Striking A Chord: Radiohead And The Resonance Of Alienation

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STRIKING A CHORD:
RADIOHEAD AND THE RESONANCE OF ALIENATION

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Honors Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the
Communication Department & Honors Scholars Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Carroll College

May 2002
This thesis has been approved for honors recognition by the Department of Communication.

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Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy.

~Ludwig van Beethoven
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people without whom this project simply could not have happened. First and foremost, I must thank my committee members for offering their time, insight, and expertise. Mr. Brent Northup, as always, pushed me at every juncture to think harder, reflect more deeply, and of course, to listen attentively. I am truly grateful to have had a thesis director who allowed me the freedom to explore one of my passions through this project. Dr. Charlotte Jones, perhaps the most left-brained member of my committee, prevented me from going completely insane with well-timed tidbits of rationality and encouragement. And finally, Mr. Mac Randall, a man who, incidentally, I’ve never actually met, generously shared his time and Radiohead knowledge through the modern wonder of Internet technology (ah, the irony . . .). Any merit this paper might hold is largely due to these three people.

Although they were not official members of my committee, Mr. Rick Moritz and Mr. Murphy Fox also deserve many thanks. Both of them offered invaluable suggestions and guidance.

I am also endlessly thankful for all the non-academic support I received during this process. My friends and roommates Tamzen Thrailkill, Kelly Ronningen, and Erin Solko are nothing less than angels for their continual patience and encouragement. Tamzen, in particular, must have said a hundred times, “Oh Mel, you’re doing fine,” while Kelly, my favorite editor, learned way more about Radiohead than she ever wanted to know. Also, many thanks to Jennifer Stephens and Jamie Dolan for sharing their own thesis experiences with me, because misery really does love company.

Last but certainly not least, I must thank my family – for everything.
ABSTRACT

In the nine years since their first single “Creep” became something of a cult phenomenon, the British band Radiohead has garnered the attention and acclaim of literally millions. With so many people listening to their music, they have obviously struck a chord with a fairly wide audience. But what is it, exactly, that Radiohead is saying through their music? This study sheds light on that question through a textual analysis of the band’s lyrics from each of their five studio albums. From this analysis, three major – and interrelated – themes emerge: alienation, negative self-concept, and the struggles of modern life. All of these issues are of paramount concern within the band’s lyrics, and presumably, because so many people are listening to Radiohead, they are also relevant to an ever-increasing segment of the population. Thus, through analysis of Radiohead, we are led not only to a clearer understanding of a particular band and the modern music industry they participate in, but also to broad realizations regarding our modern social world as it is reflected through the lens of the mass media.
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**Preface**

Although this study was initially undertaken as a mass media analysis of Radiohead, over the last year, it has gradually evolved into a vehicle of personal introspection as well. Obviously, immersing oneself in a single band’s lyrics for countless hours requires no small amount of passion for both music and that band - and fortunately, this was something I had in abundance. Thus, I approached this project with little more than a love for Radiohead’s music, but I walk away from it with a better understanding of myself through them.

Undoubtedly, the biggest question I faced in framing the paper was “Why should we care about Radiohead?” While I was able to come to a conclusion in terms of mass media effects, this failed to resolve the more personal corollary to the question: “Why do I care so much about Radiohead?” The study itself argues that alienation – in all its various forms – is an inherent part of Radiohead’s music, and thus, it is a relevant issue for their extensive audience. However, this conclusion failed to ring completely true on a personal level. Quite the contrary, listening to Radiohead has always been uplifting and enjoyable. My immediate answer, then, to the question of, “Does Radiohead represent an alienating experience?” is a definitive no. It was only after I reframed my understanding of my relationship to their music that I was able to reconcile this disparity.

The alienation inherent in Radiohead’s music is certainly something I identify with. Having struggled with loneliness, depression, and anxiety in my own life, I do feel a kinship to Thom Yorke when he sings, for example, “Limb by limb and tooth by tooth/Tearing up inside of me/Every day every hour/I wish that I was bullet proof.” This and numerous other lyrics throughout their repertoire reflect rather lonely thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Yet listening to Radiohead, being serenaded by someone who is at least equally as alienated, I come to feel that I am not, in fact, completely alone. There are others out there who also feel, at times, “the emptiest of feelings.” Thus, while Radiohead’s lyrics are clearly about alienation, they serve as accompaniment – not reinforcement – to my own emotions, and, I would dare say, those of other listeners’ as well. Radiohead’s music is not alienating in itself. Instead, it serves as welcome company in an alienating world.
INTRODUCTION

The British band Radiohead burst onto the music scene in 1993 with their hit single, “Creep.” As the song began to catch fire in the United States, it quickly became the anthem of disconcerted American youth, reaching number two on the Modern Rock charts and number 34 on the Hot 100 Singles chart. Today, almost a decade later, “Creep” remains the band’s most successful radio single. However, this in no way relegated this five-man band from Oxford to one-hit wonder status. Quite the contrary, they have become something of a legend in the music world. Through the course of nine years, the band has released five studio albums: Pablo Honey (1993), The Bends (1995), OK Computer (1997), Kid A (2000), and Amnesiac (2001), (for complete discography, see Appendix A), which have earned, more or less, ever-increasing praise.

The first section of this study considers the impact Radiohead has had on music critics, fellow musicians, and listeners alike. In light of their prevalence, we also discuss the possible benefits and implications of a better understanding of this band, particularly when they are viewed as representatives of a relatively large group of individuals (i.e.: their listeners). The study then looks in-depth at three major, interrelated themes in Radiohead’s lyrics. Finally, in the conclusion, some preliminary speculation as to the nature of the relationship between Radiohead’s message, their audience in particular, and society in general is undertaken.

Influence

Critics. Despite their relatively short career, Radiohead has garnered much critical acclaim. There are a significant number of both music journalists and publications which hold the band in high esteem. For instance, they have recently been dubbed one of “the best young bands in the world” (Farley, 2000, p. 104), and even as early as May 1997, before their multiple award-winning third album was released, the band was named “one of the U.K.’s most singular modern rock bands” (Sexton, 1997, p. 1). Indeed, in a review of their most recent album, Amnesiac, Rob Sheffield of Rolling Stone asked, “Who else can touch these guys for the kings-of-rock crown?” (2001, p. 36) Presumably, such a statement suggests that Radiohead may be on par with some of the greatest rock musicians of the century. Such comparisons are, in fact, explicitly stated by
another Rolling Stone journalist, David Fricke, who calls them “classic-rock thrillers . . . in the tradition of the Beatles in the late 1960s; the early, galactic-rock Pink Floyd; and R.E.M. (pick any era)” (2000, p. 85). To be compared to such well-respected bands indicates that Radiohead is, at least according to some, a modern classic.

Such critical comparisons are due in part to the band’s willingness to step into the musical unknown – a tendency which is particularly visible in their later work. The connection between this daring attitude and their ultimate success is pointed out in the cover story of the August 2, 2001 issue of Rolling Stone. Here, Fricke states that “Radiohead, the most inventive British rock group of the last decade, are now one of the most successful and uncompromising bands in the world” (p. 44). Clearly, the band’s innovativeness has earmarked them for success. In a review of Amnesiac, Billboard music journalist Bradley Bambarger describes Radiohead as “a rock band with something meaningful to say, saying it in a truly contemporary, utterly individual language” (2001, p. 22). A similar comment regarding the band’s innovative style was made by a different music critic only one year prior. “Radiohead now stands alone at the forefront of experimental rock with Kid A,” Michael Paoletta wrote, “defiantly tearing up the blueprints of guitar-based music and reassembling them in awe-inspiring fashion” (2000, p. 22). If the perception of music critics is to be trusted, Radiohead’s innovative style is having a definite impact on modern music.

Respect for the band on a critical level is also displayed by their list of honors and awards. The band won ‘Best Alternative Album of the Year’ at the Grammy Awards in 2000 for Kid A and in 1997 for OK Computer. These albums also garnered nominations in the Best Album of the Year category, but lost out to slightly more mainstream acts – Steely Dan and Bob Dylan, respectively. The band was honored at 1998’s Mtv Music Awards, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers Awards, and Brit Awards, as well as ’97’s Mtv Europe Awards. So many honors to their credit is further proof that the band has managed to impress.

Another manifestation of their critical acclaim appears in the form of nominations in Best of the Year and/or Best of the ’90s lists from various publications. OK Computer was named best rock album of 1997 by both Rolling Stone and People Weekly, and one of the singles from this album, “Let Down” was chosen as best song of the year by
Radiohead. Even more impressive, both OK Computer and The Bends were named one of Rolling Stone’s top albums of the 90s. As justification for choosing The Bends for this list, the team of reviewers even went so far as to write “U2 would have sold crack to nuns to make this record” (Fricke et. al., 1999, p. 58). Similar honors have been conferred on the band by Blender, Melody Maker, and the New York Times, as well. Indeed, Radiohead seems to be having a definite impact on music critics.

**Musicians.** Radiohead’s success extends beyond the ivory-towered walls of critics, however. Although it is difficult to tabulate, there is evidence that fellow musicians have also been influenced by Radiohead. Just as music critics seem to respect the band for their innovativeness and originality, so too, it seems, do other bands. R.E.M. singer Michael Stipe, for instance, has said that Radiohead is “simply staking their claim as their own band, making music they want to make . . . And fucking kudos for that. It’s not easy to listen only to yourself and react accordingly” (Fricke, 2001, p. 44).

Indeed, if imitation is truly the sincerest form of flattery, then Radiohead has numerous admirers among musicians themselves. The last few years have seen a wealth of bands from both England and the U.S. producing albums with decidedly Radiohead-like sounds. Travis, Coldplay, Muse, Palo Alto, Remy Zero, Ours, and Granddaddy, among others, are all remarkably similar, stylistically, to Radiohead. Perhaps not coincidentally, the band Palo Alto, whose self-titled album could easily be mistaken for Radiohead – era The Bends – even shares a name with one of the band’s b-sides. Whether or not their name was purposefully chosen as something of a tribute to Radiohead, their self-titled, debut album shows obvious musical influence. This is just one example of Radiohead’s effect on fellow musicians, however, with the extent of their influence on modern music being equally impressive. The quiet progression of songs such as “Fake Plastic Trees” can be heard in much of Travis’ and Coldplay’s music, for instance, while the angrier ferocity of “Vegetable” is a strong influence in Ours’ and Muse’s compositions.

