Music, Analysis, and the Body: Experiments, Explorations, and Embodiments

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AFFECT, REPRESENTATION, TRANSFORMATION: *THE ROYLE FAMILY*'S MUSICAL BODIES

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As if analysts committed to investigating the relationships between music and society do not already have enough ways to get into trouble, 'The Affective Turn' has now arrived to stir things up anew. For starters, according to some musicologists with an interest in affect, there is no significant difference between formalist and hermeneutic approaches to music analysis. Anahid Kassabian, for instance, has recently intimated that all music-analytical models, whether social or structural, 'rely on linear narrativity' to stake their claims.[1] Yet still worse, for some music analysts, than the revelation that they are closet narratologists will be affect theory's encompassing argument that to focus on what music represents — from K-Net relations to the ideology of late capitalism — is entirely, even wilfully, to miss the point of most musical encounters. Reading for meaning is *passé*; studying what music does to our bodies and minds before conscious interpretation kicks in is *à la mode*.

Affect theorists tend to deploy 'affect' to differentiate certain sensual responses from emotion; affect theory thus explores what Roland Barthes christened an inventory of shimmers.[2] As Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle explain in their introduction to the collection *Sound, Music, Affect* (2013), this usage of 'affect' indicates different domains of experience from those explored by music theorists past and present through, for instance, *Affektenlehre*. It investigates the 'fluctuations of feeling that shape the experiential in ways that may impact upon but nevertheless evade conscious knowing'; as such, affect is 'intimately involved with, but nevertheless distinct from, feeling and emotion'.[3] Simplistically, then, one might say that, if Haydn's 'Surprise' Symphony makes

[1] Anahid Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity* (Berkeley and London, 2013), p. xxiii. Affect theory is a broad and diverse field, and this essay focuses mainly on musicological engagements. Readers seeking a general overview may consult Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC and London, 2010).

[2] Roland Barthes, *The Neutral*, trans. R. E. Krauss and D. Hollier (New York, 2005), 77.

[3] Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle, 'Introduction: Somewhere between the Signifying and the Sublime', in Biddle and Thompson (eds.), *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (London, 2013), 7.

you jump, that is affect (the startle response); if listening to Rage Against the Machine's 'Killing in the Name' infects you with the band's fury, that is emotion; if you are infused with smugness by the thought of being the kind of person who listens to both Haydn and Rage Against the Machine, that is feeling. Affects are immediate; emotions respond, in part, to affect, weaving affect into relationships with signification; and feelings reflect upon, among other things, affects *and* representations, narrating aspects of our experience of both back to consciousness.

As the more sophisticated recent work on music, affect, and emotion tends to demonstrate, there is, in truth, no hard dividing line between affect and emotion, or indeed between embodied responses and the interpretation of signs.[4] Yet contrary to the recent wave of music-theoretical work on music and emotion, scholars with an interest in music and affect have tended to follow colleagues in other areas of cultural studies, thus far, by theorizing affect at a distance from reflections on what music might be said to represent (including emotions). As Biddle and Thompson clarify, affect theory moves 'away from issues of representation and cultural meaning, and towards questions regarding the uses and functions of sound as an affective force: the question shifts from "what does music mean" to "what does music do"'.[5] As I have argued elsewhere,[6] while there is excellent work of this variety in recent musicology, there are critical tasks for which it remains vital to consider how affect interacts with musical representation, and also how affective experiences of music help to shape our thinking about representation, as well as our theorizing, close reading, etc. Musicologists with an interest in affect are to be acknowledged, then, for bringing these matters — not new to music theory, but today newly pressing — to the fore and asking analysts, more broadly, to account for affect's effects and to theorize how they interact with other parameters of musical experience.

Music analysts and theorists therefore have productive work to do — or, rather, to continue doing — in this area. Following in the footsteps of pioneers

[4] See, for example, Michael Spitzer, 'Mapping the Human Heart: A Holistic Analysis of Fear in Schubert', *Music Analysis*, 29/1-3 (2010), 149–213; Ian Biddle, 'Quiet Sounds and Intimate Listening: The Politics of Tiny Seductions', in Biddle and Thompson (eds.), *Sound, Music, Affect*, 205–22; and the essays by Michael L. Klein and Kenneth Smith in the present volume.

[5] Thompson and Biddle, 'Introduction', 19.

[6] Nicholas Reyland, 'Screen Music, Narrative and/or Affect: Kieślowski's Musical Bodies', in Miguel Mera, Ron Sadoff, and Ben Winters (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound* (New York and Abingdon, 2017), 96–107.

including Arnie Cox, David Huron and Steve Larson, as theorist-analysts we can help to explain, with the precision, clarity, and elegance of the best work in our discipline, how different musical forces articulate different musical affects.[7] Through interrelated work as analyst-theorists, we can seek to identify patterns and structures of affect in different musical repertoires, in order to compare and contrast affective strategies within texts and, furthermore, within texts' cultural-historical contexts. Colleagues from empirical musicology, music psychology, ethnomusicology, and elsewhere have important roles to play too. Yet critical approaches to affect involving theory and analysis have the distinctive merit of taking up the challenge of one of affect theory's founding mothers, Susan Sontag: her celebrated essay 'Against Interpretation' called for a revivified formalism alongside her more famous erotics of interpretation.[8] Close reading, in other words, may not be so *passé* after all when it comes to music, affect, and the body. The essays in this collection, I attest, embody plenty of revivifying.

