## Narrative Music and the Concept Album: A Case Study of Nine Inch Nails, The Downward Spiral

by

Allison House Class of 2011

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Music

# **Table of Contents**

| Acknowledgments                            | 3  |
|--|----|
| Music, Narrative, and their Relationship   | 4  |
| An Introduction to the Downward Spiral     | 9  |
| The Downward Spiral                        |    |
| As Industrial Music                        | 10 |
| In the History of Narrative Music          | 15 |
| Plot Summary                               | 18 |
| Compositional Techniques and Narrative     | 24 |
| Analysis of Piggy                          | 26 |
| Analysis of I Do Not Want This             | 34 |
| Analysis of Reptile                        | 42 |
| Conclusion                                 | 47 |
| The Future Imperfect                       | 48 |
| Appendix 1: Lyrics to the Future Imperfect | 50 |

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first and foremost my adviser, Yonatan Malin. He has put a great deal of effort into helping me edit and work through this thesis in its many different forms over the last year, and I would not have been able to do it without him.

I would like to thank Josh Geller and Jacob Gogarten. Without their musical skill and their dedication, I would not have been able to write or record many of the songs present on The Future Imperfect. Their many hours in my garage with me this summer and in the recording studio with me last semester were the only thing that made this project possible.

I would like to thank Tony Lombardozzi. He has been an amazing guitar teacher and friend to me my entire time at Wesleyan and he helped me to realize my ideas for every guitar and drum party present on the album.

I would like to thank Alex Geller, Josh Geller, Shari Geller, Susan House, James House, Jacob Gogarten, and Maria Gogarten for their support and their thoughtful comments about the songs throughout the mixing process. Without the perspectives of others, I probably would have ended up with something unlistenable.

I would like to thank Eoin Callery for always fixing the studio whenever I "broke" it at a weird hour of the night and for teaching me most of what I know about Logic.

I would like to thank Dan St. Clair for allowing me to use the studio last semester and for always keeping me in the loop on scheduling so that I was able to have all the time I needed.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends, Josh Geller, Jacob Gogarten, Sonia Vucetic, Margaret Aldredge, Nick Greif, Cy Sandler, Shannon Glazier, Emily Misch, Jon Daneman, Paul Fleming, Ginger Schultheis, Jordan Burby, Peter Bergin, Ryan Trask and Cat Stevens, and my family, Susan House and James House, for always supporting my music and for urging me to pursue what I love even when it seems impossible.

#### Music, Narrative, and Their Relationship

The Oxford English Dictionary has the first appearance of the word narrative more than four hundred years ago in 1571, and defines the noun to mean, "An account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them; a narration, a story, an account."1 This definition raises the question, can one tell part or all of a story without words? More simply, are words a prerequisite to narrative? In answering this question, the example of the silent movie comes to mind. As I child, I watched (many hundreds of times) the film "The Red Balloon," directed by Albert Lamorisse.<sup>2</sup> This film develops a close friendship between a boy and a giant red balloon – a friendship that the audience roots for. As viewers, we are devastated when the red balloon is killed (popped) by a gang of bullies, but uplifted again as the other balloons of the city come to the boy's rescue and raise him high above the city. This movie has a clear narrative, which was accessible and understandable even to a child like myself, but no words, only video and a musical score. It proves that if a narrative is a story, it can be told without the use of words. The more specific question, which is engendered here, is, can a narrative be told with just music?

A great deal of work has been done in recent years on the study of narrative music, and on the basic question of whether music can or cannot convey a story by itself. Byron Almén provides a definition and methodology for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Oxford English Dictionary OnLine, s.v. "narrative," accessed October 13, 2010, http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00321221

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Red Balloon, directed by Albert Lamorisse (1956; Paris, France: Home Vision Cinema, 1996), VHS.

the analysis of musical narrative and outlines four possible archetypes, following from the work of Northrop Frye and James Jakob Liszka.<sup>3</sup> It will be useful to look at the primary points of Almén's article in order to develop a more informed understanding of what defines a musical narrative, so that this understanding may be born in mind when reading the main portion of this paper, the analysis of *The Downward Spiral*.

Almén begins his article by providing two different models for narrative music, a descendant model and a sibling model; in the descendant model a musical narrative is "a transposed reflection of literary narrative," while in the sibling model, "the two media," that is literature and music, "share a common foundation but varying manifestations." Allmén favors the sibling model overall, but he rebuts criticism of both models.

The criticisms discussed by Almén are as follows: the verbal cue argument, the causality argument, the narrator argument, the referentiality argument, and the drama argument. The first three of these are the most relevant to this particular work. The first argument suggests that a musical narrative must have some sort of text for it to provide a narrative listening strategy. Almén refutes this assertion by pointing out that musical cues may also lead one to hear a narrative. He provides as his example sonata form, and I would also assert that the verse/chorus form in much of rock music has a similar function (which I will discuss in more detail when exploring the four narrative

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Byron Almén, "Narrative Archetypes: A Critique Theory and Method of Narrative Analysis," *Journal of Music Theory* 47, no.1 (2003):

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Almén, "Narrative Archetypes," 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Almén, "Narrative Archetypes," 3.

archetypes). The second argument, the causality argument, claims that the temporal sequences provided in music do not constitute a narrative, because a chain of causal events must exist to support a narrative. The chief question here is: does something require causality to be a narrative? Almén answers no because even in literature, a narrator will not necessarily reveal the connection between two events, especially if the motivation behind an event is kept hidden in the confines of his or her head. The third argument, which seems to me to be especially relevant, is the narrator argument; this argument asserts that a narrative requires a narrator to organize the story. Almén points out that while, a narrator may be useful, it is still always up to the judgment of the reader to determine what has actually happened. *The Downward Spiral* is a great example of this phenomenon. Because the album is both a musical and a textual narrative, we are provided with a narrator, but one that is dishonest with both himself and with the listeners. Thus, determining the actual events, motivations, and emotions present on the album is entirely up to the listener; and so, a narrator must not be essential to developing a coherent narrative.

When Almén finishes dispelling the criticism present, he finally settles on his own definition of musical narrative, which is as follows: "A musical narrative is the process through which the listener perceives and tracks a culturally significant transvaluation of hierarchical relationships within a temporal span." This definition is wordy and unnecessarily academic, but Almén's does go on to clarify. In essence, a musical narrative incorporates a tension between a series of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Almén, "Narrative Archetypes," 12.

relationships possessing positive or negative culture value, which will be resolved either favorably or unfavorably. Thus, when analyzing one must look for whatever musical elements are in conflict, and then look for the outcome that is desired by the listener and whether or not this outcome is achieved. When these things are determined, one can place the musical narrative within a narrative archetype.