**Fans.** Perhaps the strongest – and most important – proof that Radiohead are indeed, the “kings of rock,” is their extensive fan-base. The band’s popularity among music lovers is demonstrated by their record sales. Their most recent Album, Amnesiac, reached number two on the Billboard 200. Impressive, indeed, but not their best showing
ever, on October 21, 2000, *Kid A* debuted at number one. Such a high debut on the charts is perhaps due in part to anticipation created by the success of their previous release, *OK Computer*, which went platinum (1,000,000 sales) only a year after its release. With this type of sales record it is clear that the band is well liked by literally millions of people. To be sure, such figures in no way rival those of Britney Spears or the Backstreet Boys, but for a remarkably private and non-mainstream band, it’s not too shabby. Actually, Radiohead could probably be considered more successful than these teen pop sensations in real terms, since their success is, for the most part, not due to commercial marketing ploys. For example, the release of *Kid A* was unaccompanied by either singles or videos, and yet, even in the absence of attention from radio and MTV, it was quite successful.

In addition to album sales, Radiohead’s selling power among fans can be seen in other areas as well. For years now, the band has been doing sold-out arena tours around the world, attracting thousands of fans whenever and wherever they play, with their concerts almost immediately selling out for venues such as Madison Square Garden, The Hollywood Bowl, and Colorado’s famed Red Rocks. Biographies, on both paper and video, have also been popular in recent years, presumably because there are wide numbers of people interested in “The Radiohead Story.” This desire to learn more about the band is particularly visible on the Net, where no fewer than 40 sites appear. Finally, the success of Radiohead’s imitators, discussed previously, can be attributed, to some extent, to their forerunner’s commercial selling power. The numerous Radiohead-like bands on the music scene today are successful partially because they are heirs to the originals’ fan-base. From records to paraphernalia, then, Radiohead’s network of fans speaks with their pocketbooks.

**Rationale**

Numerous theories in the field of mass communication have attempted to find an adequate model which might best describe the complex relationship between media and society. From the magic bullet theory, in which media is seen as an irresistible and powerful force, to the limited effects theory, in which media’s influence is severely tempered by other factors, theories throughout the ages have provided numerous viewpoints from which to view media’s place in our lives. All of these theories do,
however, have one thing in common: they all acknowledge that there is some relationship between media and its receivers, whatever form or function this relationship might take. Whether we accept a cause-and-effect sequence between media and human behaviors, believe that media’s audience engages in selective exposure by seeking out communication which reinforces their own world view, or advocate some other understanding of this relationship, it is clear that the various forms of media which we are exposed to – or expose ourselves to – can speak volumes about us as individuals and as a society.

This broad view of mass media’s place in our lives, then, serves to answer the question of “Why should we care what message Radiohead is sending?” Insofar as literally millions of people – from critics to fellow musicians to fans – are being drawn to and/or exposed to this band, understanding of the message they communicate is valuable in the interest of better understanding both ourselves and the social world we inhabit.
METHODS

As musicians participating in the current music industry, Radiohead has available to them numerous channels through which to communicate with their audience. Liner notes, music videos, live performances, interviews, and authorized biographies all convey messages to their listeners. However, the most vital mode of communication between the band and their fans is the music itself. As a first step toward understanding the message conveyed through the band’s music, then, this study concentrates on a textual analysis of Radiohead’s lyrics. Because some of the lyrical content of their work, particularly on recent albums, is difficult to understand, lyrics were first obtained from a reliable Radiohead web site (www.followmearound.com). These lyrics were carefully checked against liner notes when available or against the actual recording. When significant disagreement arose between the web site’s version and the auditory version, the latter interpretation was accepted.

After obtaining the lyrics from the band’s five studio albums, content analysis of each of these songs was undertaken. In total, this studio opus includes 57 songs, two of which are instrumental, and two of which — “Morning Bell” and “Morning Bell Amnesiac” — are virtually lyrically identical. This analysis amounted to approximately 120 pages (for sample analytical notes, see Appendix B) from which major themes emerged. Although the subject matter in Radiohead’s songs is quite varied, there are three issues in particular which stand out above the rest with these themes being expressed in a variety of ways in the majority of Radiohead’s songs. These three themes are discussed in the “Results” section.

It should be noted that while this study does endeavor to illuminate the major, underlying messages of Radiohead’s lyrics, their words alone are not necessarily representative of their musical message as a whole. Clearly, verbal communication presents only a partial view of the band’s message, and lyrical analysis considers merely the content level of the band’s communication, ignoring the “relational” depth which the music itself lends. Tone, speed, rhythm, harmony — in short, the actual instrumental sounds — all have a definite impact on the band’s message. Thus, a complete, well-rounded description of Radiohead’s message would necessarily include these other aspects. Furthermore, although some speculation is offered as to the nature of the
relationship between Radiohead’s lyrical message, their audience, and society, admittedly, this discussion is entirely conjectural. Any solid, proven corollary would require significant further research. Thus, in both its analysis and its speculation, this paper is merely a starting point – the first of many entries in mass media’s Radiohead file.
RESULTS

The three main themes which emerge from analysis of Radiohead’s lyrics are alienation, negative self-concept, and the struggles of modern life. The first of these themes – alienation – is both the most obvious and the most prevalent. Thus, it can be seen to represent “the problem” addressed within the band’s lyrics. For this reason, we will look first at this theme. With an understanding of the over-arching issue of alienation, we then examine what the band often deems its main effect: negative self-concept. Finally, we’ll turn to what seems to be the cause of this alienation: the struggles of modern life. Although discussion of these three themes within Radiohead’s lyrics could certainly constitute an entire book in itself, in the interest of brevity, we will examine only those songs from each album which best exemplify the subject at hand. However, since it is perhaps the broadest and most prevalent theme, alienation is covered in slightly greater depth.

Alienation: The Problem

By far the most pervasive theme in Radiohead’s repertoire is a sense of alienation. From Pablo Honey to Amnesiac, it seems that the narrator in many of the band’s lyrics is overcome with feelings of disconnection, isolation, and estrangement.

Pablo Honey. The band’s breakout hit, “Creep,” provides ample evidence of alienation. Here, the narrator laments the fact that the woman he cares about is essentially oblivious to him. “I want you to notice when I’m not around,” he states, indicating that she fails to acknowledge his existence. He also mentions that he is unable to establish eye contact with her. Clearly, the lack of this form of nonverbal communication reinforces his isolation. To look someone “in the eye” is an important method of establishing human connection. Yet, this is a connection that the narrator apparently lacks. The feeling of alienation is also conveyed through the voice and tone of the song in that the narrator seems to be primarily engaged in watching, rather than participating. He states that she “float[s] like a feather/In a beautiful world,” suggesting that he is merely a disconnected observer who does not actually take part in this “beautiful world.” Later, the character’s alienation is supported by his query, “What the
hell am I doing here?” and the resounding answer, “I don’t belong here.” His feeling of simply not fitting in is an obvious manifestation of alienation.

“Vegetable” tells a similar story of an individual who is socially isolated. Here, the chorus shows the narrator being abandoned. “Everytime you’re running out of here/Everytime you’re running I get the fear,” he states. These lines estrangement from a particular social relationship. The narrator’s isolation is further reinforced by his adamant statement, “I will not control myself/I spit on the hand that feeds me.” This type of behavior is in opposition to social roles and norms, and illustrates the character as unwilling to conform to the expectations of society. This is essentially another form of isolation, however in this instance, it is self-selected.

Social isolation can also be seen in the song “I Can’t,” which contains the rather vivid line, “If you give up on me now I’ll be gutted like I’ve never been before.” Being “given up on” suggests impending alienation and estrangement. Interestingly, the abandonment which is seemingly imminent in the narrator’s life is connected to a similar feeling of alienation, this time from himself. In the first verse of the song, he is seen apologizing for being mildly out of control. It seems that he can’t manage to keep his emotions in check, since they keep “rattling [his] cage.” This personification of his “doubts” suggests that something of a battle is occurring inside him. Thus, he is not only soon to be alienated from someone he cares about, but he’s also estranged from himself.

“Blow Out” provides a strong sense of alienation as well. The character here is plagued by an interesting phenomenon in which, apparently, everything he touches “turns to stone.” The denotation of “stone” suggests some qualities of his character and life. Just as stones are generally cold, inanimate, and friendless, so too, assumedly, is this individual. Furthermore, this comparison renders him virtually inhuman, and thus, naturally separated from the rest of society. The background chorus goes on to describe him as being “(all wrapped up in cotton wool)/(all wrapped up in sugar-coated pills).” In these lines, “cotton wool” insulates his body just as “sugar-coated pills” insulate his mind from the external social world. It is an interesting side note that both of these forms of insulation are essentially unreal: they serve as synthetic imitations which only reinforce his disconnection from the external world.
The Bends. The title track from Radiohead’s second album provides evidence of disconnection as well. Here, the narrator is struck with loneliness. “Where are you now, when I need you?” he asks. This song, like some on the band’s first album, tells the story of an individual left behind, alienated from someone he needs and consequently, “Alone on an aeroplane.” This last bit of information is interesting in that it suggests the nature of his alienation. He is not literally alone on a plane, but is instead surrounded by strangers who are more or less oblivious to him. He is, essentially, alone in a crowd. His isolation is further demonstrated when he expresses a wish to “be part of the human race.” The character seems to recognize, at least implicitly, that social interaction is a necessary prerequisite for humanity. Naturally then, his isolation from others leads him to feel less human, a feeling which is reinforced by the fact that his peers seem more than willing to witness his demise. “They brought in the CIA, the tanks and the whole marines/To blow me away, to blow me sky high,” he states. He is alienated to such an extensive degree that he is no longer even the recipient of basic human compassion.