The present essay's contribution began life as a response to the following question: Do some instances of musical affect create sensations which *demand* to be analysed in terms of affect's interaction with what music represents? Whatever one might think of the 'all analysis is narratological' claim, it is clear that some music — indeed, most of the world's music beyond the canon of instrumental Western art composition — happens within texts (films, pop songs, video games, rituals, programme music, operas, etc.) that have representational intent and, nested within and across their manifest intentions, layers of latent symbolism. Certain texts, nevertheless, mount notably intense provocations. This essay's televisual case study, for instance, seems purposely designed to generate affects in the context of a political agenda *about* representation: BBC TV sitcom *The Royle Family* (1998–2012). Below I make the case that this show harnessed musical affects (i.e. what music seems designed to make bodies do when audio-viewing) to political ends relating to a revisionist schema concerning the televisual representation of working class bodies and lives in the United Kingdom. An alternative case can be made, however, that what music makes the bodies of the Royles do (and, potentially, their audio-viewers' bodies do) may be a yet more radical act if considered *non*-representational — or,

[7] Arnie Cox, 'Embodying Music: Principles of the Mimetic Hypothesis', *Music Theory Online*, 17/2 (2011); David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Anticipation* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2006); Steve Larson, *Musical Forces: Motion, Metaphor, and Meaning in Music* (Bloomington, IN, 2012).

[8] Susan Sontag, 'Against Interpretation', *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London, 2009 [1961]), 3–14.

more complexly, as a text that shimmers between both domains, affect and representation, like an audio-visual Möbius strip. What follows therefore proceeds through two phases: an introduction to the show's critical contexts and reception, and an analysis of two significant musical passages from *The Royle Family*.

Contesting Representation

From modest beginnings in 1998, squirreled away late at night on BBC2, *The Royle Family* rose to become, by the end of its third and final annual season, a flagship BBC1 television programme. This was quite an achievement, Andy Medhurst notes in *National Joke*, his study of English popular comedy, 'for a relatively experimental, low-key sitcom in which a working-class Manchester family sit in their house apparently doing very little'.[9] Written mainly by Caroline Aherne and Craig Cash — who also co-starred as the feckless Denise Royle and her nice-but-dim fiancé then husband, Dave Best — one aspect of the show's experimentalism is that, usually, nothing obviously dramatic happens in an episode. Sunday lunch might be served, commented upon, and consumed; more typically, the family gathers, feeds, and banters in front of the television set. Unlike US sitcom *Seinfeld* (1989–98), however, this was not a show about nothing.

Class is central to *The Royle Family* — the clue is in the title's monarchic pun — although the same is true of most English sitcoms, '[g]iven the centrality of class to English perceptions of self and other', and the importance of 'tensions of difference' to all comedy.[10] (Think of Basil's fawning to the elite in *Fawlty Towers*, Hyacinth's pronunciation of 'Bucket' in *Keeping Up Appearances*, *Bread*'s Liverpudlian scallywags, the 'I look down on/up to him' *Frost Report* sketch, and countless other examples.) One indication of *The Royle Family*'s experimental intent, therefore, is that the show eschewed the mainstay of British class comedy — comedic stereotyping — to offer instead what Medhurst defines, 'in terms of social representation', as a 'demographic of deep narrowness' committed to mapping 'the complex and shifting nuances of distinction' within working class lives.[11] Hence the intricately detailed mise-en-scène and

[9] Andy Medhurst, 'Bermuda My Arse: Class, Culture and *The Royle Family*', *A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities* (Abingdon, 2007), 145.
[10] Ibid., 145.
[11] Ibid., 146.

the ways in which characterizations slowly unfurl, revealing riches that overturn more stereotypical, and potentially offensive or otherwise off-putting, patterns of behaviour. This strategy constructs, for Medhurst, not cliché but 'dense textures' including 'characterisations of extraordinary depth'; for him, this is the point of the show.[12] '[B]ravely and very politically', he argues, *The Royle Family* insists that stereotyping people with 'little or no power to contest those representations' is unacceptable.[13]

The Royle Family was not alone in offering alternative modes of working class representation on British TV during the 1990s and 2000s. Channel 4's slightly later *Shameless* (2004–2013), for instance, also used comedy and drama to frame anew Mancunian working class lives. In doing so, both shows formed a critical relationship to an important British screen tradition: social realism. As Glen Creeber has written in an essay tracing the relationship between *Shameless* and televisual texts from *Cathy Come Home* to *Coronation Street*, 'British social realism has always been traditionally associated with a form of "moral realism" — one that had a sense of ethical responsibility that can often be motivated by [a desire for] political change and transformation. In particular, its narrative and filmic point of view was always from an implied distance, from the perspective of a social or cultural outsider.'[14] Those 'outsiders' were often highly educated, well-meaning directors more representative, in truth, of a text's intended audience; Ken Loach and Mike Leigh are obvious examples. Yet this approach, Creeber argues, positioned social realism's 'subject in a rather passive role — either as a victim or as a self-sacrificing heroic figure', through 'one-dimensional stereotypes … centring authority with the observer and constructing the observed only from the powerful position of the cultural outsider'.[15] Creeber cites John Hill on what is absent from such dramas: 'the attitude or point of view of the characters themselves', both of which are 'subordinated to the authorial point of view announced by the film's aesthetic organisation'.[16]

Written by class insiders, albeit from the distance granted by their success as TV writers and (in some cases) stars, Aherne, Cash, and *Shameless* showrunner Paul Abbott strove, through televisual storytelling enhanced by experimental

[12] Ibid., 148.

[13] Ibid., 148.

[14] Glen Creeber, '"The Truth is Out There! Not!": *Shameless* and the Moral Structures of Contemporary Social Realism', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 7/4 (2009), 428.

[15] Ibid., 424.