The basic structure which Almén uses, and which Northrop Frye originally suggested creates four different narrative archetypes: romantic, tragic, comic, and ironic or satiric. Liszka organizes this same structure slightly differently, suggesting that comedy involves the victory of transgression over order, romance involves the victory of order over transgression, irony involves the defeat of order by transgression and tragedy involves the defeat of transgression by order. Thus, "in the first two cases, the reader's sympathy is with the victors, while in the last two cases, it is with the vanquished." These narrative archetypes make it possible for the simple verse chorus form that is present in much rock music to convey emotional transitions, which may bolster and potentially even transcend the actual text. For example, a song that builds to a dynamic climax just before its chorus, but then falls off and never reaches its high point is clearly conveying a sense of tragedy. Finally, this scheme is interesting when applied to *The Downward Spiral* which in a certain sense is a

7

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Northrop Frye, "Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays," (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957) 162.

James Jakob Liszka, "The Semiotic of Myth: A Critical Study of the Symbol," (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Almén, "Narrative Archetypes," 18.

tragedy by pure and simple, but which is complicated by the narrator's own role as both hero and villain.

Thus, Almén's article provides a useful framework for looking at musical narrative as a whole. *The Downward Spiral* lies in a unique and fascinating area of narrative music: the concept album. Thus is not simply a musical narrative (although the narrative aspects of its music are as important as the textual ones). It is also not music written for a particular pre-written text, or a musical "poem about a poem" (as in the case of Shubert's *Wintereisse*) but rather it is quite possible that the music and the lyrics were written simultaneously and equally for one another.<sup>9</sup> The analysis that the album engenders is thus partially literary, partially musical and certainly a deserving subject.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> I take notion that a song may function as a "poem on the poem" that it sets from David Lewin, "Auf dem Flusse: Image and Background in a Schubert Song," in *Studies in Music with Text* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 110.

#### An Introduction to the Downward Spiral

The Downward Spiral, the second full-length album by the band Nine Inch Nails (whose sole permanent member is now forty-five year old Trent Reznor) was released on March 8, 1994. The album, which debuted at number 2 on Billboard charts and sold almost 200,000 copies in its first week, caused Trent Reznor to be credited with "opening the door to mainstream acceptance for other once-underground industrial-styled acts." The album's popular appeal shocked many because of its undertones of nihilism and isolation and its protagonist's ultimate suicide. However, despite the darkness of the album's tone and subject matter, its lyrical and musical sincerity, paired with Reznor's ability to combine many different genres (including industrial, eltronica, techno, rock etc.) and still maintain a pop sense caused the album to resonate powerfully with listeners throughout the United States and the world. Robert Hilburn wrote in a Los Angeles Time review of the album, "'Spiral' isn't a celebration or acceptance of nihilism and decadence. It is, instead, an anguished cry for something to believe in during a time when such traditional support systems as religion and family have failed for so many."11 The Downward Spiral was a seminal album that had a measurable impact on much of the music that followed

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 10}$  Craig Rosen, "Nine Inch Nails makes Charts on Industrial Zone,"  $\it Billboard Magazine, April 2, 1994,$ 

http://www.theninhotline.net/archives/articles/bill2.shtml.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Robert Hilburn, "Natural Born Thriller," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-10-02/entertainment/ca-45644\_1\_trent-reznor.

it in the later '90's, and the album's second single, "Closer," is still played on radio stations across America today.

In this chapter, I will examine how *The Downward Spiral* is situated in the historical traditions from which it arose. Specifically, I will show that while Trent Reznor learned from the tradition of industrial music established in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he added his own perspective through the creation of a uniquely twisted and complicated protagonist. Furthermore, bearing in mind Byron Almén's definition of musical narrative, I will explore how *The Downward Spiral* relates to the concept albums and narrative musics produced before it. Finally, in addition to situating *The Downward Spiral* in its historical context, I will examine the music and lyrical devices Reznor uses to create a holistic album, which juxtaposes man with machine, and tells a complete story of one individual's bizarre path to self-destruction.

#### The Downward Spiral as Industrial Music

The Downward Spiral is commonly credited with bringing industrial music to mainstream America. Trent Reznor himself has had a lot to say about this issue of being "America's industrial band" and about the tendency of the music industry in general to attempt to classify all bands. In an interview with Beat Magazine, he responded to the question, "Is the industrial rock label appropriate?" with the words "they need to pigeonhole you as something, [...] we became the definitive industrial band in America which I think is ridiculous

personally. [...] I don't know what we are and I'm not worried about it."<sup>12</sup>
However, regardless of Reznor's own acceptance or rejection of the label, *The Downward Spiral* draws a lot from the industrial music tradition and the album helped to bring industrial music to a greater audience, thus expanding the cultural influence of the genre as whole.

According to Alan Di Perna, the term "Industrial Music" was coined by Peter Christophersen of the band Throbbing Grissle in the late 1970's. <sup>13</sup> Karen Collins writes, "Industrial music was created originally by using mechanical and electric machinery, and later advanced to synthesizers, samplers and electronic percussion as the technology developed. It is commonly built around 'non-musical' and often distorted, repetitive, percussive sounds of industrial machinery." <sup>14</sup> Thus, industrial music is a reasonably new phenomenon, which depends on the use of nascent technology (relatively speaking) for its very creation. However, though the purely musical aspects of industrial are based upon new technology, the themes present in the lyrics and bolstered by the music are drawn from slightly older artistic traditions, notably the DaDa movement, which thrived in the early 1920's, the Beatnik movement of the 1950's, and the literary tradition of the dystopian novel pioneered by George

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Gaby Boffa, "Nail Gun," interview with Trent Reznor, *Beat Magazine*, March 23, 1994,

http://www.theninhotline.net/archives/articles/manager/display\_article.php?id=550.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Alan Di Perna, "Machine Head," interview with Trent Reznor, *Guitar World Magazine*, April 1994,

http://www.theninhotline.net/archives/articles/manager/display\_article.php?id=555.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Karen Collins, "Dead Channel Surfing: The commonalities between cyberpunk literature and industrial music." *Popular Music* 24.2 (2005): 166.

Orwell's 1984.

