had wanted accompaniment while they [*sic*] chanted the Koran (“Qu’ran”), they’d have invented some.”

In the end, Pareles quite directly posed the anxious question, the one about power asymmetries: What if, he asks in the review’s last sentence, the tables were turned? Indeed, Pareles was perhaps the earliest and is still one of the few critics willing to pose that question. But it is still a major question, namely: How would pop stars and technology gurus like Eno and Byrne (and their record companies) react to being sourced, edited, and remixed by Algerian Muslims, Arabic pop singers, a Lebanese villager (whose name, by the way, they misspelled in the *MLBG* liner and almost everything else written about the project for twenty years), or Georgia Sea Islanders? The question remains poignant. If global sounds can detach from their sources to flow freely into the ears and machines of Western pop stars, could the sounds of pop stars possibly detach, flow freely, and go unnamed or misspelled, unauthorized or unacknowledged into the more local circulatory worlds of Western pop’s historical others?

In several interviews published at the time of the LP’s appearance, Eno was particularly articulate about *MLBG* as celebratory, indeed, as liberatory hybridity. He rendered the LP unassailable in terms of a politics of unbounded intercultural and borderless transculture. “It’s almost collage music,” he said, “like grafting a piece of one culture onto a piece of another onto a piece of another, and trying to make them work as a coherent musical idea, and also trying to make something you can dance to” (Talking Heads-Net 2000).

But there is a more specific logic to the “grafting” idea, which brings us back to modernist avant-gardism. In a March 1981 interview with Sandy Robertson for *Sounds* magazine, Eno referred to *MLBG* as his “African psychedelic vision.” Positioning Africa as “the interface between primitive and futuristic,” he says, “rather than the old theory of the modern giving way to the post-modern, linear progression, the interesting ideas are being generated by the primitive, meaning the unchanged aspects of the old world.” He adds: “I think we’ve got to look elsewhere for solutions. Our society has lost a certain strength, partly a strength of tradition, a moral strength.” Robertson—the interviewer—then asked Eno about the critical counterview. The “implication is that you’re saying the music isn’t ‘intelligent’ enough until you improve upon it, and that therefore what you do is patronizing to black culture.” Eno responded, calmly, that his work “arrives from a kind of humility rather than a kind of arrogance . . . I regard myself as a student . . . I’m very humble about my understanding of African music, it’s a vastly more complicated and rich area than I had dreamed of.”

So, is it arrogance or humility? Appropriation or homage? Imperialist poaching or avant-garde boundary transgression? Elitist politics masked by populist dance aesthetics or populist aesthetics triumphing over hybridophobia? Those are the binaries, the anxious vs. celebratory rhetoric that was so clearly established by this

and many other projects in the e- recycled throughout the discursive

Fast forward again. Twenty-five of numerous technological frontiers, pundit and elder statesman, a fixer, producer of the extremely successful senior entrepreneur, producer, and tably both are now also active participants on the proprieties of c-

Time magazine of January 20. “The US Needs to Open Up to the World in a fortress of arrogance and ignorance and a mass media “thriving on its own into something indistinguishable from too, which he says has retreated into and gender studies, leaving the functions to do the politics.”

Eno’s preaching is paralleled by to the *New York Times* titled “I Hate music” as “a pseudomusical term,” way of reasserting the hegemony of world’s music. A bold and audacious

Isn’t it fascinating—or just bizarre—are from the history of aesthetic changes of these two musicians? Eno and Byrne from the ranks of the spoilers, those who cheapen or trivialize musical differences might be positioned as appropriation all their interviews and projects since to examine how the history of their practices. So here, in the role of a lament, ironically enough, lack the reflexive implicated in creating some of the most appalling. Put in the anxious language of the back beat, a “world music” re-sampled (1989) so poetically dubbed “i-

“Unrelated Wanderings”: My Life and Its Phantom Double

These tales qua religious experience and Tutuola connection. Born in the N

published his novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* in 1954, after a previously successful novel, *The Palm Wine Drinkard*. Both books are written not in a literary register but in everyday spoken Nigerian English, a stylistic matter that aroused much literary critical commentary (Di Maio 2000). Both, too, are quest narratives, with *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* more of an underworld odyssey, the story of an eight-year-old boy who becomes lost in the “Bush of Ghosts,” a parallel world of spirits and magic.

In the same March 1981 interview with Sandy Robertson for *Sounds* magazine, Eno was asked about the title of the record and how it might be connected to the book. He begins by acknowledging a parallel between the two but then does an about-face:

It’s a bit like the record in a way. The writer portrays himself as a young boy growing up in an African village, and at some point there’s an emergency of some kind and he decides to hide in the bush. He dives through this little hole in a hedge and he suddenly finds he’s entered this unmapped world of strange spirits. All of the ghosts, I gather, have a certain spiritual place, they’re allegories for certain conditions of life. We started making the record before we’d ever read the book, so the record isn’t in any way an illustration, or in fact it doesn’t really have anything to do with it, except that in a sense it’s a series of “unrelated wanderings.”