[16] John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema, 1956-1963* (London, 1986), 133; cited in Creeber, '"The Truth is Out There! Not!"', 424.

audio-visual strategies, to locate their works' authority *with* the observed from the informed position of the cultural insider — having grown up in circumstances related to those depicted in their respective shows. If social realism used to be shot from outside the working class, in order to provoke those safely above it to ask 'what might We do for Them?', *The Royle Family* and *Shameless* are shows shot *by* Them, thereby offering a steelier, more challenging form of address: 'Who are you calling Them, pal, and why?'

As Medhurst documents, when responding to these challenges, viewers and critics of *The Royle Family* tend often to reveal, consciously or otherwise, 'a strategy of distancing based on class', exercising their own (often unevaluated) sense of social privilege as a means of labelling and judging those beneath their status; scrutinizing the series is 'like looking at mould through a microscope' wrote one critic in, of all places, left-wing British newspaper *The Guardian* (20 October 1998).[17] '[A] discourse is offered', Medhurst notes, 'in which the series is reduced to an uncomplicated matter of "us" (critics, broadsheet readers, devotees of Finnish film directors and middle-class broadsheet readers) laughing at "them" (Royles, banjo players, fans of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*)'; would actual Royle families get the joke, some critics made a pretence of worrying — 'as if anyone from less privileged backgrounds', Medhurst critiques, '… will only be capable of the most rudimentary, grunting grasp of cultural texts'.[18] Nonetheless, he refuses to accept that most audio-viewers could be too stupid or callous (even 'in the most stratospheric echelons of the English class hierarchy') to react unkindly to the show's more profound 'moments of tenderness, affection, raw emotion and unapologetic sentiment' — moments such as Dad Jim (Ricky Tomlinson) pledging lifelong loyalty to his baby grandson, Mum Barbara (Sue Johnston) on the verge of falling apart, and neighbour Joe (Peter Martin) serenading those gathered for Anthony Royle's eighteenth birthday party 'with a tear-prompting rendition of [the early twentieth-century popular ballad] "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen"'[19] — of which more below.

It was beyond the remit of Medhurst's chapter on *The Royle Family* to investigate all of the mechanisms enabling these effects to occur, but I contend that affective moments in the show — many of the most potent of which are musical — are fundamental to audio-visual and narrative strategies relating to its

[17] Medhurst, 'Bermuda My Arse', 157.
[18] Ibid., 157.
[19] Ibid., 157.

politically motivated desire to create symbolic structures which augment but then break through clichéd barriers to interclass empathy. *The Royle Family*'s creators designed and regularly redeployed a number of strategies of affective manipulation with the potential to undercut a perceiver's ability critically to police her or his responses to narrative representation. In particular, one recurrent affective strategy in the series is the induction of affective *and* representational disgust through a character's behaviour and attitudes, thereby heightening the potential gap between audio-viewer and show, before short-circuiting that gap by delivering moments of rare affective power. Whatever one's class and beliefs, such instances have the potential to cut one's critical considerations off at the pass, enforcing a kind of empathy. The next section of this essay analyses two examples of this strategy in action.

Two Songs

Its debt to British social realist traditions means that, alongside the handheld cameras and unflattering lighting, there is no non-diegetic score in *The Royle Family*. Yet the show is full of music. Oasis-penned main and end titles theme song aside,[20] music often emanates from the family's TV set and reveals the creators' awareness of the semiotics of screen scoring, and a concomitant desire to manipulate those clichés for comedic and other purposes. For instance, a car ad featuring a sultry saxophone's style topical intimations jars ironically with neighbour Cheryl's discussion of how make up will help her look sexier. (The basic joke here is that Cheryl is always on a diet because she is overweight and concerned about her appearance; the better joke is that, as her eating habits persistently reveal, she is in truth quite content with her appearance — an appearance at odds with the style topic's connotations, i.e. its evocation of

[20] There is not space in this essay for an extended analysis of 'Half the World Away' or of the main title visuals. Overall, though, the track evokes resistance, or perhaps just ambivalence, to the first idea presented by the vocal persona: 'I would like to leave this city'. A potential for musical departure is signalled through various chromatic moves toward more exotic climes than the C major tonic, eventually arriving 'half a world away' on A♭ major (i.e. ♭VI) on those very words. Such moves are always undercut, though, by a return to the subdominant poised, it seems, to cadence back into the tonic. When this process first begins to happen, the persona sings of 'warning signs/running around my mind', but such images of progress or escape all evaporate into this cyclical, unfinishable gesture. The voice then fades out with the words 'I've been lost…'. Over the end credits, when the song returns, that sentence — and the sentiment of the show as a whole — is completed: 'I've been lost/I've been found/No I don't feel down', and tonal closure is gently secured. The 'warning', it would seem, is as much about leaving as staying.

the *femme fatale*). The 'reveille function' of TV main title themes is also acknowledged.[21] You've got until we hear the *Antiques Roadshow* music, the men in the household announce to Denise, her mother, and the other women assembled to view Denise's wedding dress — then we're coming back into the living room (from their self-imposed exile in the kitchen). And so they do, singing the theme tune and marching along to the beat. The men and women (and, potentially, audience) take great pleasure in this ebullient performance and, notably, the interruption of a notionally profound life event with the ostensibly more mundane matter of keeping an appointment with the TV.