Two aspects of the Dada movement have been especially influential for industrial music. The first of these is the Dada's "fear of the encroachment of technology into the human realm." <sup>15</sup> Much of industrial music demonstrates (ironically, because of its own dependence upon machines) a similar fear that the development of technology will eventually be the downfall of the human race. In *The Downward Spiral*, this manifests in the narrator's struggle against his transformation into a machine. Also from the Dada movement, industrial music has taken the idea of collage. This for the Dadas involved "the appropriation of everyday objects [...] a kind of sampling of the mass media which would 'attack the bourgeoisie with distortions of its own communications imagery'."16 Collage plays an important role in industrial music because of the prevalence of sampling - most industrial artists draw from a wide range of samples taken both from other music and from the world at large. These samples are cut up, altered, and repeated throughout songs and albums and make up the base of many industrial artists' work. For *The Downward Spiral*, Reznor drew on a bank of roughly 3000 samples assembled from movies and other albums; some notable examples include the kick drum sampled on "Closer" from the Iggy Pop song, "Nightclubbing," and the female voice sampled on "Reptile," from the movie, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. These samples are cycled

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Collins, "Dead Channel Surfing," 167.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Collins, "Dead Channel Surfing," 167.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Greg Rule, "TRENT REZNOR," interview with Trent Reznor, *Keyboard Magazine*, April, 1994, http://www.9inchnails.com/articles/trent-reznor-keyboard.php. Steve Huey, review of *The Downward Spiral*, by Nine Inch Nails,

throughout individual songs and across the album; they change and are made to sound like things other than what they are, just as pictures may become unrecognizable within a collage. The Dada's motivation for using collage—to turn certain aspects of a society around and present them in a distorted and revealing way—is also the motivation for using this medium in *The Downward Spiral*, which draws many of its sounds for a tortured soul from early 90's mass media.

In addition to similarities with the Dada movement, industrial music has a great deal in common with the writings of the Beatniks and dystopian novels.

Themes commonly dealt with in these genres include dehumanization, machines triumphing over men, men lacking in direction and being incapable of connecting with one another, and authority being unstoppable and all consuming. Every single one of these themes is present in *The Downward Spiral*.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* stands as an obvious example of a dystopian work, which takes dehumanization as its primary theme. The characters in this novel, all of who are symbolic of specific human personae, are portrayed as different sorts animals; the novel details the workings of this "animal" community. Much of *The Downward Spiral* seems to parallel this earlier work. The humans in *The Downward Spiral* are themselves similarly referred to as animals—specifically, as pigs, reptiles, flies and sheep. Reznor also dehumanizes his narrator in a completely different way; rather than being

allmusic, 2010,

http://www.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=10:hjfuxqugldae.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1945).

characterized as an animal, he is characterized as a machine.

Just as *Animal Farm* provides a clear example for the theme of dehumanization, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, arguably the defining work of the Beatnik movement, creates the prototype for a protagonist who lacks direction and has difficulty connecting with others and thereby becoming grounded. Sal Paradise, the protagonist in *On the Road*, spends the novel traversing the length of the country, and fading quickly in and out of people's lives in a mess of drugs, alcohol, and sex.<sup>19</sup> Sal is not so different from the protagonist of *The Downward Spiral*, who likewise has difficulty establishing meaningful human connections, and resorts to sex and drugs as escape mechanisms.

Yet another novel by George Orwell, 1984 demonstrates the typical presentation of authority figures in dystopian novels.<sup>20</sup> The authority figure usually maintains complete control over the citizen populous and drastically limits the freedoms of any and all people who he or she holds mastery over. As in 1984, this situation is true in *The Downward Spiral* where the freedom of the people is so greatly limited that they are reduced to an animal-like state. They have entirely lost their identities as individuals, and even when the narrator addresses another human in a friendly manner, he refers to him as Piggy.

Now that the similarities between *The Downward Spiral* and the themes of dystopian novels should be clear, it is important to recognize that there is also a difference. Discussing the representation of the hero character in the dystopian novel, Karen Collins writes, "the hero is rarely the macho Hollywood all-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking Press, 2007).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> George Orwell, 1984 (New York: Chelsea House, 1987).

American stereotype; the hero is nearly always an outsider, an alienated social misfit, disempowered, and a member of some 'underclass' of citizens."<sup>21</sup> The *Downward Spiral's* hero is clearly a misfit, separated from the rest of humanity. He finds his fellow humans unrelatable because while he is becoming a machine, they are moving in the opposite direction and becoming animals. However, the protagonist of the Downward Spiral differs from other dystopian protagonists in that while he is an outsider, he is not necessarily one who is good-hearted or strong. He fights a battle against the all-consuming authority of the Ruiner (the album's antagonist), but it is unclear whether he does this to save the rest of humanity or out of his own jealousy and resentment. Finally, *The Downward* Spiral's hero is different in that he loses the battle against both the Ruinder and himself, and ultimately fails to survive his own on-going metamorphosis. Thus, The Downward Spiral ends with no change to the totalitarian state and with the death of its hero. This sends a nihilistic message about the potential for success for humans against the machines, a message that differs from common dystopian novels and Dadaist art, which at least encourage humans to fight back. Even though this ending is seen in dystopian novels, the fact that it is brought about by the hero's fundamental failings is unique to *The Downward Spiral*.

#### The Downward Spiral in the History of Narrative Music

The idea of a musical work that parallels or is based upon an outside narrative is not a new one. Roger Scruton indicates that program music was established by 1700, citing Johann Kuhnau's Biblical Sonatas for keyboard, Nos.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Karen Collins, "Dead Channel Surfing," 171.

1-6, as early examples.<sup>22</sup> Thus, pieces with narrative components have been written for centuries. Clearly, however, the narrative component of a piece changes a great deal and is made vastly more specific by adding a lyrical component. *The Downward Spiral* is thus part of a tradition, which became popularized in the 1960's of concept albums, whose roots may plausibly be traced back to the song cycles of Schubert and Schumann in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup>

Although *The Downward Spiral* clearly comes from the same tradition as albums that are referred to as concept albums, whether or not it is a concept album depends on the definition of the term (something that is not widely agreed upon). On one end of the spectrum, Alan Parsons, an engineer for both *Dark Side of the Moon* and *Abbey Road*, said when interviewed that for something to be a concept album "it just means that there is a feeling or a link between each of the songs or each of the tracks." By this definition, a large percentage of the albums released after the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, may be described as concept albums. Alternatively, an article published in Variety Magazine in the late 70's, explicitly uses the term to refer to something much more specific, describing in detail the release of three albums, all of which depict stories with complex and involved plots. This idea, however, seems much more

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Programme Music," by Roger Scruton, accessed Sept. 30, 2010, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/article/grove/music/22394

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Edward L. Macan. *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1996), 20, 43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> David Montgomery, "The Rock Concept Album: Context and Analysis," Interview with Alan Parsons, (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2002), 203.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Meyr, "Arrival of the Concept Album," *Variety*, July 12, 1978, 58.

reminiscent of a rock opera, something which Allan Moore says is an album that "needs a consistent narrative."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, given this spectrum of concept album to rock opera, *The Downward Spiral* seems to fall somewhere in the middle between rock opera and concept album. It does not have a clear linear narrative, but it is also united by more than just a theme or an aesthetic. The album has characters that evolve throughout its progression, and at least one major, definable plot event (the narrator's suicide).