The story of a daredevil who’s willing to do almost anything for “recognition” is the subject of “High & Dry.” In this song, the main character is described as being willing to kill himself for the acknowledgment of others. This character is a social pariah, standing on the outskirts of society and attempting daring feats, such as “two jumps in a week” and “flying along on [his] motorcycle” in the interest of impressing his peers and gaining their acceptance. This desperation implies social isolation, which is reinforced by the later line “You will be the one who cannot talk.” Being unable to verbally communicate with those around him would naturally result in no small degree of loneliness. The extent of his isolation, however, doesn’t become clear until a few lines later, when the singer informs him, “They’re the ones who’ll hate you . . . They’re the ones who’ll spit at you.” Here, as in “Stop Whispering,” the image of being spit on by an unaccepting and unwelcoming society reinforces the pervading sense of alienation.

Interestingly, “(nice dream)” demonstrates alienation through what it does not say. The song begins with a rather utopian vision of belonging, in which the narrator is loved “like . . . a brother,” and his wishes are fulfilled by the loving individuals surrounding him. However, this peaceful vision is shattered by the sarcastic message of the chorus, in which the audience learns that this description is merely a “nice dream.” It
would seem that social isolation is inescapable, and to deny this is simply an illusion. Being part of a social group is not an easily accessible privilege. “If you think you belong enough,” the lyrics state, beware that this is merely a “nice dream.” The irony and sarcasm utilized in this song, then, presents a snapshot of a lonely and desolate society.

“Bullet Proof” describes, in none too subtle terms, society’s abuse of the narrator. “Wax me/Mold me/Heat the pins and stab them in,” he states. Such abuse suggests that he is neither cared for nor accepted by his peers. Essentially, the song presents the ongoing struggle between this particular individual and the rest of society, with him on the losing end. Thus, it is in this state of defeat that he says, “So pay me money and take a shot/Leadfill the hole in me.” Taken literally or metaphorically, the vision of society shooting at one of its members obviously suggests that he is shunned and isolated. Not surprisingly, he blames his current, downtrodden state on his persecutors. “You have turned me into this,” the singer states. The exact description of “this” is implied later on when he admits to being “All surrogate and bullet proof.” Both of these descriptors imply a lack of genuine humanity which serves to reinforce his alienation from the rest of society.

The alienation presented in “Black Star” occurs in a somewhat more concrete form than in many other Radiohead songs. The song tells the story of a romantic relationship which is slowly unraveling. This is occurring namely because of faulty communication. “The troubled words of a troubled mind I try to understand what is eating you,” the singer states. This line indicates that there is a breach of understanding between these two partners and consequently, they are becoming increasingly isolated from one another. Their isolation is all too complete by the end of the song, when the relationship has ended. “I get on the train and I just stay in the back now that I don’t think of you,” he says in the final verse. Not only does this line suggest that they are alienated from each other, but it is also interesting to note that such circumstances lead to more general isolation from society at large. It seems reasonable to assume that since he’s sitting “in the back” of the train, he is probably not interacting much with other individuals. His extensive isolation is driven home by the line in the chorus which states,
“Blame it on the satellite that beams me home,” an image which suggests that his life is very much an alien experience.

**OK Computer.** In “Subterranean Homesick Alien,” the alienation is apparent even in the title. The song is concerned mainly with how an alien from another planet might view life on Earth, and this is a vision that the narrator can identify with. According to him, human beings are likely to be seen as “. . . weird creatures/Who lock up their spirits/Drill holes in themselves/And live for their secrets.” This vision clearly provides evidence of human isolation. It is nearly impossible to imagine a well-integrated society, rich in human interconnectedness, in which its individual members “lock up their spirits” as such. Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that the song itself shows the speaker dreaming wistfully of being taken aboard an alien ship, as the line “I wish that they’d swoop down in a country lane” indicates. This desire is the result of his feeling completely out of place within the confines of the “uptight” human experience. The fact that he identifies so strongly with the views of “aliens” is further proof of his own degree of alienation from humankind. He is even willing to give up his earthling friends in favor of whatever comfort he might obtain from alien company. “I’d tell all my friends/But they’d never believe me . . . They’d shut me away/But I’d be all right,” he states. Overall then, this song portrays a man so uncomfortable with other human beings that he desires nothing more than escape to the companionship of aliens. He is, essentially, an alien himself.

“Karma Police” opens with the singer demanding that another man be arrested because “He talks in maths/He buzzes like a fridge/He’s like a detuned radio.” Perhaps part of the reason that the narrator is so frustrated with this particular individual is because it is impossible to communicate with him. The narrator can’t understand what this man is saying because he speaks in “maths.” Consequently, it seems that these two individuals are alienated from one another, a condition which leads the narrator to alienation from himself as well. “For a minute there, I lost myself,” he states. This final disconnection from self, however brief it might be, reinforces his social estrangement.

Somewhat in opposition to “Karma Police” is the friendship portrayed in “Climbing up the Walls.” Here, the narrator apparently desires to maintain a relationship, but is rebuffed. “Do not cry out or hit the alarm/You know we’re friends ‘til we die,” he
states. The fact that whomever he is speaking to would be inclined to metaphorically “hit the alarm” suggests that the narrator is a social pariah. His alienation is demonstrated by the fact that nobody wants to be his friend. Naturally, this results in loneliness, a feeling which he readily admits to later in the song. He describes himself as having “... the smell of a local man/Who’s got the loneliest feeling.” This is a somewhat ironic image in that a “local” is generally fairly well known and accepted within a given society. However, this is apparently not the singer’s experience. Instead, he is alone and lonely because he has been ostracized from society.

**Kid A.** The title “How to Disappear Completely” seems to parody an instruction manual, suggesting that it might give direction on how to totally renounce one’s physical existence. And indeed, self-renunciation as a form of personal alienation is quite visible in the song’s lyrics. In this song, the narrator desires escape from himself. “That there, that’s not me,” he says in denial. He seems to be observing himself and his life from an objective perspective, suggesting a sense of disconnection. His lack of acceptance of his own situation is a manifestation of his extensive alienation. “I’m not here/This isn’t happening,” he says in the chorus. This serves as merely another denial of his life circumstances which illustrates his estrangement from himself, and presumably, those around him. To be sure, the very desire to “disappear completely” is evidence of a sense of alienation.

Disconnection occurs again in the song “In Limbo,” this time in the metaphor of being lost. “I’m lost at sea,” the singer states. His condition of complete disorientation is comparable to, if not directly caused by, social isolation. He is, literally and/or metaphorically, lost, at least in part because there is no one around to offer him direction. Presumably, he has nobody to turn to for guidance, indicating almost complete alienation from others. This estrangement applies to himself as well. “I’ve lost my way,” the character states. This phrasing suggests that he has accepted blame for his own lack of direction. Unable to navigate through his own life, he is much like a compass which has lost true north. From his point of view, the world is very much “a fantasy world” comprised of numerous “trapdoors” through which he is likely to fall at any moment. This is an individual who is hopelessly lost, with no chance of obtaining direction from either internal or external sources because of his complete alienation.
Alienation is also apparent in “Morning Bell” since it is reportedly a song about divorce. Throughout the song, the narrator states “Release me,” a request which suggests impending, if not already commenced, separation. Indeed, his very demand to be “released” indicates a growing schism between him and the addressee. They have apparently become so alienated from one another that they have finally settled on separation as the only feasible solution. Insofar as the very subject of the song is divorce, it is deeply concerned with the issue of alienation. This can be seen in the command to “Cut the kids in half.” Although this statement seems rather gruesome, it serves as a metaphor for joint custody. Thus, not only are the two divorced individuals affected by their separation, but the solution they have chosen also causes alienation for others. The background vocals at the close of the song reinforce this feeling as well. “The lights are on but nobody’s home,” the song states. Here, since “home” is, in general, a metaphor for comfort and belonging within the company of others, the obvious absence of a warm and welcoming hearth reinforces the pervading alienation described throughout the song.

**Amnesiac.** The dialectic of narrator versus the rest of the world presented in “You and Whose Army?” is also demonstrative of alienation. The song opens with a challenge: “Come on, come on/You think you drive me crazy.” Since it is not made clear exactly who the addressee is in this song, it seems reasonable to assume that it applies, at least implicitly, to society in general. Thus, this character is posed in strong opposition to the rest of the world. Considering the boastful nature of his challenge, he seems relatively unfazed by his outcast standing, yet it is nonetheless a position of remarkable solitude. His alienation is demonstrated even further by the mention of the fact that he is entering this metaphorical battle astride a “ghost horse.” This implies that his perception of the situation and/or of himself is somewhat inaccurate. Just as he is disconnected from his enemies, so too is he out of touch with himself. It seems then, that his rather cocky attitude is merely a defense mechanism against extensive alienation.

“Knives Out” continues this message of social isolation in that it tells the tale of an individual who is virtually abandoned. “I want you to know/He’s not coming back,” the narrator states with brutal honesty at the beginning of the song. Clearly, whomever he is speaking to is suffering from no small degree of alienation. This point is driven home later in the song when the singer tells him, “If you’d been a dog/They would have
drowned you at birth.” The severity of this statement suggests that this rather unfortunate individual is excluded from society to such an extent that he is subject to death. Whatever the reason for this vulnerability, he is obviously so alienated that he is viewed as utterly worthless by the rest of society.

The final song in Radiohead’s studio repertoire, “Life in a Glasshouse,” offers little relief from the pervasive theme of alienation. The story told here is of an individual “in trouble with [their] only friend.” Obviously, such a circumstance is a fairly lonely one. The main character is described as watching his sole friend “paper the window panes,” an action which is illustrative of isolation. Without the human connection which this friendship provided, the narrator becomes less than human. He describes humanity, particularly himself, as being “packed like frozen food and battery hens,” indicating a feeling that the society in which he lives places very little value on the human spirit. This is perhaps the reason that lynching is permissible – and even desirable. “Once again we are hungry for a lynching,” one line of the song states, suggesting that alienation is so pervasive within this particular society that human life becomes ultimately worthless.

The narrator’s sense of isolation is only made worse by the absence of human communication. He states that “Well of course I’d like to sit around and chat/Well of course I’d like to stay and chew the fat,” yet he refuses to do so for the simple reason that “someone’s listening in.” Such paranoia implies separation between self and other which is carried out to such an extensive degree that he is forced, both internally and externally, into lonely, disconnected isolation.