One might imagine that such scenes of what screen music theorist Claudia Gorbman terms 'artless singing' would be heavily marked for critical attention in the show, and pregnant with representational meaning. However, the examples of Gorbman's 'polylogues' in the show (songs performed by a group of amateur voices entirely within the context of a fiction's diegetic reality) yield, on the surface, what she calls 'the most conventional results' of this kind of audio-visual event: 'a group bonds through the common beat, melody, and pleasure of a song, and their collective activity of singing it.'[22] Polylogues, for Gorbman, are artless singing at its most 'impoverished' (although she does not mean the term harshly). In *The Royle Family*, this symbolic redundancy is emphasized by the mundaneness of the music thus performed: sing-alongs range from 'The Birdie Song' and 'That's Amore' to a 1980s Cadbury's Flake jingle and the 'P-P-P-Pick up a Penguin' motif from ads of the same era. Affective pleasure trumps signification in motivating these outbursts of song. The Royles are not self-conscious postmodernists, revelling in the rubble to gain social traction through a display of cultural capital — although they are certainly revelling.

Postmodern ironists aside, few rock critics would be likely to concede that listeners could deem such texts authentic (although Allan Moore and Elizabeth Eva Leach offer frameworks within which the Royle's musical attachments could be theorized as such).[23] By utilizing obviously inauthentic popular music texts, however, these musical materials heighten the division between Medhurst's more pejorative audience members and fictional characters whose tastes are

[21] Philip Tagg, *Kojak: Fifty Seconds of Television Music: Towards the Analysis of Affect in Popular Music* (New York, 2000 [1979]), 93.

[22] Claudia Gorbman, 'Artless Singing', *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, 5/2 (2011), 165.

[23] See Allan Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', *Popular Music*, 21/2 (2002), 209–23; and Elizabeth Eva Leach, 'Vicars of 'Wannabe': Authenticity and the Spice Girls', *Popular Music*, 20/2 (2001), 143–67.

exaggeratedly uncool. Yet the 'Antiques Roadshow' performance's exuberance, for instance, is infectiously pleasurable in ways that bypass, or at least complicate, any concerns over the representational significations of, for example, the tune's inauthenticity as popular music. By being unmarked for inattention, as it were, such moments may even participate in stealthier strategies for the achievement of ideological aims. Some might be representational; others call to mind powerful passages from Gorbman's important 1987 study, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* — the ones about unconsciously perceived music, or aspects thereof, easing the audio-viewer's slippage into pre-fabricated subject-positions.[24]

'I Want a Girl'

In S1E5 of *The Royle Family*, the dramatic stakes are unusually high. Denise and Dave's arrival home from the pub shatters the late-night peace of the household. They are arguing. Dave was allegedly flirting with his ex, the legendarily cantilevered Beverly Macca, down at The Feathers, the Royles's local pub. Denise calls off the wedding. Jim, Barbara, and Anthony Royle (Ralf Little) then descend from their bedrooms, disturbed by the racket, to join Denise (and, later, Dave) in the cold living room. The lack of warmth in the hearth in the living room (one of Richard Hoggart's key symbols of working class British identity, as Medhurst notes) is significant.[25] This is chilly stuff: the episode seems calibrated to unsettle the audio-viewer ethically and physically. Denise and Dave's fighting, for instance, illuminates a nastier side to the family. The camera, meanwhile, calls attention to Jim picking his nose and wiping it on his shirt; he also repeatedly tries to clear mucus from his throat, complaining of a pain in his chest and the likelihood of imminent heart failure. Jim, of course, is the *locus nauseatus* of disgust in the show. Not only does he announce 'my arse' to dismiss everything that displeases him, he is regularly depicted scratching his bottom, nose, belly, feet, and nipples in front of all and sundry,

[24] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London, 1987), 69. See also Nicholas Reyland, 'Corporate Classicism and the Metaphysical Style: Affects, Effects, and Contexts of Two Recent Trends in Screen Scoring', *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, 9/2 (2015), 115–30, for a discussion relating Gorbman's concepts to issues of affect in contemporary screen scoring.

[25] Medhurst starts his article by quoting Hoggart's statement that '[t]he hearth is reserved for the family … and those who are "something to us"', from Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (London, 1957), 33–4.

or discussing the execution of his bowel movements and other bodily functions. In a sense — or, rather, sensuously — he exhibits grossness, the affective power of which is complemented by his attitudes. His laziness, homophobia, sexism, and off-hand neglect of his wife Barbara all make liking Jim a challenge — and he is not alone. It is a testimony to Tomlinson's beautiful and nuanced performance, however, so emblematic of all of the actors' performances in the show, that there is always a sense that Jim has hidden reserves of genuine kindness. Occasionally, that kindness is summoned by a tune.

In the episode, as tempers quell, tea is summoned — laced with whiskey against the cold of the room — and the dramatic tension starts to abate. (The dramatic structure here is a narrative irony: the abatement of pathos and return to the Royles's bathetic existence restores equilibrium through its dramatic anti-climax.) Dave breaks the ice with a notably poor impression of TV magician Paul Daniels. A genuinely magical televisual transformation then occurs, as the episode becomes a kind of Royle variety performance. 'To the wedding!' toasts Jim, before bursting into a fragment of 'How to Handle a Woman' from *Camelot* and proclaiming himself the Mick Hucknall of the estate. Warming up, he then serenades his son, Anthony, with an even more esoteric number. Jim sings 1930s show tune 'Shake Hands with a Millionaire', popularized in the UK by Arthur Tracy in a 1937 recording. Who could have suspected that Jim has such depths and musical talent? Ultimately, however, this is all scene setting for the arrival of Jim's much vaunted, but in previous episodes unheard and unseen, banjo. Once Jim has taken up his banjo, everything that has occurred thus far in the episode — so carefully calibrated to chill or to disgust — melts away. What happens next is ineluctably pleasurable.