Let us explore that trope for a moment to consider the different quests that the book and LP are after. Of course, by “unrelated wanderings” Eno means the aesthetic autonomy of the LP’s music from the book. He wants to share in the power of Tutuola’s title and the aura of the book’s artistic achievement, but at the same time he insists that he and Byrne owe nothing to Tutuola, either in terms of inspiration or content. The apex of the exchange is the statement that the LP began before they had even read the book, positioning its content as a coincidental afterthought. Even the elisions, what Eno refers to as “an emergency of some kind,” is a notable piece of forgetting in the context of calling *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* his “psychedelic African vision.” In fact, that emergency is a harrowing part of the book, where Tutuola’s young narrator is abandoned during a slave raid.

Like Tutuola’s previous work, Yoruba myth and folklore are clearly evident throughout the book, interwoven with frequent signs of European influence. The Rev. Devil performs a baptism of fire and water in the 8th Town of Ghosts; agents of the colonial state dominate the 10th Town, and schools and churches, not to mention the Television-Handed Ghostess—the strongest of Tutuola’s analogies between technology and spiritual power—crop up consistently in his narrator’s amazing wanderings. The simultaneity of layered beliefs and realities—of Yoruba stories and religion with Western Christianity and science—are woven together consistently through a series of trials and tribulations, which lead in equal measure

to demonstrations of the narrator have imagined that this was Tutuola could the mix of “primitivist futurist LP be read at all in light of Tutuola’s position, but one difference is clear whereas Eno’s ignore it. “Unrelated

The trope of “unrelated wanderings” precisely Eno and Byrne were fleeing into Wonderland, into their bush of ghosts, finding an increasingly technological LP as a revitalization in order to make something less commercial, less banal and more global.

Thus in Eno and Byrne’s bush of ghosts there are brief encounters with excruciating spirituals, Arabs, and North African drous spirits, alive with mysterious powers and Byrne’s ghosts remain, quite close to the power to embody and incorporate, truncate, and caricaturize them so that they appear as “loops” to use the terminology of the recording’s acoustic material.

Most important, all this takes place in music, by the allure of physical presence. Danceability is what sold pop and rock, and it is understood that danceability was the critical phase where the exotic tease never satisfied, about virtual religion comes into focus. Increased spiritual contact that masks spiritual distance?

For the looped material we hear in the LP, used just about anything and the way the Group vocal “chant” is widespread, and loops with maximal textural ornamentation enough to make. So choosing *Qu’ra* as a name, namely, the desire to become intimate with religious practices, to cozy up to their spirit and splice it, enter into its mysteries and secrets. This is what Eno referred to, in celebrating the schizophonic detachment performed by the LP, that spiritual capital is recontextualized in

Ghosts in 1954, after a previously successful book is written not in a literary English, a stylistic matter that aroused (io 2000). Both, too, are quest narratives of an underworld odyssey, the story of the “Bush of Ghosts,” a parallel world

Sandy Robertson for *Sounds* magazine, and how it might be connected to the link between the two but then does an

ter portrays himself as a young boy at some point there’s an emergency of the bush. He dives through this little hole he’s entered this unmapped world where, have a certain spiritual place, of life. We started making the record the record isn’t in any way an illusion—anything to do with it, except that things.”

to consider the different quests that the “related wanderings” Eno means the aesthetic book. He wants to share in the power of artistic achievement, but at the same time, going to Tutuola, either in terms of language is the statement that the LP began using its content as a coincidental afterthought as “an emergency of some kind,” is the act of calling *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* that emergency is a harrowing part of the world abandoned during a slave raid.

myth and folklore are clearly evident and evident signs of European influence. The narrator in the 8th Town of Ghosts; agents of the town, and schools and churches, not to mention—the strongest of Tutuola’s analogies crop up consistently in his narrator’s layered beliefs and realities—of Yoruba spirituality and science—are woven together in a web of relations, which lead in equal measure

to demonstrations of the narrator’s courage, faith, and wonderment. Could Eno have imagined that this was Tutuola’s psychedelic vision of Britain in Africa? And could the mix of “primitivist futurism” and “futurist primitivism” that guide the LP be read at all in light of Tutuola’s cultural mixings? This is an interesting juxtaposition, but one difference is clear: Tutuola’s mixings foreground colonialism, whereas Eno’s ignore it. “Unrelated wanderings” indeed.

The trope of “unrelated wanderings” also leads to the simple question of what precisely Eno and Byrne were fleeing when they jumped, perhaps more like Alice in Wonderland, into their bush of ghosts. The answer might be that they were fleeing an increasingly technological 1970s pop and rock music that required spiritual revitalization in order to make contact with the world, in order to present pop as less commercial, less banal and Western, and thus more spiritual, profound, and global.

Thus in Eno and Byrne’s bush of ghosts, that is, the LP’s whole sonic landscape, there are brief encounters with exorcists and radio preachers, African American spirituals, Arabs, and North Africans, who play the role of frightening and wondrous spirits, alive with mysterious power and passion in voice and sound. Yet Eno and Byrne’s ghosts remain, quite contra Tutuola, as others under control. For it is the power to embody and incorporate these other powers technologically, to edit, truncate, and caricature them sonically, to create them in and as display miniatures—as “loops” to use the technical tape-editing term—that is most clear in the recording’s acoustic material constitution.