Given such extensive display of alienation throughout Radiohead’s repertoire, it is clear that this is, indeed, a major theme within their body of work. Estrangement, disconnection, and isolation from self and/or from others occur in both explicit statement and implicit suggestion in at least half of the songs on every album. Such a majority is fair evidence that alienation is a significant issue in Radiohead’s lyrics.

**Negative Self-concept: The Result**

The prevalence of alienation within Radiohead’s repertoire parallels another common and ultimately related theme. Many of their songs are written from the point of view of someone who suffers from negative self-concept. This is manifested in
numerous ways, including defeatism, low confidence, and sometimes even suicidal thoughts. While this particular trend is interesting in itself, what is perhaps more important is its apparent relationship to alienation. Through the narratives presented by Radiohead, it is clear that poor self-concept often grows from social isolation.

**Pablo Honey.** The extensive alienation demonstrated in “Creep” is intricately connected to the narrator’s negative feelings of himself. Because the woman he so admires is completely oblivious to him, he comes to feel that he is unworthy. “I wish I was special/You’re so fucking special,” he states, implicitly drawing a comparison between himself and her and coming up short. Insofar as he is alienated from her elevated status, real or imagined, he naturally perceives himself in a negative light. She is untouchable, he is isolated, and the result is his rather melancholy conclusion that “I’m a creep/I’m a weirdo.” Essentially, he has come to see himself this way because of his estrangement from this “angel.” The connection between such alienation and his poor self-image is further strengthened by the rest of the chorus. “What the hell am I doing here?” he asks, “I don’t belong here.” This question, and its subsequent answer, shows a lack of self-esteem which grows directly out of his sense of not belonging. As she is seen “running out again” at the end of the song, the narrator becomes ultimately self-defeated. “Whatever makes you happy/Whatever you want,” he states, apparently acquiescing his own desires to hers. Out of the oblivion and abandonment which he experiences in their almost non-existent relationship springs his construct of himself as a “creep.”

“Thinking About You” clearly displays the narrator’s negative definition of himself in his statement that “I’m still no one.” Apparently, he comes to this conclusion after the demise of a valued relationship. In the absence of this relationship, or rather, in the midst of his alienation, he feels poignantly his personal insignificance. Although the inclusion of the word “still” in this statement might imply that he had these feelings before her departure, the fact that he is brooding over his self-worth at this particular juncture indicates that his current state of isolation has only served to drive the point home. Indeed, there seems to be a link between this statement and the rather bitter query, “What do you care?” The fact that she doesn’t care and has left him alone and lonely has justified, if not precipitated, his judgment of himself as “no one.”
Yet another example of the link between alienation and poor self-concept occurs in "I Can’t." In a single line, the connection between these two themes is clearly drawn: "If you give up on me now," the narrator states, "I'll be gutted like I’ve never been before." Although it isn’t made clear exactly what he means by being "gutted," it is reasonable to assume that this suggests a negative view of himself. That the singer imagines himself as ineffectual and/or lifeless due to her possible abandonment is proof of the link between degree of self-esteem and social isolation. Ultimately, the realization that "I Can’t" stems from feelings of incapability that the alienating aspects of this relationship have stirred.

The Bends. The relationship between poor self-concept and alienation described in "Fake Plastic Trees" is very much similar to that of "Creep." Here, the narrator lives in a world of plastic perfection, and consequently, all the people around him are also seen as perfect. This, in turn, sets him apart, and the effects of his estrangement are detrimental to his self-worth. Throughout the song, the characters are seen valiantly attempting perfection. However, the narrator is merely "worn out" by all of this, and because he is so different and separate from their ideals, he begins to view himself as somehow inferior. "If I could be who you wanted," he states wistfully at the end of the song, implying that he would perhaps like to change but is incapable of it. Thus, his inability to fit in leaves him feeling devalued and uncomfortable with himself.

The inherent sarcasm of "(nice dream)" is a well-disguised hint at negative self-concept. The sarcastic tone displayed throughout the song can be interpreted as bitterness at being alienated. However, it might also be extended a step further, suggesting an internalized belief by the narrator that he isn’t actually worthy of living out such a dream life. Essentially, exiled as he is from the company of others, he must consider the possibility that this status is due to the fact that something is inherently wrong with him. Once again, he is led to question himself because of the behavior of his peers.

OK Computer. Amidst the alienation described in "Let Down," the narrator comes to feel as if he is "crushed like a bug in the ground." The meaning of this phrase is indicated by the common connotations of bugs. Generally, we consider bugs insignificant and sometimes annoying creatures, and by analogy, it seems this is the way the narrator feels about himself. He is so insignificant that the rest of society has no
trouble “crushing” him as if he were as insignificant as an ant. That he even draws this analogy between himself and a bug suggests that he has, to some extent at least, internalized this view of himself as unimportant. Although he doesn’t state it outright, there is an undercurrent of negativity regarding his view of himself since he is capable of envisioning himself with “Shell smashed, juices flowing.” The indeterminable boundary between him and a bug in his own mind is displayed in the line “hysterical and useless,” a description which could easily apply to either subject. As a result, then, of perhaps the ultimate form of alienation – being crushed like a bug – the narrator’s self-identity suffers.

In “The Tourist,” the sense of alienation created by being barked at as if he were a ghost leads directly to the main character’s habit of calling himself “Idiot.” Apparently, it is through such social interaction as this, in which he is able to imagine how he might appear to others, that he comes to see himself in this negative light. This marks the beginning of a self-identification process in which he bestows a negatively connotated name on himself. His definition of himself as an “Idiot” is the result of feelings of pervasive alienation.

Kid A. Since the primary form of alienation displayed in “How to Disappear Completely” is estrangement from oneself, the link between this and a negative self-concept is clear. The personal denial displayed in lines such as “that’s not me,” indicates that the speaker does not accept himself and/or the situation he is in. This denial is further supported in his habit of wishful thinking. “I walk through walls/I float down the Liffey,” he states. Here, imagining himself with such superhuman powers indicates that he is uncomfortable with his all too human identity. The construction of an idealized lens through which to view the world, then, serves as a defense mechanism which allows him first to ignore his negative perceptions of himself, and subsequently, to ignore the alienation from self which is so closely related.

The mention of “Red wine and sleeping pills” which opens “Motion Picture Soundtrack” serves as another example of negative self-concept. Obviously, the combination of these two substances connotes suicide, and from this information, it is reasonable to assume that the narrator is suffering from extreme mental anguish. He presumably no longer feels that his life is worth living – a self-definition which
demonstrates much negativity. Not surprisingly, this suicidal state is the direct result of alienation from a particular loved one. He even goes so far as to imagine that these two substances, and by analogy suicide itself, will “help [him] get back to [this estranged person’s] arms.” According to his warped logic, then, suicide is the most direct route out of his uncomfortable state of alienation. It is his pervading sense of isolation which precipitates poor self-worth to such an extent that he would consider ending his own life.

Amnesiac. “I Might Be Wrong” displays negative self-concept as well. This is demonstrated by the opening line of the song, in which the narrator twice repeats the song’s title with a definite tone of self-doubt. Clearly, he lacks confidence in himself, which in turn results in the timidity of his statement. Related to this sense of personal uncertainty is that of feeling useless. “What would I do?” he asks, “If I did not have you...” In posing this query, the narrator suggests that he would be ineffectual in the absence of the particular individual he’s addressing. Even the simple act of imagining being alienated in this manner can have a significant effect on self-concept. It is because of estrangement in this social relationship, real or imagined, that he is so visibly timid and unconfident.

The violence displayed in “Knives Out” is evidence of the presence of a negative definition of self as well. It is impossible to imagine that a statement such as “If you’d been a dog/They would have drowned you at birth,” could be interpreted in any but the most negative fashion. Presumably, even a hard-hearted person would feel such an insult to the core because it conveys the idea that their life is worthless. Not to depart from the prevailing trend, this song also connects poor self-concept to alienation in a cause-and-effect relationship. This hurtful message is being delivered from an external source, as is indicated by the second person singular, “you.” Furthermore, any two people who would have such a conversation are undoubtedly estranged from one another, to say the least. This insult then, can be seen to arise out of two such individuals’ collective and individual alienation, and reaches its end in the negative effect it almost certainly has on the receiver.

Given this evidence, it is clear that poor self-concept is an integral part of Radiohead’s message, arising, as it so often does, out of alienation in many forms. While not every lyric in which the character feels some amount of negativity about himself is
the direct cause of alienation, there does, nonetheless, seem to be substantial evidence to support the claim that poor self-concept is often the result of social isolation and estrangement.

**Modern Life: The Cause**

Although much of Radiohead’s lyrical content is concerned with the personal consequences of alienation, they also focus on its perceived cause. According to the band’s world view, conditions of modern-day life are largely responsible for this pervasive alienation. As a result of coping with technology, capitalism, materialism, etc. we often suffer from the most extreme form of alienation possible: a loss of our basic humanity.

*Pablo Honey.* “Ripcord” opens immediately with an attack on commercial society. “Soul destroyed with clever toys for little boys,” the singer states in the first line of the song. This line suggests that the human soul is ruined through the corrupting influence of various “toys.” Applying a more adult perspective to this loaded word, the narrator seems to feel that we are systematically robbed of our humanity by the compulsion for fast cars, huge boats, and grand houses. The song expands on this feeling of alienation, in fact, in the very metaphor around which it is structured. Put quite simply, it describes sky-diving as an analogy for life, except on this particular jump, “You’ve no ripcord.” Thus, it seems that we are dropped from an “aeroplane” – a perfectly modern analogy – and spend the remainder of our time plummeting toward death, alone and without the possibility of salvation.

Modern life is clearly the cause of the loneliness displayed in “Prove Yourself,” as well. Essentially, the character comes to feel as if he’s “better off dead” precisely because he “can’t afford to breathe in this time.” Although he doesn’t state exactly what it is about “this time” which is so stifling, a later line suggests that he is, indeed, referring to circumstances of modern day life. “I work, I bleed, I beg and pray,” the narrator says plaintively. It is a statement which is clearly connected to our modern, goal-oriented culture, in which society tells each individual, “prove yourself.” Unfortunately, the character’s apparent inability to do so has terrible consequences, in that he is led to feel
that his life is worthless. The demands of the modern world, then, are a significant factor in his inability to "sit without a gun in [his] hand."