Jim sings the chorus to Will Dillon and Harry von Tilzer's 'I Want a Girl' (1911) — a song that had sold over five million sheets and recordings by Dillon's death in 1961. Putting aside the lyrics, which most obviously relate to the wedding theme of the episode, the music has an immediate effect on the Royles. Over six shots (see Table 1), they gradually become more and more animated in their knee-clapping, nodding, gestural participation, and singing, as the performance infects them with its ebullience and as Jim's monologic 'artless song' transforms into a polylogue. More subtly, the framing and editing of these transformations intensify as well: the shots become busier, the cutting gets quicker, and the editing culminates not with a cut but a deft pan linking Barbara (Jim's 'girl') back to Jim. Gorbman's 'conventional' results are certainly achieved: the song represents the reunification of the family unit (and, structurally, cements a return to the narrative's 'home' bathetic register). Yet the sequence has the potential to do something more than this for the audience.

Table 1. An increasingly animated polylogue from *The Royle Family*

			
Shot 1 - 5": Jim performs, Dave's moving head and hand at edge of frame	2 - 7": Jim's flourish and scat, medium close-up, dramatic movement	3 - 4": Dave clapping moving leg, Barbara scatting, Denise smiling	4 - 4": Anthony's whole body moving, delight palpable; Dave's knee jigging, corner of frame
			
5 – 3": Denise rests head on Dave – reunion – Dave singing and moving more	6a – pan: Barbara medium close up, singing animatedly with husband	6b: Across room and back to Jim, medium close up serenading his 'girl'	6c: Final flourish, fist pump, rousing cheer!

All of the images and actions respond to, and indeed underscore and amplify, the affective potential of the song. Rhythm is key, and not merely the exciting outburst of Jim's spoken lead in, or the spring in his banjo's timbral step. One upshot of the use of a banjo here is its short reverberation time, and the more frenetic level of activity thus required to play it compared, say, to a guitar. Jim's quaver strumming, though, does not accelerate during the performance — although, occasionally, semiquavers dance in response to his scat breaks. The harmony, too, proceeds at a stately pace of one chord per bar. The music's seat of affective power, then, lies elsewhere — in the vocal line's rhythms, their interaction with the more regular strumming, and, by the end of the first line, their sensuous engagement of the family and the audio-viewer.

The four bars making up the first sentence of the song have two main elements. First, the rhythmic snap of 'wanna girl' — the semiquaver anticipation of 'girl' — shifts 'girl' in front of the strong downbeat at the start of bar two. The beat is left empty by the vocal. This is important. Transposed up a fourth, the line is then reiterated, but crammed into the remaining three beats of bar two and given a kick of its own — the final 'that'. This rhythmic intensification is then answered by the four-on-the-floor of the last two bars. Jim's lively scat break responds to his opening musical statement, and the four bars sketch, in miniature, the affective and symbolic trajectory of the entire song, building and then sustaining an impetus toward celebration.

Writing on the mysteries of groove, and seeking to theorize '*how* music elicits the desire to move, and why stimulus-driven sensorimotor synchronization is pleasurable', Maria Witek has argued that combinations of syncopation, temporal expectation, and metrical events 'invite the body to physically enact the beat of a groove through dance'.[26] Drawing on music and psychological theory, plus empirical observations of clubbers dancing, she claims that '[t]he open spaces of metrical events revealed by … syncopations invite the [perceiver's] body to "fill in"' for the expected but absent metrical event. An acoustic absence — like the fourth beat in the first bar of Chic's 'Good Times', say, or the rest on the downbeat of bar two in Jim's song — issues what Witek terms a 'corporeal invitation', creating 'a situation of attunement between music and body', as musical and perceiver agencies start to blur. In the example of Jim's song, rather than cycling to form an actual groove, the song provides the additional payoff of immediately repairing its syncopated deviation in the four-on-the-floor ending to line one, which conjoins with a 3-2-1 melodic descent and I-V-I on the banjo.

Witek cites studies suggesting that the 'rhythmic entrainment and sensorimotor synchronization' elicited by some music are widely recognized as pleasurable; she also draws attention to the ways in which, when clubbing, 'body-movements are not only synchronized to the music, but [also] to the movements of other bodies'. Music's 'open spaces' and other entraining elements 'become portals through which people can share the same mental and physical space', and as minds and bodies synchronize through music, 'time exists collectively and pleasure is shared'. These social activities perform, in turn, cultural work: 'syncopation in groove provides a "venue" in which cultural values and preferences can be transmitted', she notes, and '[d]iscussions of gender, sexuality and class… [can] naturally follow on' from investigations of these parameters.

The Royles and their television audience are not literally in the same room, and the audio-viewer's participation in the performance may be limited to realizing the interior micro-movements or discharging of mirror-neurons at the heart of theories such as Cox's mimetic hypothesis or Jeffrey M. Zack's mirror rule in *Flicker: Your Brain on Movies*.[27] But 'musical structure, body-movement

[26] Quotes from Maria Witek, '"Filling In": The Relationship Between Body-Movement, Pleasure and Syncopation in Groove', paper presented at PopMAC Conference, University of Liverpool, July 2013; a version of this paper has now been published as Maria Witek, 'Filling In: Syncopation, Pleasure and Distributed Embodiment in Groove', *Music Analysis*, 36/1 (2017), 138–160. Subsequent Witek quotations from the PopMAC talk.