Most important, all this takes place in an aesthetic space dominated by dance music, by the allure of physical participation and its promise of bodily pleasure. Danceability is what sold pop and rock music, and Eno and Byrne well understood that danceability was the critical step in resignification, the commodity phase where the exotic tease never strips the familiar. Again the anxious question about virtual religion comes into focus: Is *MLBG*, then or now, a simulacrum of increased spiritual contact that masks an unexamined reproduction of increased spiritual distance?

For the looped material we hear in the composition, Eno and Byrne could have used just about anything and the world would not have known the difference. Group vocal “chant” is widespread, recordings of it quite common, and five second loops with maximal textural ornamentation and minimal melodic ambit easy enough to make. So choosing *Qur’anic* recitation signals something important, namely, the desire to become intimate with particular others through their religious practices, to cozy up to their spiritual power, technologically detach it, cut and splice it, enter into its mysteries via the tape recorder as a musical instrument. This is what Eno referred to, in celebratory mode, as the desire to “graft” culture, to create a new hybrid of “primitive futurism.” But put in more anxious terms, the schizophrenic detachment performed creates a new tripartite social form. First, spiritual capital is recontextualized in a new sonic object; second, spiritual pow-

ers are resignified as hybrid art, technological mastery, and dance pleasure; and, third, ownership politics are elided or masked by autonomous aesthetics.

The regime of value issue is this: in the eyes of the pop music elite, ethnographic recordings are tokens of raw authenticity. But they require civilizing—"development" to use the common international aid metaphor—to become dance-worthy and pop sales-worthy. This is accomplished by schizophonic variations on four historically important techniques common to Western modernist avant-garde engagements with the exotic: decontextualization, incorporation, juxtaposition, and curation (Feld 1996). In the space of the "Qu'ran" track, these techniques combine with Western modernist avant-gardism's reigning ideological principle: anything that's possible is permissible.

The core modernist story here concerns how the aura—the detachable spiritual powers of others—is called upon to replace or renew Western senses of inner loss. The spiritual becomes an index of primal authenticity, a way to invest authentic difference into sound objects that are overtly hybrid and, in their acoustic material form, familiar to Western pop. In "world music" market terms, religion is recontextualized to become value-added primitivism, value-added aura, value-added difference, value-added nostalgia. Religious sounds are key means for incorporating, juxtaposing, and curating spiritual otherness. This is because their key work in resignification is to create a special sense of contact with something imagined to be more primal, integrated, coherent, pure, innocent, and passionate. And, of course, in the most critical contradiction, spirituality is meant to make the product seem less commercial.

Looking back, *MLBG* reveals an originary moment in a critical "world music" story: the industrialization of desire for pleasure participation in spiritual difference. And, since that moment in 1981, any incisive history of "world music" products will indicate how religion has been and remains critical to the genre's market-cycle reinvigoration and niche expansions. For "world music," *MLBG* was a herald of how religion can have a revitalizing effect in pop music, its legacy the creation of a commodity phantom double whose artistic, marketplace, and consumer interests come together as a historical exemplar of the social life, and empire, of schizophonic things.

Note

This essay was first presented as a lecture in early fall 2004 for New York University's Center for Religion and Media, and I am grateful to Faye Ginsburg, the Center's director, for the challenge to write it, and to the audience for their thoughts. Later 2004 presentations, at the Universities of Bergen, Copenhagen, Palermo, and Texas at Austin also produced stimulating conversations. A version of this essay was published in Italian, in 2007, as "My Life in the Bush of Ghosts: la 'world music' e la mercificazione dell'esperienza religiosa," in *Incontri di etnomusicologia: Seminari e conferenze in ricordo di Diego Carpitella*, edited by Giovanni Giuriati, 329–348, for the EM serie Quaderni, Archivi di Etnomusi-

colgia, by Accademia Nazionale e and written together with Annem "Entangled Complicities in the Pre Jenkins Encounter Brian Eno and at <http://www.popular-musicology-use-of-Lebanese-singer-Dunya-Yunis-Rovsing-Olsen>, the co-editor, with *of Islam*, for the Music in the World ing the current version and sharing interviews with Brian Eno from the

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ologia, by Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Roma. A companion essay, researched and written together with Annemette Kierkegaard of the University of Copenhagen, is “Entangled Complicities in the Prehistory of ‘World Music’: Poul Rovsing Olsen and Jean Jenkins Encounter Brian Eno and David Byrne in the Bush of Ghosts,” published online at <http://www.popular-musicology-online.com/2010>. This text adds the story of *MLBG*’s use of Lebanese singer Dunya Yunis’s voice, as recorded by Danish ethnomusicologist Poul Rovsing Olsen, the co-editor, with Jean Jenkins, of the LP *The Human Voice in the World of Islam*, for the Music in the World of Islam series. I am grateful to Ole Reitov for reviewing the current version and sharing with me both his correspondence and his Danish radio interviews with Brian Eno from the period of the recording’s initial release.

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