**The Bends.** "Fake Plastic Trees" describes life in a rapidly advancing society as being increasingly composed of plastic. The opening lines of the song describe "Her green plastic watering can/For her fake Chinese rubber plant/In the fake plastic earth." This is a cold, austere environment, in which everything is the product of commercial production rather than human investment. Not surprisingly, the rapid encroachment of "plastic" is shown to endanger relationships and general humanity as well. "She lives with a broken man/A cracked polystyrene man," the narrator says, describing one of many characters coping with the sense of alienation imposed by modern life. It seems that the more plastic which surrounds these characters, the more they too become metaphorically plastic. This process continues until even love is no longer real. "She looks like the real thing/She tastes like the real thing/My fake plastic love," the singer laments. Submerged in such an uncomfortable, alienating world, by the end of the song, he must admit defeat. "It wears me out," the narrator states sadly, presumably submitting his humanity to the new, plastic world.

The unexpected negative effects of technological advancement are also a focus in "My Iron Lung." Although technology is supposed to be beneficial to our way of life, according to the narrator's experience, it can actually rob us of life. In this song, the narrator is hooked up to failing "life support," and this, in turn, becomes a metaphor for technology's effects. Despite the fact that he is connected to an "iron lung," he nonetheless suffers from "a lack of oxygen." Essentially, technology seems to be slowly sucking the life out of him, leaving personal destruction in its wake. This process is described in a more general sense in the lines "We scratch our eternal itch/A twentieth century bitch." Apparently, this individual sees the modern century as a complete nuisance. Technology is an annoyance, like the itch that just won't quit. However, we nonetheless remain naively grateful for "our iron lung," seemingly oblivious to the harmful effects it has on our humanity.

In "Street Spirit (fadeout)" a new aspect of modern life is introduced: the experience of suburbia. In the opening line of this song, the narrator describes "Rows of houses, all bearing down on me." This phrase conveys a definite sense of horror at the
suburban neighborhood, in which each house is alike, and in his point of view, as harmful as the last. He continues on to state, “I can feel their blue hands touching me.” Here, the symbolism of the color blue, connotative of sadness and depression, suggests that these feelings are related to suburbia as well. This encounter leaves him feeling significantly alienated, as is indicated by the lines, “This machine will, will not communicate/These thoughts and the strain I am under.” Living in suburbia, he has become extremely disconnected with himself. In addition, he is led to the conclusion that human beings are comparable to “dead birds” who “scream as they fight for life.” In this song, then, modern life is painted as an ultimately endless and fruitless struggle which leads directly to a “fade out.”

**OK Computer.** The detrimental effects of modern life on one’s sense of community are quite clear in “Let Down.” Here, the song opens with the lines, “Transport, motorways and tramlines/Starting and then stopping/Taking off and landing/The emptiest of feelings.” The connection of these two ideas – technological advancement and emptiness – indicate that the singer feels technology is anything but benevolent. Rather, it leads to feelings of extreme alienation. He seems to view his peers as victims of that value system which glorifies “motorways and tramlines,” and leaves people empty, “disappointed,” and “clinging on to bottles.” Despite the grand expectations for modernity, in his view, it is nothing but a “Let Down.” Rather than being uplifted by the constant stream of new inventions which modern life brings, humankind is instead, “Crushed like a bug in the ground.”

Nowhere in Radiohead’s repertoire is disgust for modern, suburban life so apparent as in “Fitter, Happier.” In what can only loosely be described as a song, a computer voice narrates qualities of this supposedly ideal existence over wistful background notes. The lyrics illustrate a “proper” life governed by suburban values: “fitter, happier/more productive/comfortable/not drinking too much/regular exercise at the gym (3 days a week)/getting on better with your associate employee contemporaries . . .” This idealized description of what life in the modern world should be continues for approximately two minutes before the computer narrator’s real perception of such an experience is finally revealed. At the end of the song, we are told that such a life is comparable to living “like a cat/tied to a stick/that’s driven into/frozen winter shit.” This
line suggests that our “calm” existence is actually merely docile, and ultimately inhuman. In fact, we as individuals are so absorbed with living out the suburban dream life that we each, as individuals, become nothing more than “a pig/in a cage/on antibiotics.” Such an analogy, illustrating society as stripped of humanity because of modern conditions, is evidence of the cause-and-effect relationship between contemporary life and alienation.

“No Surprises” is nearly as harsh as “Fitter, Happier” in its view of the expectations of modern life. Here, the effects of such an existence are rather gruesome. The opening of the song describes “A heart that’s full up like a landfill/A job that slowly kills you/Brui sses that won’t heal.” Once again, life in the modern world is seen as detrimental to basic humanity. Instead, it only leads slowly and unpleasantly to death, leaving people, in the meantime, “tired and unhappy,” as the second verse states. Given such an unpleasant existence, it is not surprising that the narrator desires nothing more than escape, and once again, this wish is manifested in suicidal thoughts. “I’ll take a quite life/A handshake of carbon monoxide,” he sings. This choice is rendered even more startling in light of the fact that the character has apparently managed to attain all those things which society deems desirable. Despite the fact that he has “Such a pretty house and such a pretty garden,” he nonetheless desires escape. Thus, the background voices at the end of the song can be heard plaintively demanding, “Let me out of here.” It seems that the modern, suburban lifestyle of “No alarms and no surprises,” is actually unhappy, unfulfilling, and ultimately alienating.

Kid A. The narrator in “Idioteque” is largely concerned with the modern-day values of commercialism and materialism. He implies that the corporate world is indeed an “Idioteque” with its misplaced value system. In this commercialist society, there are constantly “Mobiles working/Mobiles chirping,” as he explains with a rather tense note in his voice. Furthermore, he adds to this description the command to “Take the money and run/Take the money and run/Take the money . . .” There is a tone of sarcasm underlying these lines, conveying the feeling that he actually despises such a mindset. This character seems to be deeply troubled by what he feels is an overvaluation of money within contemporary society, and it is a value which is inevitably connected to commercialism and materialism as well. Governed by such monetary motives, then, society can be considered to be metaphorically entering an “ice age” of sterility and inhumanity.
“Morning Bell” presents a negative portrait of modern life insofar as it focuses on a particular occurrence which has grown out of contemporary values: divorce. The song is something of an in-depth study of a family being torn apart, quite literally, as the line “Cut the kids in half,” indicates. Although it isn’t explicitly stated, the lyrics seem to imply that divorce is a manifestation of the various pressures of living in a modern world. Certainly, materialism is present in the lines “Where’d you park the car?/Clothes are all over the furniture.” It is almost as if these inanimate objects are of more importance than the emotional breakup which is occurring. This family has become so focused on the modern value of amassing tangible wealth that they have become completely alienated from one another. A sense of disconnection as the result of contemporary experiences is demonstrated by the statement, “(The lights are on but nobody’s home/Everybody wants to be a . . .).” Here, the perceived emptiness and aimlessness of life in the modern world has left humanity empty and aimless as well.

**Amnesiac.** The violence portrayed in “Knives Out” makes the narrator’s disgust for modern life all too apparent. Although it is impossible to prove, it seems that the chorus of the song is particularly concerned with capitalism. “So knives out/Catch the mouse,” the singer states, implying the determined pursuit of a goal which is so often present in today’s world. It seems that this individual sees business executives, for example, as nothing more than rat-catchers, fruitlessly chasing an ever-elusive goal. Not surprisingly, this has a detrimental effect on them. Immediately following this description of their pursuit, the narrator commands them, “Don’t look down/Shove it in your mouth.” These lines show them eating the mouse they’ve worked so hard at catching, an image which is none too distasteful. Through this analogy, then, of individuals chasing after an ultimately undesirable goal, as well as the inhuman, alienating effects this has on them, the narrator’s disgust for many of the underlying conditions of modern life comes to light.

“Dollars and Cents” provides perhaps the most personal view of Radiohead’s experience with modernity. To some extent, the song can be interpreted as the band’s own experiences within the money-hungry music industry. At the opening of the song, he is told, “Be constructive/Bear witness/We can use.” These lines suggest exploitation of an individual by a larger body. Indeed, it seems this might very well be a parroting of
the message conveyed to the band itself from the music industry and/or society. The alienating effects of this value system are demonstrated by the further commandment to “Be constructive with your blues.” It seems that the human element of music has been removed in favor of achieving the “constructive” goals of modern life. Thus, the band’s own experience in the music industry becomes an analogy for the individual within the modern world. According to this perception, we are each only as valuable as the money we are capable of earning. As the chorus angrily states, “We are the dollars and cents/And the pounds and the pence/And the mark and the yen.” We have essentially surrendered ourselves as commodities. Thus, the song views material wealth and values as a fundamental interference with individuality and humanity, leaving us inhuman and alienated.

As these examples show, Radiohead sees modern-day life as an ongoing and extremely difficult struggle. We are pitted in a constant battle for our souls against such formidable enemies as technology, plastic, suburbia, divorce, capitalism, commercialism, and materialism, and naturally, as these opponents gradually prevail in our lives, we become increasingly alienated from ourselves and others.
**SUMMARY**

Alienation, negative self-concept, and the struggles of modern life are clearly significant concerns within Radiohead’s lyrical repertoire. From *Pablo Honey* through *Amnesiac*, the consistent presence of these themes is apparent. Particularly discernible, however, is alienation in all of its various manifestations. Loneliness, inhumanity, estrangement, disconnection, isolation: these are all ways of describing Radiohead’s foremost theme. It is perhaps understandable that this issue would be stressed more than any other, because it lies at the center of somewhat of a cause-and-effect sequence. The band’s lyrics strongly indicate that negative self-concept is the result of pervasive alienation, while contemporary life is one of its principal causes. Thus, the sequence might look something like this:

modern-day life → alienation → negative self-concept

According to the band’s lyrics, negative self-concept does not stand on its own, but is instead generally the result of alienation. Presumably, when we receive the message from others, intentional or not, that we are not worthy of their time or attention, we come to feel that this is the case. Such a development of poor self-concept, then, can be seen as a negative illustration of the theory of the looking glass self. Radiohead’s principal lyricist, upon regarding himself in the dismissive eyes of society, naturally comes to view himself in a negative light. This theme, then, is important insofar as it serves to suggest the effects of the larger theme of alienation.