[27] Jeffrey M. Zack, *Flicker: Your Brain on Movies* (New York, 2015).

and pleasure are all necessary components' (Witek) when one experiences Jim and his family's performance. This passage in the episode may thus be interpreted as enacting culturally significant work in light of the show's many challenges to empathy and, in particular, its engagement with the politics of class representation. Offering anthropological perspectives on music and affect, Judith Becker has argued that '[m]usical events set up an aural domain of coordination that envelops all those present'.[28] Writing specifically on rhythmic entrainment, she states that, in moments akin to Jim's song, '[b]odies and brains synchronize gestures, muscle actions, breathing, and brain waves while enveloped in musicking': 'bound together by common aims, [people] may experience revitalization and general good feeling', as 'the music descends upon all alike, while each person's joy is his or her own'.[29] Becker then explains the concept of 'structural coupling': the way an agent's body, mind, and senses thereof are changed through interactions with other beings and environments.[30]

As Richard Dyer argues in an essay on Nino Rota and affect, music's affective presence in screen fictions can permit us to relate to characters not by identification or projection, but 'with interest, sympathy, affection, adoration, or even frustration and despair, but not often actually imagining ourselves as them'.[31] When audio-viewers participate in Jim's song and his family's responses, they may find it hard to resist sharing in the Royles's pleasure: joy has the potential to descend on each and every one of the fictional and real world agencies engaged in the musicking. If so, the experience could feel all the more pleasurable, given the affective structuring of this and other episodes: sour distastefulness enframes these sweet moments, like a tonal dissonance preparing a resolution. Crucially, though, the show's triangulation of music, televisual narrative, and audience engagement constructs a space in which one is opened, potentially, to new domains of knowing through doing. Such knowledge may transform, or at least trouble, aspects of one's ontology — such as one's feelings about the disregarded lives explored in *The Royle Family*. Pleasure may then replace disgust, or at least attach a caveat to one's enculturated feelings about class.

[28] Judith Becker, 'Anthropological Perspectives on Music and Emotion', in Patrik Juslin and John Sloboda (eds.), *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (Oxford, 2001), 151.

[29] Ibid., 151–2.

[30] Ibid., 152.

[31] Richard Dyer, 'Side by Side: Nino Rota, Music, and Film', in Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (eds.), *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema* (Berkeley, LA, and London, 2007), 256.

'I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen'

'Any requests?' asks Jim after his performance of 'I Want a Girl'. 'Yeah, let's go to bed' deadpans Barbara. Warmed by the music and whiskey-laced tea, however, the performances continue. Barbara sings to Denise, Anthony performs a comical dance number, and when Dave and Denise snuggle up on the sofa, the repairs to their relationship are signified musically as Dave reprises Barbara's serenade of 'You Belong to Me'. In the next example of extended musical performance, taken from the second season of the series, the process is reversed. Musical turns at Anthony's eighteenth birthday party (S2E6) build toward a performance by Jim, again healing tensions that have formed — tensions that, here, are explicitly related to class — while resolving disgust with pleasure and, potentially, inducing still greater empathy between audio-viewers and the characters. Yet a further musical turn follows Jim's comic song this time, and its effects are somewhat different. As such, it invites interpretation of another way in which the show attempts to induce affect to create an experience shared by characters and audience alike.

The episode's foregrounding of class conflict — that staple of British sitcom tensions — takes the form of Anthony's contrasting guests at his party: a friend, Darren, who is always in trouble with the law, and Anthony's girlfriend, Emma, who is from a middle-class family and, in other ways, different from the Royles and their friends. (An impeccably polite vegetarian with exotically braided hair and a henna tattoo from a two-car family makes a conspicuous addition to proceedings.) Alongside the atmosphere of discomfort created through misunderstandings and the Royles's desire not to offend Emma (all played for comedy, as when Anthony's Nana asks if Emma, as a vegetarian, cannot at least have some wafer thin ham), actual disgust is generated through a series of character behaviours likely to offend most people's senses and sensibilities, regardless of class. When Dave arrives, for instance, he treads dog faeces into the carpets; Barbara proceeds to pick the muck out of the tread of his shoe with a butter knife over the kitchen sink; Jim makes a number of off-colour statements, including a homophobic joke at Anthony's expense in the middle of the birthday toast he is giving. Again, rifts are created between the characters *and* between the audio-viewers and the fictional agents; again, musical performances are deployed to heal the rifts.

Boldly for a half-hour sitcom, the ensuing performances take up a third of the episode's running time — another sign of the *The Royle Family*'s experimentalism. The reappearance of Jim's banjo again heralds the transformation,

this time with a literally startling affect. (Nana Royle complains that his sudden emergence from the hallway, singing and rapidly strumming a major chord, 'made me jump'; everyone else cheers.) Thus begins a five-part musical structure, with two broader phases, defined by musical affects and what they do to the Royles and their audience. Jim's declamatory toast (Phase 1a) is as hearty as one might expect: withering yet affectionate, rough-edged but jolly, it maintains the sonic intensity generated by his initial musical outburst. He then signals the end of this musical-dramatic sentence through a reiteration of the strummed chord. The second musical event now ensues.

Dave begins a rendition of 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' (Phase 1b), and he is joined, after a word or two, by the entire gathering in a rendition of this most rowdily enjoyable of impoverished polylogues. Playing on audience memories of their own participation in renditions of the song, and engaging mechanisms charted by Cox's mimetic hypothesis, it is hard to resist feeling part of this performance, thanks to the density of audio-visual gestures cueing actual or mimetic participation. These range from the *rit.* at the registral peak of the song, as the melody rises to its climax — i.e. 'For he's a jolly good fe-e-lowwwww' — to Jim's punching of the air in response to the musical action. As before in S1E5, albeit through a more clichéd (if no less enjoyable) polylogue, the audio-viewer's experience may begin to blur with the Royles, and joy descend upon all. One is becoming Royle (or, indeed, becoming-Royle).[32]