The Downward Spiral is most directly influenced by the concept albums of David Bowie and Lou Reed, as Reznor himself has observed.<sup>27</sup> Because of the success of Sgt. Pepper, which David Montgomery asserts "was intended as a complete package, a tactile experience, and something to be consumed visually as well as aurally," the LP as a unit with a unifying concept started to be a more lucrative sales opportunity for record companies post-1967.<sup>28</sup> Both David Bowie and Lou Reed were products of this trend. Bowie's first truly successful album, The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars, had an explicit narrative and involved Bowie assimilating the personality of his protagonist to the point that "it became impossible to separate his own identity from the Ziggy Stardust alter-ego."<sup>29</sup> In contrast, Lou Reed used his own persona in his most influential (if albeit not his most successful) album, Berlin, a 'story,' which

d=597.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Allan F. Moore, *The Beatles: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997), 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Keith Duemling, "Talking about Nothing with Trent Reznor," Interveiw with Trent Reznor, *Axcess Magazine*, July 28, 1994, http://www.theninhotline.net/archives/articles/manager/display\_article.php?i

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Montgomery, "The Rock Concept Album," 29-30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Montgomery, "The Rock Concept Album," 292.

"follows an abused courtship through a maze of abuse and drug addiction."30

Thematically, it is clear that both these artists influenced Reznor. Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* deals with "themes of mind control, messianic androgyny, sci-fi, rock 'n' roll, stardom, and the apocalypse," many of which are common to *The Downward Spiral*. Furthermore, *The Downward Spiral*, shares in common with *Berlin* its autobiographical qualities as well as its obsession with dysfunctional and drug-ridden relationships. Last but not least and most direct in terms of its influence, is Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*. This album is often cited as beginning industrial music, and thus founding the tradition that Reznor popularized.

#### The Downward Spiral Plot Summary

The Downward Spiral centers around a narrator whose life is defined through a variety of insecurities and mental instabilities. Because the album is a narrative that is told both through its music and its lyrics, each song is important. Some songs, however, are clearly more pivotal than others in moving the album's "plot" forward and in demonstrating the key ways in which the music and lyrics interact to tell the story. Furthermore, an in depth analysis of a few specific songs allows for a more detailed perspective on the interactions between the music and the lyrics that can be found throughout the album.

Therefore, this section will provide a brief song-by-song plot summary, while the

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 30}$  Montgomery, , "The Rock Concept Album," 314.

<sup>31</sup> Montgomery, "The Rock Concept Album," 294.

next sections will provide an overview of compositional techniques and in depth analysis of selected songs that are turning points in the album.

In the album's first song, "Mr. Self Destruct," the listener is introduced to the narrator's alter ego, to whom the narrator gives the fitting name of Mr. Self Destruct. The narrator conceives of this alter ego as being responsible for all of the negative aspects of his life: his weakness, drug addiction, metamorphosis from man to machine, etc.... The alter ego in turn accepts responsibility for all of the negative aspects of the narrator's character by repeating the refrain "and I control you," but at the same time, he claims that he is simply trying to realize the narrator's true wants and needs with the repeated lines "I take you where you want to go/I give you all you need to know."

After "Mr. Self Destruct" the album turns in a different direction with "Piggy." In "Piggy," the narrator seems to address a friend, but one he refers to as "pig," "piggy," and "my little pig." This is the only example on the album of the narrator "connecting" to another human being in a friendly way (apart from his sick and twisted connection with his love interest). Thus, while portraying the narrator attempting to reach out to his fellow men, "Piggy," also introduces the narrator's disillusionment with the rest of humanity, who he thinks are becoming more and more like animals rather than civilized humans. "Piggy "begins to give the album its distinct nihilistic flavor with the repeated refrain that ends the song (and will be repeated even more later on the album) of "nothing can stop me now/ I don't care anymore."

The album's third song "Heresy" further expounds upon the narrator's nihilism by repeating the phrase over and over, "your god is dead and no one cares." In addition, "Heresy" introduces the character of the Ruiner (although not by name). The Ruiner is the Orwellian authority figure, whom the narrator blames for the rest of humanities' debasement to an animalistic state. (He refers to the Ruiner as "keeping his flock of sheep in line.") The narrator however does not consider himself better than this authority figure, condemning both the Ruiner and himself to hell ("if there is a hell I'll see you there"). This is a hint to the album's listeners that the narrator is not a traditional hero, since even he does not consider himself to hold a moral high ground.

In "March of the Pigs" the narrator seems to conceive of himself as the champion of the pigs (the debased humans). However, his true motivations seem to lie closer to a simple love for destruction and hatred for the Ruiner, than any real affection for his fellow man. "March of the Pigs" is also a clear example of the narrator associating himself with something living and animalistic ("bite chew suck away the tender parts"), which stands in contrast to the his mechanical descriptions of himself in the second half of the album.

In the fifth song, "Closer," the narrator gets even more in touch with his carnal side, repeating the phrase "I wanna fuck you like an animal." In "Closer," he demonstrates his tendency to self-define through entities outside himself. He first did this through Mr. Self Destruct, and now he defines himself through his love interest (later to be named Annie). At this point in the album, the listener may see a pattern – the only ways the narrator can relate to his fellow man are

physical i.e. sex and violence. These attempts, though futile, clearly demonstrate animalistic tendencies on the narrator's part (which will disappear eventually disappear). Finally, "Closer" shows the narrator's mixed relationship with religion – he has already rejected God in "Heresy" ("your god is dead and no one cares"), yet he still hopes for salvation, singing the phrase, "you get me closer to God," as if this is a positive aspect of his relationship with Annie.

The album's sixth song, "Ruiner," is the title song for the authority figure introduced in "Heresy." In "Ruiner" the listener begins to see the narrator treating the Ruiner not only as a source of governmental authority, but also as a sexual and romantic rival, singing the phrase, "How'd you get so big?/ How'd you get so strong?/ How'd you get so hard?/ How'd you get so long?" In addition, the narrator throughout "Ruiner" seems to resent not only the Ruiner himself, but the rest of humanity (who he refers to as flies and cattle) for following him. The narrator ends the song by returning to the phrase from "Piggy," "nothing can stop me now," but at this point in the album, it is less and less believable.