Tracing the roots of alienation within the band’s repertoire, on the other hand, leads directly to the various struggles of modern day life. It is not difficult to see how, for example, living a life surrounded by plastic, as in “Fake Plastic Trees,” would lead to estrangement. The prevailing values of our contemporary times – values such as capitalism, commercialism, and materialism – as well as the manifestations of those values, have definite alienating effects. As music journalist and Radiohead biographer Mac Randall notes in his discussion of *OK Computer*, one of the principal themes contained therein is “the dehumanization of the modern world,” noting that “the song titles alone . . . clearly evoke the rootlessness, confusion, and dysfunctionality of late-twentieth-century society” (2000, p. 205). This sense of being out of place, indeed, of being an alien within a modern world, leads directly to estrangement from society and
from ourselves. Much like the issue of negative self-concept, the struggles of modern life are of particular importance in light of their relationship to alienation.

All of this is not to suggest, however, that the relationship among these three themes is clear-cut. To be sure, in Radiohead’s lyrics, as in life, they are often mixed up, overlapping, and in a constant state of ebb and flow. There are, of course, instances in which negative self-concept appears outside the explicit influence of alienation, just as modern-day life is not always blamed for this pervasive sense of disconnection. However, there is consistent evidence to suggest that these three themes do sustain and perpetuate one another. In some sense, they are even indiscernible. The sense of loneliness and desperation inherent in “red wine and sleeping pills,” the personal loathing displayed by calling oneself a “creep” or an “idiot,” and the worker’s heart which is “full up like a landfill” are all part of the same emotion, the same trend. Through their music, Radiohead lends these themes the complexity they deserve.
CONCLUSION

Since alienation and its causes and effects are such prevalent issues in Radiohead’s music, by inference, it is likely that these are concerns for their audience as well. Perhaps, as the magic bullet and similar theories suggest, the band’s focus on alienation effects some sense of estrangement among their listeners. On the other hand, it may be that Radiohead’s audience is attracted to them in the first place because they identify with this major theme, as is suggested in the theory of selective exposure. In any case, whether we accept Radiohead as an influence on society, consider them a reflection, or apply some other mass media approach, there is undoubtedly a relationship between their lyrical message and their audience. Whatever the nature of this relationship may be, the fact that people are listening to them – and listening in vast numbers – suggests that Radiohead’s message resonates with many. Alienation, its cause – modern life, and its effect – negative self-concept seem to be significant concerns for “Generation Radiohead.”

To some extent, this inherent relationship between media and its receivers has always been visible in rock music. Since its inception, rock and roll has served, among other things, as the voice of the people. The Beatles, for instance, managed to convey the collective feelings and experiences of a considerable Western sub-culture in the 60s. Nirvana accomplished the same feat in the early 90s, singing the anthem of disaffection for a generation: “Oh well, whatever, nevermind . . .” And now, it seems that Radiohead could very well be considered rock’s newest grassroots voice.

Given all of this information, numerous avenues of inquiry arise which might further our understanding of Radiohead. In particular, the musical components of their songs lend much greater depth and complexity to their message than the lyrics alone, and exploration of these aspects would allow for a more comprehensive view of their message. Also interesting would be research into the relationship between Radiohead’s message and the members’ lives, as well as the exact nature of the relationship between this message and their audience. Clearly, there are many ways to understand this particular band as a caveat of the mass media, and analysis of their lyrics is only one of those ways. Useful? Yes. Interesting? Yes. All-inclusive? Certainly not. Radiohead cannot – and will not – be put into such a tidy box.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Discography

Pablo Honey
February 1993
1) You
2) Creep
3) How Do You?
4) Stop Whispering
5) Thinking About You
6) Anyone Can Play Guitar
7) Ripcord
8) Vegetable
9) Prove Yourself
10) I Can’t
11) Lurgee
12) Blow Out

The Bends
March 1995
1) Planet Telex
2) The Bends
3) High & Dry
4) Fake Plastic Trees
5) Bones
6) (nice dream)
7) Just
8) My Iron Lung
9) Bulletproof...I Wish I Was
10) Black Star
11) Sulk
12) Street Spirit (fadeout)

OK Computer
June 1997
1) Airbag
2) Paranoid Android
3) Subterranean Homesick Alien
4) Exit Music (for a film)
5) Let Down
6) Karma Police
7) Fitter, Happier
8) Electioneering
9) Climbing Up the Walls
10) No Surprises
11) Lucky
12) The Tourist

Kid A
November 2000
1) Everything In It’s Right Place
2) Kid A
3) The National Anthem
4) How to Disappear Completely
5) Treefingers
6) Optimistic
7) In Limbo
8) Idioteque
9) Morning Bell
10) Motion Picture Soundtrack

Amnesiac
May 2001
1) Packt Like Sardines in a Crushd Tin Box
2) Pyramid Song
3) Pulk Pull Revolving Doors
4) You and Whose Army?
5) I Might Be Wrong
6) Knives Out
7) Morning Bell Amnesiac
8) Dollars and Cents
9) Hunting Bears
10) Like Spinning Plates
11) Life in a Glasshouse
Appendix B: Sample Analytical Notes

"Everything in It's Right Place" opens with lyrics containing the album's title. "Kid A, Kid A, Kid A, Kid A," the singer states in the first line. Although the meaning of this phrase is somewhat obscure, the fact that the child he describes is named after "A," the first letter of the alphabet, implies that s/he represents a first. Furthermore, since this title is fairly impersonal, it can be assumed that the person he speaks of is lacking in humanity to some extent. This interpretation is in accordance with information given during interviews with the band regarding the album's title, in which lead singer Thom Yorke explains that "Kid A" is a generic term used for the first cloned human being. Obviously, then, this song is largely concerned with issues of technology and its perhaps too rapid rise, as the somewhat sarcastic naming of this individual implies. Despite the apparent cynicism directed at "Kid A," however, the narrator continues on to describe "Everything, everything, everything, everything.../In its right place." Thus, it seems that this newly invented human being represents something of a natural progression in technology. Indeed, there is irony here in that he probably doesn't feel that Kid A is truly a metaphor for everything being right and proper in the world, yet he nonetheless states that this is the case. Consequently, it can be assumed that there is some external influence which leads him to this conclusion, despite his own better judgment. This influence is probably most likely society and/or media. The modern social world places an extreme value on technology, and this value is naturally reflected in our interaction with society. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that he has internalized the value of technology as a result of his social interactions; a process which ultimately leads him to the conclusion posited in the first verse. Yet, despite his seeming acceptance of the value of Kid A, and metaphorically speaking, technology, the narrator nevertheless wakes up "sucking a lemon," as the next verse shows. This can be seen as an involuntary reaction due to the fact that he has surrendered his own personal values in favor of those of society. Although on the surface he has accepted the external world's belief that Kid A is the culmination of all things good, his physical reaction is evidence that he is not completely at peace with this supposed truth. The fact that he wakes up sucking a lemon indicates that his life contains no small amount of bitterness which his subconscious mind is perhaps only able to bring while he sleeps. Since the idea expressed directly preceding
this sour reaction was that of technology, it seems fair to assume that “sucking a lemon” is an analogy for society’s relationship to technology. Furthermore, because the commonly accepted symbolism of lemons is of unpleasantness, sourness, etc., these adjectives can consequently be assumed to apply to technological advancement. When the singer returns in the third verse to the idea that everything is “In its right place,” however, the focus shifts to a more personal level. Following the description of his awakening with a lemon, these lines imply that his individual reaction, mainly one of suffering, is natural and expected. Thus, it seems that society is willing to sacrifice him in favor of Kid A, implying a sense of unimportance which is placed on humanity. In this new age of technology, the absolute value of every person is not assumed, but instead is decided based on their relationship to innovation and/or advancement. By this point in the song, then, there seems to be a debate between the seemingly opposing values of the individual, as represented by the narrator, and society, as represented by “Kid A” and technology. Perhaps it is this dueling imagery which leads our hero to state that “There are two colours in my head.” These lines imply a very dualistic view of the world, as if all issues and images are painted in black and white, with no shades of gray to represent indecision or individualism. Of course, since he never explains exactly which two colors he is speaking of, an accurate semiotic analysis is next to impossible. In light of the cynical tone of the song, however, it is probably safe to assume that this effect is a negative one which is most likely imposed by society. Perhaps as a result of the dueling colors he is experiencing, he is seen as withdrawing from society. “What is that you tried to say?” he asks in the following lines. Apparently, the narrator is so alienated from society that communication has become quite difficult. Whether it is his own fault or society’s, his question shows him having a difficult time communicating, implying, in turn, that he has ceased to fit in. Metaphorically, then, it seems that Kid A has taken his place in society, or rather, by analogy, that technological determinism has begun to override the individual. In this sense, then, the narrator’s statement that this substitution is an example of everything being “in it’s right place” represents pure pessimism and defeat.

Main theme(s): technology, society vs. the individual, alienation
Appendix C: Lyrics

Pablo Honey

Creep
When you were here before
Couldn't look you in the eye
You're just like an angel
Your skin makes me cry
You float like a feather
In a beautiful world
I wish I was special
You're so fucking special

But I'm a creep
I'm a weirdo
What the hell am I doing here?
I don't belong here

I don't care if it hurts
I want to have control
I want a perfect body
I want a perfect soul
I want you to notice when I'm not around
You're so fucking special
I wish I was special

But I'm a creep
I'm a weirdo
What the hell I'm doing here?
I don't belong here

She's running out again
She's running out
She runs runs runs

Whatever makes you happy
Whatever you want
You're so fucking special
I wish I was special

But I'm a creep
I'm a weirdo
What the hell am I doing here?
I don't belong here
I don't belong here

Thinking About You
Been thinking about you, your record's a hit
Your eyes are on my wall, your teeth are over there
But I'm still no-one, and you're not a star
What do you care?