Neighbour Mary then recalls how Anthony, as a young boy, used to visit her and husband Joe to perform 'The Birdie Song' (Phase 1c) in return for a 10p piece. As polylogues go, 'The Birdie Song' represents an even more debased form of musical currency than 'For he's a jolly good fellow'. Once again, though, as the characters perform this melody and dance, it is a challenge to retain a shielding sense of the song's musical inauthenticity (mediated, potentially, through semi-shameful memories of performing it oneself at gatherings past) in the face of the performers' expressive ebullience and manifold gestural invitations. The song's main function in the sequence, however, is to provide an upbeat to Jim's immediately ensuing performance of an older novelty number, Eddie Latta's 'Grandad's Flannelette Nightshirt' (Phase 1d), which was written for George Formby (Jim's obvious musical role model) and the 1940 film *Let George Do It*. Although its vocal line is more sedate than 'I Want a Girl', and Jim's performance has greater subtlety (e.g. more dynamic contrasts), the audio-visual sequence is similarly affecting. Panning down the sofa from

[32] See Kenneth Smith's essay in the present volume.

Jim to Darren and back as in 'I Want a Girl', foot tapping and other forms of grooving are again in evidence. Jim's performance contains some slips — his voice cracks, the chords briefly lose their way — but its overall quality and affective sweep are enrapturing. Gradually, the song transforms from monologue to polylogue.

More subtly, the tempo of the song and the speed of Jim's strumming complete a dual acceleration over the first four elements (1a–1d) of the show's longer, two-part musical sequence. Song tempi thus far have been more sedate than Jim's introductory strumming at the start of the toasts, but here a song finally matches the rhythmic energy of that opening outburst. More subtly, the entrance points of the songs in phase one of the sequence have gradually become closer, as if accelerating toward this point of arrival and what (on the basis of previous episodes of the show) one might expect to be a climactic performance. Yet that would be a surprisingly repetitive move for this innovative series. Instead, having aped its own uses of music for similar purposes in S1E5 — smoothing away tensions, creating empathy through affect and action — S2E6 now breaks with the show's intratextual conventions, confounding audience expectations and, possibly, delighting one anew.

The deepest structural preparation for the second phase of the performance sequence has been, in a sense, occurring for two seasons of the show. Neighbour Joe, as a running joke has it, barely speaks in more than a monosyllable. He then turns up tipsy at the party and proves unexpectedly voluble, reminiscing about past times. Nothing, though, could lead one to predict what emerges from the background of Jim's song (and it emerges from the background visually, in that Joe is seated out of focus at the back of the room, and sonically, in that his song is masked, when it begins, by Jim and co. finishing and then applauding 'Grandad's Flannelette Nightshirt'). Joe's choice of song is equally unexpected. 'I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen' (Phase 2) is an 1876 ballad by US songwriter Thomas P. Westendorf. It was Westendorf's one great success and a favourite of tens of thousands, including Henry Ford and Thomas Edison.[33] Today the song may best be known through an appearance in the original *Star Trek* series, but it was a hit, from the nineteenth century onward, in print and, later, recordings.[34]

[33] See Richard S. Hill, 'Getting Kathleen Home Again', *Notes* second series, 5/3 (June 1948), 338–53, for a detailed study of the song's origins, creator, and early recorded history.

[34] Wikipedia users document recordings from 1916 onward, and provide the following synopsis of its appearance in *Star Trek*: 'In the Star Trek episode, "The Naked Time" (first aired Sep. 29, 1966), the crew of the Enterprise is affected by a substance, unknowingly picked from

The song is touching, sad, and gently provocative. Its persona serenades Kathleen, who has lost her looks and may, the lyrics hint, be ill or even dying ('The roses all have left your cheek/I've watched them fade away and die'). It therefore promises to take her back to the land in which she grew up ('To where your heart will feel no pain') — back, in other words, to hearth, home, and even homeland, as if to reverse the ensuing years and ameliorate her ageing. The vocal melody roams, as does the harmony (the latter only implied in Joe's version). Both play on tonal departure and return, making each reprise of the chorus a resolution of each verse's generation of tonal tension. By the end of the song, however, the cyclical repetitions of this process suggest not a journey but a lulling. Its promises are the ones one might make to a loved one on her deathbed — a palliative fiction.

The song's basic sentiment of nostalgia for an impossible return, common to émigrés in the USA (and elsewhere) in the late nineteenth century, is not so far removed from sentiments expressed elsewhere in *The Royle Family*. In a curious way, for instance, the Oasis title track, 'Half the World Away', has similarities at its musical and symbolic core.[35] Unlike the Mancunian Britpop act, however, the sound world of 'Kathleen' *is* half a world away from any music performed thus far by the Royles, and its sadness is certainly at odds with the celebratory tone of the previous songs in this sequence and the party's hitherto accelerating revelry. Its allusions to ageing and the fleeting nature of existence might thus be read as representing, in the setting of an eighteenth birthday party, a gently reflective coda.[36] Yet what the song represents does not seem to be the primary focus of most of the Royles or their friends as Joe performs it. Instead, his song about journeys literal and metaphorical effects an affective

an uninhabited frozen world about to break up, that brings repressed feelings and behavior to the surface. One crewman, Kevin Thomas Riley, who fancies himself a descendant of Irish kings, locks himself in Engineering and shuts the engines off, causing the ship to fall out of orbit toward the disintegrating planet. While the behavior-altering disease spreads through the ship, and the ship continues to fall toward the planet, Riley adds to the stress by repeatedly singing, "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen" in a half-drunken way through speakers he has locked open throughout the ship.' See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I'll_Take_You_Home_Again,_Kathleen (accessed 27 August 2015). The rather different effects of Riley's version of the song in *Star Trek* exemplify an important point made by Biddle and Thompson about musical affect: any one musical text's affects can be channelled into different symbolic contexts by circumstances of usage. See Thompson and Biddle, 'Introduction', 5.