"The Becoming" marks the point on the album where the narrator must begin to fight his change from man to machine in earnest. The narrator names many features of himself that are no longer human, specifically that he has "circuitry" and that his "blood has stopped pumping." He calls his love interest Annie by name, and cries out to her for help, "Annie, hold a little tighter I might just slip away." After this song, the narrator becomes worse and worse at asking for help and more and more resentful of Annie, who he associates both with his drug problem (which is subtly referenced throughout the album) and with the

Ruiner. Finally, in "the Becoming" the narrator reminds us that he conceives of his metamorphosis as being caused by Mr. Self-destruct, singing "it won't give up it wants me dead/ goddamn this noise inside my head."

The eighth song, "I Do Not Want This," is a continuation of the abrupt downward plunge of "the Becoming." The narrator has become resentful of Annie, singing, "don't tell me that you care/ there really isn't anything is there?" At the same time, he is aware that he needs help, admitting quietly near the song's end "maybe this is a cry for help." In "I Do Not Want This," the narrator oscillates wildly between anger, fear, and attempted acceptance and it is clear that he has lost what level of emotional stability he once had—this will be the point on the album from which there is no return.

After "I Do Not Want This" the narrator goes silent for the ninth and tenth songs. "Big Man with a Big Gun," the ninth song, is sung from the perspective of the Ruiner. This song sets up a contrast between the Ruiner and narrator—the Ruiner is confident and in control of his life in every way that the narrator is not. He is the master of his destiny with respect to his love life, his mental state, and his control over the rest of humanity (when the Ruiner sings "nothing can stop me now," it is believable). "A Warm Place," the tenth song, is an instrumental that seems to echo musically the narrator's assertion in "I Do Not Want This" that he is drowning. The narrator finally resurfaces vocally at the end of "Eraser," the eleventh song. The lyrics are simple – the narrator sings a first list of statements (need you/ dream you/ find you/ taste you/ fuck you/ use you/ scar you/ break you) all of which tie him to Annie and make her physically his

only remaining connection to the human world. In contrast, he ends with a second list, "lose me/ hate me/ smash me/ erase me/ kill me," which make it clear that Annie will not connect him to humanity, but rather she will destroy him.

The album's twelfth song, "Reptile," begins with the sounds of a machine starting up; this is meant to signal to the listener that the metamorphosis is complete and the narrator is now more machine than man. In "Reptile," the narrator cements both his hatred and his sick love for Annie, saying that "she has the blood of reptiles" and calling her an "infection," a "disease" and a "whore." The narrator seems to have also entirely given in to his own downward spiral, stating "I now know the depths I reach are limitless."

The narrator's suicide in the album's thirteenth song, *The Downward Spiral*, does not come as a surprise. The narrator shoots himself in the head, whispering under a much louder human scream "so much blood from such a tiny hole." Thus, it turns out the narrator did still have blood in his veins after all (implying that the entire metamorphosis into a machine may have been in his head). Even at the end, he is sadistically ironic, stating "problems do have solutions, you know."

The album's final song "Hurt," which is sung from the grave, sends a strange, mixed message of both nihilistic despair and twisted hope. The narrator bitterly understates, "I hurt myself today [having just committed suicide]/ to see if I still feel." He sings the phrase, "everyone I know goes away in the end," as if he has no regrets at his death and is at peace with it, but leaves the listener with

the last words, "if I could start again/ a million miles away/ I would keep myself/ I would find a way."

#### **Compositional Techniques and Narrative on the Downward Spiral**

Before launching into specific song analyses, I will provide an overview of compositional techniques used to unify the album and create a narrative. Apart from the obvious narrative component of the words, there are several identifiable lyrical devices used by Trent Reznor throughout the album, which give the album the sense of being a whole piece sung primarily by a single voice. Reznor repeats short words and phrases such as "care," and "hurt," and "nothing can stop me now." He also repeats both words and phrases with varying emphases at different points on the album and sometimes with one or more words changed from song to song. This combination of repetition and subtle change sometimes give a sense of build and progress, and other times depicts a compulsive search for perfection on the part of the narrator. In addition to his use of repetition, Reznor utilizes imagery of animals, machines and of drug use. The narrator talks about several different sorts of animals, all of which either maintain a herd or hive instinct or are perceived as being disgusting or repulsive; these include pigs, sheep, flies, insects, and reptiles. The narrator's fixation on the rest of humanity as being part of a herd accentuates his own delusions about being the sort of strong individual who will save them. In direct opposition to this animal imagery, on the later half of the album the narrator

begins to refer to himself in terms that one would generally use for describing a computer or a machine.

In further contrast to the machine imagery, the narrator uses the drug references on the album to accentuate the living, feeling part of himself. These images center around depictions of needles and of skin and they make two things clear to us as listeners: first, that the kinds drugs the narrator is using are probably very intense and dangerous (the sort that require injection), and second, that the narrator associates these drugs with maintaining his sense of humanity – to take them he punctures the skin, not the metal, which still covers his body. Finally, Reznor's use of naming is a significant lyrical feature of the album. It is telling, that every character on the album is given a name, except for the narrator himself: the alter ego is called "Mr. Self Destruct," the rival is called "the Ruiner," and the girlfriend is named simply "Annie." The narrator's failure to give himself a name demonstrates his need to self identify through others, and his ultimate failure to find a sense of self before he has become too many parts of a machine.

In addition to the above lyrical devices, there are recurring themes and techniques in the album's music. Throughout the album, the level of the vocals in the mix changes depending on the emotional honesty of the narrator. When the narrator sings something truthful, which he does not actually wish the listener to hear or understand, the vocals tend to be lower in the mix or distorted; conversely, when the narrator tries to assert false confidence, the vocals are clear and loud. Animal and machine noises constitute major portions of the

album's music, reinforcing these themes in the lyrics. There are many points when these two forces seem to battle, highlighting one of the central problems of the album, that is that the narrator leaves no room for humanity amongst animals and machines. Finally, the album as a whole juxtaposes distortion and synthesized percussion and with melodicism and percussion that is played live. Whereas both distortion and synthesized percussion are widely used throughout the album, clear melodic lines and live instruments are used sparingly. These pure melodies and humanly-played instruments seem to represent the threads of the narrator's own humanity, while both the distortion and the synthesized percussion represent different aspects of his metamorphosis into a machine, and his self-delusion.