Been thinking about you, and there's no rest
Shit, I still love you, still see you in bed
But I'm playing with myself, and what do you care
When the other men are far, far better

All the things you got
All the things you need
Who bought you cigarettes and bribed the company
To come and see you, honey

I've been thinking about you, so how can you sleep
These people aren't your friends, they're paid to kiss your feet
But they don't know what I know, and why should you care
When I'm not there

Been thinking about you, and there's no rest
Shit, I still love you, still see you in bed
But I'm playing with myself, what do you care
When I'm not there

All the things you got, you'll never need
All the things you got, I burn and I bleed to please you, please you

Been thinking about you...

1 Lyrics included are for all songs cited.
Ripcord
Soul destroyed with clever toys for little boys
It's inevitable, inevitable, it's a soul destroyed
You're free until you drop
You're free until you've had enough
But you don't understand
You've no ripcord
No ripcord, no ripcord, no ripcord

Aeroplane
Do I mean what I mean?
It's inevitable, inevitable, oh aeroplane
A thousand miles an hour
And politics in power
That you don't understand
You've no ripcord
No ripcord, no ripcord, no ripcord

The answer to your prayers
We'll drop you anywhere
With no ripcord
No ripcord, no ripcord, no ripcord

Vegetable
I never wanted anything but this
I worked hard, tried hard
I ran around in domestic bliss
I fought hard, died hard

Everytime you're running out of here
Everytime you're running I get the fear
I never wanted any broken bones
Scarred face, no home
Your words surround and I asphyxiate
And I burn all hate

Everytime you're running out on me
Everytime you're running I can see
I'm not a vegetable
I will not control myself
I spit on the hand that feeds me
I will not control myself

The waters break, the waters run all over me
The waters break, the waters run
And this time you're gonna pay
I'm not a vegetable
I will not control myself
I spit on the hand that feeds me
I will not control myself...
Prove Yourself
I can't afford to breathe in this time
Nowhere to sit without a gun in my hand
Hooked back up to the cathode ray
I'm better off dead
I'm better off dead
I'm better off

Prove yourself
Prove yourself
Prove yourself

I wanna breathe, I wanna grow
I'd say I want it but I don't know how
I work, I bleed, I beg and pray
But I'm better off dead
I'm better off dead
I'm better off

Prove yourself
Prove yourself
Prove yourself

I'm better off dead
I'm better off dead
I'm better off

Prove yourself
Prove yourself
Prove yourself

Why?

I Can't
Please forget the words that I just blurted out
It wasn't me, it was my strange and creeping doubt
It keeps rattling my cage
And there's nothing in this world will keep it down

Even though I might, even though I try, I can't
Even though I might, even though I try, I can't

So many things that keep, that keep me underground
So many words that I, that I can never find
If you give up on me now I'll be gutted like I've never been before

And even though I might, even though I try, I can't
Even though I might, even though I try, I can't

If you give up on me now I'll be gutted like I've never been before
And even though I might, even though I try, I can't
Even though I might, even though I try, I can't
Even though I might, even though I try, I can't
Even though I might, even though I try, I can't
Blow Out
In my mind
And nailed into my heels
All the time
Killing what I feel
And everything I touch
(all wrapped up in cotton wool)
(all wrapped up in sugar-coated pills)
Turns to stone
Everything I touch
(all wrapped up in cotton wool)
(all wrapped up in sugar-coated pills)
Turns to stone
I am fused
Just in case I blow out
I am glued
Just in case I crack out
And everything I touch turns to stone
Everything I touch
(all wrapped up in cotton wool)
(all wrapped up in sugar-coated pills)
Turns to stone
The Bends

The Bends
Where do we go from here?
The words are coming out all weird
Where are you now, when I need you
Alone on an aeroplane
Falling asleep against the window pane
My blood will thicken

I need to wash myself again
To hide all the dirt and pain 'cause I'd be scared
That there's nothing underneath
But who are my real friends?
Have they all got the bends?
Am I really sinking this low?

My baby's got the bends, oh no
We don't have any real friends, no, no, no

Just lying in the bar with my drip feed on
Talking to my girlfriend, waiting for something to happen
I wish it was the sixties, I wish I could be happy
I wish, I wish, I wish that something would happen

Where do we go from here?
The planet is a gunboat in a sea of fear
And where are you?
They brought in the CIA, the tanks and the whole marines
To blow me away, to blow me sky high

My baby's got the bends
We don't have any real friends

Just lying in the bar with my drip feed on
Talking to my girlfriend, waiting for something to happen
I wish it was the sixties, I wish I could be happy
I wish, I wish, I wish that something would happen

I wanna live, breathe
I wanna be part of the human race
I wanna live, breathe
I wanna be part of the human race, race, race, race

Where do we go from here?
The words are coming out all weird
Where are you now when I need you?

High & Dry

Two jumps in a week
I bet you think that's pretty clever don't you boy?
Flying on your motorcycle,
Watching all the ground beneath you drop
You'd kill yourself for recognition,
Kill yourself to never ever stop
You broke another mirror,
You're turning into something you are not

Don't leave me high, don't leave me dry
Don't leave me high, don't leave me dry

Drying up in conversation,
You will be the one who cannot talk
All your insides fall to pieces,
You just sit there wishing you could still make love
They're the ones who'll hate you
When you think you've got the world all sussed out
They're the ones who'll spit at you,
You will be the one screaming out

Don't leave me high, don't leave me dry
Don't leave me high, don't leave me dry

It's the best thing that you ever had,
The best thing that you ever, ever had
It's the best thing that you ever had,
The best thing you ever had has gone away
Fake Plastic Trees
Her green plastic watering can
For her fake Chinese rubber plant
In the fake plastic earth
That she bought from a rubber man
In a town full of rubber plans
To get rid of itself

It wears her out, it wears her out
It wears her out, it wears her out

She lives with a broken man
A cracked polystyrene man
Who just crumbles and burns
He used to do surgery
For girls in the eighties
But gravity always wins

It wears him out, it wears him out
It wears him out, it wears him out
It wears...

She looks like the real thing
She tastes like the real thing
My fake plastic love
But I can't help the feeling
I could blow through the ceiling
If I just turn and run

It wears me out, it wears me out
It wears me out, it wears me out

If I could be who you wanted
If I could be who you wanted all the time

(nice dream)
They love me like I was a brother
They protect me, listen to me
They dug me my very own garden
Gave me sunshine, made me happy

Nice dream, nice dream, nice dream
I call up my friend the good angel
But she's out with her ansaphone
She says that she'd love to come help but
The sea would electrocute us all

Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream

If you think that you're strong enough
Nice dream
If you think you belong enough
Nice dream
If you think that you're strong enough
Nice dream
If you think you belong enough

Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
Nice dream
My Iron Lung
Faith, you're driving me away
You do it everyday
You don't mean it
But it hurts like hell

My brain says I'm receiving pain
A lack of oxygen
From my life support
My iron lung

We're too young to fall asleep
Too cynical to speak
We are losing it
Can't you tell?

We scratch our eternal itch
A twentieth century bitch
And we are grateful for
Our iron lung

Suck, suck your teenage thumb
Toilet trained and dumb
When the power runs out
We'll just hum

This, this is our new song
Just like the last one
A total waste of time
My iron lung

And if you're frightened
You can be frightened
You can be, it's OK
And if you're frightened
You can be frightened
You can be, it's OK

(Bulletproof . . . I Wish I Was
Limb by limb and tooth by tooth
Tearing up inside of me
Every day every hour
I wish that I was bullet proof

Wax me
Mold me
Heat the pins and stab them in
You have turned me into this
Just wish that I was bullet proof

So pay me money and take a shot
Leadfill the hole in me
I could burst a million bubbles
All surrogate and bullet proof

And bullet proof
And bullet proof
And bullet proof

(The headshrinkers, they want everything
My uncle Bill, my Belisha beacon)
Black Star
I get home from work and you're still standing in
your dressing gown
Well what am I to do?
I know all the things around your head and what
they do to you
What are we coming to?
What are we gonna do?

Blame it on the black star
Blame it on the falling sky
Blame it on the satellite that beams me home

The troubled words of a troubled mind I try to
understand what is eating you
I try to stay awake but its 58 hours since that I
last slept with you
What are we coming to?
I just don't know anymore

Blame it on the black star
Blame it on the falling sky
Blame it on the satellite that beams me home

I get on the train and I just stay in the back now
that I don't think of you
I keep falling over I keep passing out when I see
a face like you
What am I coming to?
I'm gonna melt down

Blame it on the black star
Blame it on the falling sky
Blame it on the satellite that beams me home
This is killing me
This is killing me

Street Spirit (fadeout)
Rows of houses, all bearing down on me
I can feel their blue hands touching me
All these things into position
All these things we'll one day swallow whole
Fade out again
Fade out

This machine will, will not communicate
These thoughts and the strain I am under
Be a world child, form a circle
Before we all go under
Fade out again
Fade out again

Cracked eggs, dead birds
Scream as they fight for life
I can feel death, can see its beady eyes
All these things into position
All these things we'll one day swallow whole
Fade out again
Fade out again

Immerse your soul in love
Immerse your soul in love

Street Spirit (fadeout)
OK Computer
Subterranean Homesick Alien
The breath of the morning
I keep forgetting
The smell of the warm summer air
I live in a town
Where you can't smell a thing
You watch your feet
For cracks in the pavement

High up above
Aliens hover
Making home movies
For the folks back home
Of all these weird creatures
Who lock up their spirits
Drill holes in themselves
And live for their secrets

They're all uptight
Uptight... Uptight... Uptight... Uptight...
Uptight... Uptight... Uptight...

I wish that they'd swoop down in a country lane
Late at night when I'm driving
Take me on board their beautiful ship
Show me the world as I'd love to see it

I'd tell all my friends
But they'd never believe me
They'd think that I'd finally lost it completely
I'd show them the stars
And the meaning of life
They'd shut me away
But I'd be all right
All right...

I'm just uptight
Uptight... Uptight... Uptight... Uptight...
Uptight... Uptight... Uptight...