[35] See n. 20 above.

[36] It also forms an interesting prelude to the final episode of season two, the Christmas special, which focuses on Denise going into labour and the idea of familial rebirth.

transportation — intentionally to mirror a discussion of similar screen music moments by Berthold Hoeckner.

From Nietzsche, Hoeckner develops the notion that music can make one remember and at the same time forget 'perhaps even ourselves',[37] contrasting how the most hackneyed play on conventional scoring clichés (transportation from hearing a musical sign to cognizing its signified other) can participate in audio-visual texts that transport one beyond the everyday. He then explores this 'double disposition' further in examples including perhaps the most famous of all scenes of musical transport: Ilsa, in *Casablanca*, listening to Sam's rendition of 'As Time Goes By'. 'We know the song is a carrier, but we don't know the cargo. In a brilliant stroke, this lack is compensated by showing the music's effect on Ilsa … In other words, while we cannot see the transportation, we can still see the transport.'[38]

In the *Royle Family* episode, the contrast between the acceleration that climaxes in Jim's song and the slow pace of Joe's ballad is only the most obvious way in which 'Kathleen' signals the episode's shift in affective focus from a panoramic view of all assembled to an intimate close-up of a single transported subjectivity. Initially, the Royles merely seem stunned by the performance because Joe, of all people, has burst into song; surely his rich baritone also impresses them. As with the previous songs, his monologue then seems set to become a polylogue ending at its first chorus, as various family members add a hushed accompaniment. (Jim tries to accompany on the banjo, but, at this stage, cannot find the right key and stops playing.) To everyone's surprise, however, Joe's song continues beyond its first chorus into a second and, finally, a third verse and chorus, the performance overall lasting almost four minutes. Darren is unmoved (he stares fixedly at the muted television); Cheryl continues eating; Nana is reduced to tears and (unlike Ilsa) reveals why (her dead husband used to sing it to her). Everyone else is more or less transfixed and, like Joe himself, transported. At the final chorus, Jim joins in again on his banjo, and this time — significantly — finds the key; the family again performs the chorus. A brief silence ensues — a held televisual breath, like the silence preceding applause at a recital — before it is punctured by Darren, who chooses this magical moment loudly to note 'I can still smell the shit in here.' Unlike Barbara's 'let's go to bed', though, this punchline seems callous, not funny

[37] Berthold Hoeckner, 'Transport and Transportation in Audiovisual Memory', in Goldmark et al., *Beyond the Soundtrack*, 165.

[38] Ibid., 169–70.

(or, rather, it is both callous and funny at once). Darren has missed the point. One cannot return, not yet at least, to that level. The song has transported everyone — the family, their friends, the audio-viewers — elsewhere.

Neither can one know where Joe has been transported, but one can theorize how his song affects and perhaps transforms its audience. Writing about soundtracks by Jonny Greenwood in which musical noises announce their origins in material causality — thus invoking, for the audio-viewer, hapticity in the form of an embodied connection to the score — Miguel Mera likens Michel Chion's 'materialising sound indices' (in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 1994) to Roland Barthes's notion of the geno-song in 'The Grain of the Voice' (1972).[39] Such sounds, Mera writes, 'pull a film scene towards the physical'. In obvious ways, most of the musical performances in *The Royle Family* might be read to pull the audio-viewer closer to the family's bodies and thus into the 'dense textures' Medhurst praises for their revisionist and patently political investment in the value of working class lives. Barthes wrote that '[t]he "grain" is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs'[40] — i.e. the sense of the material being behind a voice, rather than the disembodied, depersonalized, more conventional expressivity of a highly trained singer's 'pheno-song'. Up until this point in the episode's musical sequence, one has been drawn toward the grains, plural, of the show's bodies and thus what might awkwardly be termed their geno-polylogues. Now the entire party stops, for the most part, and responds to the grain, singular, of Joe's monologic voice. Hitherto, the audio-viewer may have been attracted to the collectivity of this family through musical affect; henceforth, affect draws the audio-viewer into the collective and toward that collective's shared recognition of the value of an individual working-class life.

The fact that Joe's ballad is about the transitory nature of existence, and that his voice carries one into an appreciation of his particular body and its previously (by the other characters) neglected presence, is a poignant reminder of the manner in which an entwining of affect and representation lies at the heart of key functions of many works of art. As Michael L. Klein argues in his chapter for this collection, and as a number of film theorists have advocated for some

[39] Miguel Mera, 'Materialising Film Music', in Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music* (Cambridge, 2016). My thanks to Miguel Mera for allowing me early sight of this essay.

[40] Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London, 1977), 188.

time,[41] while affect and signification operate along different channels in terms of their engagement of a perceiver's embodied consciousness, our responses to such texts are a 'mixed alloy', affective and hermeneutic. As a critic one should sometimes, Klein advocates, 'put them back together and witness how they interact' — although for theorists and analysts, it will be vital, at other times, to enforce the pretence of separation, in order more clearly to focus on the material components of the alloy. *The Royle Family* provides compelling evidence of the need, on occasion, interpretively to consider such interactions through the show's contestation of the stereotypical effects of a common act of misrepresentation: British televisual depictions of working class lives. The subversive potency of the show resides in its canny channelling of affect and signification, diverting both along parallel, political trajectories. Music analysts should be similarly canny.

[41] See Reyland, 'Screen Music, Narrative and/or Affect', for a summary of these positions.