I will now explore the use of these devices in three songs: "Piggy," "I Do Not Want This," and "Reptile." All three of these songs represent key turning points on the album, and thus deserve closer attention.

#### **Piggy: Lyrical Analysis**

The Downward Spiral's second song, "Piggy," gives the only sign on the entire album that the narrator has made an attempt to "reach out" to the rest of humanity; unfortunately, "Piggy" also shows us that this attempt has failed and that the narrator is resolved live alone. Table 1 (below) provides the lyrics with an outline of the song's form. Throughout verses 1 and 2, the narrator addresses another human in terms that seem initially to be of endearment ("piggy," and "my little pig"). Furthermore, the narrator says, "there's a lot of things I hoped

you could help me understand" (verse 2), thus showing that he at some point had a desire to have a normal human support system. Both of these things seem to indicate that the narrator has not always embraced the solitary state in which he lives for most of the album. Unfortunately, the rest of the verse lyrics demonstrate that the narrator's attempts at friendship have already failed. The narrator sings, "black and blue and broken bones/ you left me here, I'm all alone/ my little piggy needed something new" (verse 1). These lyrics demonstrate a sense of abandonment; apparently, the narrator has been physically injured (presumably sometime before the album's beginning), and was not defended by his "friends." Furthermore, the second part of this statement, "my little piggy needed something new," shows hints of the narrator's resentment, which will only grow over the course of the album. This statement gives a sarcastic, rather than an endearing, sense to the term "piggy" - the narrator's "friend" has seemingly left him because something or someone shinier and newer has come alone. This "something new," which is referred to is presumably an allusion to Ruiner. Thus, even in the album's first song the narrator subtly harps on the fact that humanity has fallen under the sway of his "rival" and so he likens them to a herd of pigs.

Table 1: Formal Outline for "Piggy"

| Section | Time        | Lyrics  |
|---------|-------------|---|
| Verse 1 | 0.00 - 0.45 | hey pig yeah you hey pig piggy pig pig all of my fears came true black and blue and broken bones you left |

|                          |             | me here I'm all alone<br>my little piggy needed something new   |
|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| Chorus                   | 0.46 – 1.14 | nothing can stop me now cause I don't care anymore nothing can stop me now cause I don't care [4 lines repeated once]   |
| Verse 2                  | 1.15 – 1.50 | hey pig nothing's turning out the way I planned hey pig there's a lot of things I hoped you could help me understand what am I supposed to do I lost my shit because of you |
| Break                    | 2.21 – 2.24 |   |
| Extended<br>Chorus/Outro | 2.25 – 4.24 | Nothing can stop me now (3x) Nothing can stop me [multiple repetitions]   |

Thematically, these verse lyrics tie into the greater picture of the album. Right of the bat, the narrator himself dehumanizes those around him by referring to them as pigs; in this way, he immediately disassociates himself from them and demonstrates his tendency to polarize things in terms of animal and machine. Conversely, Reznor makes a point of referring to the narrator's physical injury, his broken bones and bruises, thus accenting the fact that this song is the album's second song and the narrator is not yet struggling with his transformation into a machine.

In contrast to the normal lyrical variation in the verses, the chorus and the second half of the song both have the narrator repeating two phrases: "nothing can stop me now," and "I don't care anymore" (chorus and extended chorus/outro). The first of these two phrases is the most commonly repeated on the album, appearing again in both "Ruiner" and "Big Man with a Gun." Here in "Piggy," the first phrase conveys the relatively positive outlook of the narrator; he believes this is a true statement and is confident in his own supremacy and moral high ground. However, the presentation of this phrase within the song also conveys that the narrator is both obsessive and compulsive. "Nothing can stop me now" is repeated for almost an entire minute in isolation, from 2:25-3:50, without the answering phrase "cause I don't care anymore." During this minute and a half, the narrator changes the ways in which he speaks this phrase. He begins with the rhythmic spacing given in Table 2. This pattern occurs four times. After these repetitions finish at 3:23, the phrase starts to occur over four bars instead of two. Consequently, it is at this point that the music starts to completely overpower the words, and so the narrator needs more time to generate the effort to speak. Additionally, the narrator, apparently stumbling over the words because of the power of the music, varies his placement in the four bars dramatically (Table 3). By the last repetition, the narrator cannot even get all the words out and say only "Nothing can st." Thus, it is as if the narrator believes that if he says this phrase enough times, in the right way and against all odds, he will create truth or perfection.

**Table 2: Repetitive Rhythmic Transcription for the Outro** 

| Bar 1   |       |      |        | Bar 2 |   |    |   |
|---------|-------|------|--------|-------|---|----|---|
| 1       | 2     | 3    | 4      | 1     | 2 | 3  | 4 |
| Nothing | can   | stop | me now |       |   |    |   |
| Nothing | can   | stop | me now |       |   |    |   |
| Nothing | can   | stop | me now |       |   |    |   |
| No      | thing |      | can    | stop  |   | me |   |

Table 3: Breaking down Rhythmic Transcription for the Outro

| Bar 1   |       |   |            | Bar 2 |      |    |     |
|---------|-------|---|------------|-------|------|----|-----|
| 1       | 2     | 3 | 4          | 1     | 2    | 3  | 4   |
| No      | thing |   | can        | stop  |      | me |     |
| now     |       |   |            |       |      |    |     |
| No      | thing |   | can        | stop  |      | me |     |
| [p] now |       |   |            |       |      |    |     |
| No      | thing |   | can        | stop  |      | me | now |
| No      | thing |   | [p] can st |       | sttt |    |     |

<sup>\* ----</sup> indicates sustain through multiple beats

This same phrase in "Ruiner" has greatly different connotations. The narrator is clearly not the one with the upper hand (as he believes he is in "Piggy") and the words follows the hyperbolic assertion, "nothing can hurt me," which comes after the narrator has already admitted that the Ruiner's actions, "fucked him up." Finally, in "Big Man with a Gun," the phrase no longer belongs to the narrator, and is sung confidently by the Ruiner himself, while the narrator stands mute. Thus, the effort the narrator puts into this phrase in "Piggy" is indicative of how important it is for him to believe its truth, and the repetition of the phrase later on the album proves it to be ultimately false.