Let Down
Transport, motorways and tramlines
Starting and then stopping
Taking off and landing
The emptiest of feelings
Disappointed people clinging on to bottles
And when it comes it's so so disappointing

Let down and hanging around
Crushed like a bug in the ground
Let down and hanging around

Shell smashed, juices flowing
Wings twitch, legs are going
Don't get sentimental
It always ends up drivel
One day I am gonna grow wings
A chemical reaction
Hysterical and useless
Hysterical and...

Let down and hanging around
Crushed like a bug in the ground
Let down and hanging around

Let down again
Let down and hanging
Let down...

You know, you know where you are with
You know where you are with
Floor collapsing
Floating, bouncing back
One day
I am gonna grow wings
A chemical reaction
Hysterical and useless
Hysterical and...

Let down and hanging around
Crushed like a bug in the ground
Let down and hanging around
Karma Police
Karma police, arrest this man
He talks in maths
He buzzes like a fridge
He's like a detuned radio

Karma police, arrest this girl
Her Hitler hairdo is
Making me feel ill
And we have crashed her party

This is what you get
This is what you get
This is what you get when you mess with us

Karma police
I've given all I can
It's not enough
I've given all I can
But we're still on the payroll

This is what you get
This is what you get
This is what you get when you mess with us

For a minute there, I lost myself, I lost myself
Phew, for a minute there, I lost myself, I lost myself

Fitter, Happier
fitter, happier
more productive
comfortable
not drinking too much
regular exercise at the gym (3 days a week)
getting on better with your associate employee
contemporaries
at ease
eating well (no more microwave dinners and
saturated fats)
a patient better driver
a safer car (baby smiling in back seat)
sleeping well (no bad dreams)
no paranoia
careful to all animals (never washing spiders down
the plughole)
keep in contact with old friends (enjoy a drink now
and then)
will frequently check credit at (moral) bank (hole in
wall)
favors for favors
fond but not in love
charity standing orders
on sundays ring road supermarket
(no killing moths or putting boiling water on the
ants)
car wash (also on sundays)
no longer afraid of the dark
or midday shadows
nothing so ridiculously teenage and desperate
nothing so childish
at a better pace
slower and more calculated
no chance of escape
now self-employed
concerned (but powerless)
an empowered and informed member of society
(pragmatism not idealism)
will not cry in public
less chance of illness
tires that grip in the wet (shot of baby strapped in
back seat)
a good memory
still cries at a good film
still kisses with saliva
no longer empty and frantic
like a cat
tied to a stick
that's driven into
frozen winter shit (the ability to laugh at weakness)
calm
fitter, healthier and more productive
a pig
in a cage
on antibiotics
Climbing up the Walls
I am the key to the lock in your house
That keeps your toys in the basement
And if you get too far inside
You'll only see my reflection

It's always best when the fire is out
I am the pick in the ice
Do not cry out or hit the alarm
You know we're friends till we die

And either way you turn
I'll be there
Open up your skull
I'll be there
Climbing up the walls

It's always best when the light is off
It's always better on the outside
Fifteen blows to the back of your head
Fifteen blows to your mind

So lock the kids up safe tonight
Shut the eyes in the cupboard
I've got the smell of a local man
Who's got the loneliest feeling

That either way he turns
I'll be there
Open up your skull
I'll be there

Climbing up the walls
Climbing up the walls
Climbing up the walls

No Surprises
A heart that's full up like a landfill
A job that slowly kills you
Bruises that won't heal

You look so tired and unhappy
Bring down the government
They don't, they don't speak for us

I'll take a quiet life
A handshake of carbon monoxide

No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises
Silent, silent

This is my final fit, my final bellyache with

No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises please

Such a pretty house and such a pretty garden

No alarms and no surprises (let me out of here)
No alarms and no surprises (let me out of here)
No alarms and no surprises please
The Tourist
It barks at no one else but me
Like it's seen a ghost
I guess it seen the sparks a-flowing
No one else would know

Hey man slow down, slow down
Idiot, slow down, slow down

Sometimes I get overcharged
That's when you see sparks
You ask me where the hell I'm going
At a thousand feet per second

Hey man, slow down, slow down
Idiot slow down, slow down

Hey man, slow down, slow down
Idiot, slow down, slow down
Kid A
How to Disappear Completely
That there, that’s not me
I go where I please
I walk through walls
I float down the Liffey
I’m not here
This isn’t happening
I’m not here, I’m not here
In a little while
I’ll be gone
The moment’s already passed
Yeah, it’s gone
I’m not here
This isn’t happening
I’m not here, I’m not here

Strobe lights and blown speakers
Fireworks and hurricanes
I’m not here
This isn’t happening
I’m not here, I’m not here

In Limbo
(I’m the first in the Irish Sea
Another message I can’t read
I’m the first in the Irish Sea
Another message I can’t read)
I’m on your side
Nowhere to hide
Trapdoors that open
I spiral down
You’re living in a fantasy world
You’re living in a fantasy world
I’m lost at sea
Don’t bother me
I’ve lost my way
I’ve lost my way
You’re living in a fantasy world
You’re living in a fantasy world
You’re living in a fantasy world
This beautiful world
(I’m the first in the Irish Sea
Another message I can’t read
Another message I can’t read)
Idioteque
Who’s in the bunker, who’s in the bunker?
Women and children first
Women and children first
Women and children
I’ll laugh until my head comes off
I swallow till I burst
Until I burst
Until I...
Who’s in the bunker, who’s in the bunker
I’ve seen too much
I haven’t seen enough
You haven’t seen enough
I’ll laugh until my head comes off
Women and children first
And children first
And children...
Here I’m alive, everything all the time
Here I’m alive, everything all the time
Ice age coming, ice age coming
Let me hear both sides
Let me hear both sides
Let me hear both...
Ice age coming, ice age coming
Throw me in the fire
Throw me in the fire
Throw me in the...
We’re not scaremongering
This is really happening, happening
We’re not scaremongering
This is really happening, happening
Mobiles working
Mobiles chirping
Take the money and run
Take the money and run
Take the money...
Here I’m alive, everything all of the time
(The first of the children)

Morning Bell
Morning bell
Morning bell
Light another candle
Release me
Release me
You can keep the furniture
A bump on the head
Coming down the chimney
Release me
Release me
Please...
Release me
Release me
Where’d you park the car?
Where’d you park the car?
Clothes are all over the furniture
Now I might as well
Sleepy jack the fire drill
Runnin’ around and round and round and round and round...
Cut the kids in half
Cut the kids in half
Cut the kids in half

(The lights are on but nobody’s home
Everybody wants to be a
The lights are on but nobody’s home
Nobody wants to be a slave
Walking walking walking walking...)

(The lights are on but nobody’s home
Everybody wants to be a
Everyone wants to be a friend
Nobody wants to be a slave
Walking walking walking walking...)

(46)
*Motion Picture Soundtrack*

Red wine and sleeping pills
Help me get back to your arms
Cheap sex and sad films
Help me get where I, I belong

I think you're crazy, maybe
I think you're crazy, maybe

Stop sending letters
Letters always get burned
It's not like the movies
They fed us on little white lies

I think you're crazy, maybe
I think you're crazy, maybe

I will see you in the next life
Amnesiac
You and Whose Army?
Come on, come on
You think you drive me crazy, well
Come on, come on
You and whose army?
You and your cronies
Come on, come on
Holy Roman empire
Come on if you think
Come on if you think
You can take us on
You can take us on
You and whose army?
You and your cronies
You forget so easily
We ride tonight
We ride tonight
Ghost horses
Ghost horses
We ride tonight
We ride tonight
Ghost horses
Ghost horses
Ghost horses

I Might be Wrong
I might be wrong
I might be wrong
I could have sworn
I saw a light coming on

I used to think
I used to think
There is no future left at all
I used to think

Open up, begin again
Let's go down the waterfall
Think about the good times
Never look back
Never look back
What would I do?
What would I do?
If I did not have you...

Open up and let me in
Let's go down the waterfall
Have ourselves a good time
It's nothing at all
It's nothing at all
Nothing at all
Knives Out
I want you to know
He's not coming back
Look into my eyes
I'm not coming back

So knives out
Catch the mouse
Don't look down
Shove it in your mouth

If you'd been a dog
They would have drowned you at birth

Look into my eyes
It's the only way you'll know I'm telling the truth

So knives out
Cook him up
Squash his head
Put him in the pot

I want you to know
He's not coming back
He's bloated and frozen
Still there's no point in letting it go to waste

So knives out
Catch the mouse
Squash his head
Put him in the pot

Dollars and Cents
There are many things
To talk about
Be constructive
Bear witness
We can use
Be constructive with your blues
Even when it's only warnings
Even when you're talking war games

Why don't you quiet down?
Why don't you quiet down?
Why don't you quiet down?
Quiet down!

You don't live in a business world
You never go out and you never stay
We'll have goals in a liberal world
Living in times when I could stand it, babe
It's all over baby's crying, it's all over baby
I can see out of here

All of the planet's dead,
All over the planet, so let me out of here
All over...

We are the dollars and cents
And the pounds and pence
And the mark and the yen, and yeah
We're gonna crack your little souls
We're gonna crack your little souls

We are the dollars and cents
And the pounds and pence
And the pounds and yen, and yeah
We're gonna crack your little souls
We're gonna crack your little souls

We are the dollars and cents
And the pounds and pence
And the pounds and pence, and yeah
We're gonna crack your little souls
We're gonna crack your little souls

We are the dollars and cents
Life in a Glasshouse
Once again I'm in trouble with my only friend
She is papering the window panes
She is putting on a smile
Living in a glasshouse

Once again packed like frozen food and battery hens
Think of all the starving millions
Don't talk politics and don't throw stones
Your royal highnesses

Well of course I'd like to sit around and chat
Well of course I'd like to stay and chew the fat
Well of course I'd like to sit around and chat
But someone's listening in

Once again we are hungry for a lynching
That's a strange mistake to make
You should turn the other cheek
Living in a glasshouse

Well of course I'd like to sit around and chat
Well of course I'd like to stay and chew the fat
Well of course I'd like to sit around and chat
Only only only only only only only only
only....
There's someone listening in
REFERENCES