The second phrase in the chorus of "Piggy," "I don't care anymore," introduces the theme of caring vs. not doing so to the album. This is an issue that the narrator obsesses over and that comes up again in "Heresy" and "I Do Not

<sup>\* [</sup>p] indicates out of time pause

Want This." In "Heresy," the narrator expands his assertion to be "no one cares," rather than just "I don't care," and in "I Do Not Want This," he snaps, "don't tell me that you care." All three of these statements display varying degrees of disconnect. It makes sense that the narrator claims that he personally doesn't care – after all, we know from the verse lyrics of "Piggy" that his attempt to connect with others has failed. It even makes sense that the narrator expands this phrase to a generic, "no one cares," he clearly believes that the rest of humanity has left him for dead. The truly disturbing point is in "I Don't Want This," when the narrator indicates through the phrase, "don't tell me that you care," that he believes Annie, his love interest on the album has forsaken. We will come to realize in the analysis of "I Do Not Want This" that Annie's caring is essential the narrator's survival as a human being.

### **Piggy: Musical Analysis**

The music of "Piggy" provides a description of the fundamentally human place in which the narrator begins the album. "Piggy" has the fewest and the simplest synthesized components of any song on the album (potentially with the exception of "Hurt," the album's "epilogue"). Concurrently, "Piggy" has the most live/acoustic instrumentation. Both of these facts are in accordance with the notion that on *The Downward Spiral* melody and live/acoustic instruments symbolize humanity.

The synthesized components on "Piggy" include three sounds: the sound that resembles change jangling in a pocket in the song's opening (first appearing at 0:01), the brief bursts of static (and other semi-mechanical sounds) that

happen throughout the song (first appearing at 0:35 and 0:46), but disappear quickly, and the animal/human screaming sounds that fade in and out (first appearing at 1:26). The first of these sounds conjures up the image of a regular man walking along, while the last literally utilizes the cries of living things. Thus, while the mechanical side of the album tries to break through in the bursts of static, even the synthesized sounds on "Piggy" are atypically meant to accentuate the narrator's humanity.

Instead of synthesized drums, the song is sonically populated by a wandering vocal melody, a clear bass line, organ chords, and late in its second half, a keyboard melody. The vocal melody in the verses of "Piggy" contrasts with all other melodies on the album, in that it is not at all repetitive – the first and second verses employ entirely different tunes, and even within the verses themselves, no really repetition exists. Thus, the verses of "Piggy," being melodic and conversational, communicate with the listener with an openness that is not encountered again on *The Downward Spiral*. Adding to this human element, the organ chords played in Verse 2 (Example 1) at 1:14 are the first example on the album of a recurring motive.

Example 1: Organ Chords in "Piggy"



This motive in particular reappears again on "Closer" and on "The Downward Spiral." Because of the placement of the motive on these three specific songs, these chords seem to symbolize the narrator's human side. The human element

is demonstrated physically and emotionally in "Piggy," and it is obvious as the narrator asserts himself as a sexual being during "Closer." Even in "The Downward Spiral," the motive is in a twisted way a representation of the narrator's humanity; the narrator kills himself to prove that he still can, and to prove that there is something in him still alive enough to die and not become all machine.

Finally, "Piggy" is the only song on the *The Downward Spiral* to incorporate live drumming. Much of the song's second half (2:37-3:55) is made up of an extended drum solo, performed by Trent Reznor himself, under the repeated lyrics, "nothing can stop me now." This drum solo is a unique experience on the album; it is the only point where the narrator's humanity seems to be unleashed in an extended and almost uncontrollable way. Interestingly, this solo drowns out the lyrics, the controlled repetition of "nothing can stop me now." It is almost as if the narrator's inner need for connection and expression is trouncing his own compulsive desire to assert individual superiority.

Thus, musically "Piggy" demonstrates melodicism, a lack of synthesized percussion, and the only use of live drumming on the album. Lyrically, "Piggy" displays the narrator's humanity and his only (if half-hearted) attempt to reach out to his fellow men make. And so, "Piggy" a distinct example of the narrator's human beginning that may be contrasted with both his middle in "I Do Not Want This," and his end in "Reptile."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Greg Rule, "TRENT REZNOR."

#### I Do Not Want This: Lyrical Analysis

In the album's eighth song, "I Do Not Want This," the narrator has crossed the halfway point in his transition from man to machine. He repeats the title of the song many times, as if this blunt expression of desire will bring about change, but it is clear that he is past the point of no return, and his wants are painfully irrelevant. Whereas in the previous song, "The Becoming," the narrator's "blood stopped pumping," now in "I Do Not Want This," he makes reference to himself as being "made of clay," and he states that with "bamboo puncturing this skin/ nothing comes bleeding out of me." The narrator focuses in on his blood and skin as the inner and outer representations of himself as a living being, and he finds that although he has the outer appearance of being a man (his skin), he is no longer human on the inside.

Table 2: Formal Outline for "I Do Not Want This"

| Section               | Time        | Lyrics   |
|-----------------------|-------------|--|
| Verse 1 (type 1)      | 0.00 - 0.32 | I'm losing ground you know how this world can beat you down I'm made of clay I fear I'm the only one who thinks this way   |
| Verse 1<br>(type 2)   | 0.33 - 0.49 | bamboo puncturing this skin and nothing comes bleeding out of me just like a waterfall I'm drowning in two feet below the surface I can still make out your wavy face and if I could just reach you maybe I could leave this place |
| Refrain<br>1(based on | 0.50 - 1.04 | I do not want this (4x)  |

| verse type 1) Refrain 2          | 1.05 – 1.21 | Don't you tell me how I feel(3x) You don't know just how I feel  |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Break                            | 1.22 - 1.38 |  |
| Verse 2<br>(Type 1)              | 1.39 - 2.10 | I stay inside my bed I have lived so many lives all in my head don't tell me that you care there really isn't anything, is there?  |
| Verse 2<br>(Type 2)              | 2.11 – 2.25 | you would know, wouldn't you? you extend your hand to those who suffer to those who know what it really feels like to those who've had a taste like that means something and oh so sick I am and maybe I don't have a choice and maybe that is all I have and maybe this is a cry for help |
| Refrain 1(based on verse type 1) | 2.26 – 2.42 | I do not want this (4x)  |
| Refrain 2                        | 2.43 – 2.58 | Don't you tell me how I feel(3x) You don't know just how I feel  |
| Outro                            | 2.59 – 5.41 | I want to know everything I want to be everywhere I want to fuck everyone in the world I want to do something that matters [4 lines repeated multiple time]  |

Table 2 provides an outline of the form of "I Do Not Want This" with the lyrics and times on the track. Everything about the song is meant to demonstrate the narrator's dualistic state and his emotional instability as a result of this dualism. In the first type 1 verse, the narrator makes a list of

general statements, which tell us nothing about his situation except that he feels somewhat defeated and afraid. These lyrics are conversational, the narrator sings, "you know how this world can beat you down," as if his situation is one that your average person might be able to relate to and sympathize with. He says, "I fear I'm the only one who thinks this way," as if expecting someone to reassure him that he is not. The only possible hint that the narrator is in a really bad place is his statement, "I'm made of clay," which at this point could mean anything and is sufficiently obscure as to hide any meaningful feeling.

In contrast to the first type 1 verse, the first type 2 verse is full of detailed imagery, which, while still being relatively oblique, is potentially interpretable. As was mentioned earlier, the narrator makes specific reference to his lack of blood, thus situating us in his transformation. After this, he goes on to say, "just like a waterfall I'm drowning in," and we as listeners begin to understand that he feels extremely overwhelmed. His water imagery continues, "two feet below the surface I can still make out your wavy face/ and if I could just reach you maybe I could leave this place." Thus, we see that the narrator has the sensation that he is drowning; however, we are meant to understand that he has not entirely lost hope. He is close to the surface – so close that he can see a face, presumably Annie's, and he feels that she still has the power to pull him out of his downward slide.

Just as the there is an opposition within the first two verses of general vs. specific, the song's two refrains have the same sort of contrast. In the first refrain, the narrator repeats simply, "I do not want this," over and over in a

pleading tone. This is a vulnerable moment and one that seems to correspond with what the narrator has said in both the type 1 and type 2 verses. However, the second refrain cuts in with the narrator screaming, "don't you tell me how I feel," over and over again and ending with, "you don't know just how I feel." This sudden display of resentful anger is a shock and is the first sign of the narrator's lack of emotional grounding.

The second half of the song creates a basis for the type two refrain. The second type 1 verse is again general, but rather than giving sense of vague defeat and fear, we are presented instead with defeat and resentment. The narrator sings, "I stay inside my bed/ I have lived so many lives inside my head." Here, he is too pathetic and lost even to venture out into the world (he doesn't say why). Furthermore, his psychoses and the drama he creates inside his head seem to have rendered him exhausted and incapable of living a normal life. He continues, "don't tell me that you care/ there really isn't anything, is there?" This statement is one of the most important on the album. The narrator has already revealed to us that Annie is the one above the water, the one who can save him and it is thus disturbing that he resents her and believes that she does not care for him. Finally, this last question is disturbing anyway you look at it. Either the narrator dismisses what he has had with Annie (and thereby dismisses what he has acknowledged is his only change at salvation) or he dismisses "everything," and life itself.

The second type 2 verse does away with metaphors, but like the first type 2 verse is specific (as opposed to general) when compared with its type one

counter part. The narrator opens with a sarcastic and biting tone, "you would know wouldn't you?" He then proceeds to detail exactly what his problem is with Annie, singing, "you extend your hand to those you suffer/ to those who really know what it feels like to those who've had a taste like that means something." The narrator begrudges the fact that Annie seems to sympathize and connect with anyone who has had a drug problem similar to her own. Although the narrator previously (in "Closer") valued his experience with Annie, of which drugs were a major part, he now despises the substance-abuse-related bond that he has with her because it is not something unique to the two of them. Finally, the narrator ends with a series of direct statements, "oh so sick I am/ and maybe I don't have a choice/ and maybe that is all I have/ and maybe this is a cry for help." Here the narrator has come a great distance from the place where he started the song. He acknowledges that he is extremely sick, and that the song is in essence a demonstration of his extreme confusion, and potentially inescapable issues.

"I Do Not Want This" ends with a regression to the sort of absurd delusions of grandeur to which the narrator is prone throughout the album. He sings, "I wanna know everything/ I wanna be everywhere/ I wanna fuck everyone in the world/ I wanna do something that matter." Even after revealing, his fear, anger, desperation, resentment, depression, and instability, the narrator still regresses to the defense mechanism of false bravado.

Thus, "I Do Not Want This" presents a complex structure, the first half of which depicts the narrator as the pathetic, a fearful human being pleading to his

lover to save him with the words, "I do not want this," and the second half of which pictures the angry, resentful half-human, who screams in the type two refrain, "don't you tell me how I feel." These two pictures when combined show someone who is divided and unstable, and this emotional division corresponds with the narrator's actual division between man and machine.

## I Do Not Want This: Musical Analysis

The music of "I Do Not Want This," supports the lyrics in reflecting a point slightly more than halfway along the narrator's transition from man to machine. Additionally, distorted vocals are juxtaposed with clean ones in representing the narrator's anger vs. his helplessness in the refrains. Finally, there is a build in intensity from the song's beginning its end, that is, every section, which repeats old material also incorporates something new. The song thereby creates the sensation of a machine being put together.

The first of the type 1 verses (0:01-0:32) has a sparse background, containing only a loud percussive beat accompanied by a quieter, simple piano line, while the second type 1 verse has the same instrumentation with mechanical sounds (added at 1:46 and 1:53). This minor difference is an obvious example of the "building" feature of the song as a whole. The mechanical sounds in "I Do Not Want This" contrast with the animal sounds of "Piggy" and demonstrate that the narrator himself has progressed on the animal machine spectrum. Vocally, Reznor sets the lyrics of the type 1 verses high in the mix and makes them clearly audibly - this is because these verses are made up of general

statements (e.g. "I'm losing ground") that do not reveal anything too personal or vulnerable, and thus the narrator feels no desire to hide his speech.

Conversely, in the type 2 verses, there is a distinct change in tone, both vocally and instrumentally. In the first of the type 2 verses (0.33-0:49), the percussive beat from the type 1 verse continues, but it is accompanied by the sound of heavy breathing and the piano is almost completely drowned out; the instrumentation in the second type 2 verse is almost identical, but again something is added, this time intermittent bursts of static (2:11-2:25). The music in the type 2 verse again creates an effect of increased intensity by the heavy breathing and other layered elements. The vocals, in contrast with those of the type 1 verses, are whispered and almost impossible to distinguish over the music. It is as if these words are not necessarily part of the song, but rather something the narrator needs to say and is just choosing to hide underneath the music. The subject matter is much more personal and honest, and the narrator fears showing his own weakness. It is impossible to understand many of the lyrics without the liner notes. The picture presented to the listener without written words is thus very different; it shows someone much more belligerently confident than the narrator actually is.

There is a huge dichotomy between the first and second refrain types. In the first type, the narrator sings in a clear and wavering voice, which parallels his words lamentation of "I do not want this"; in the second type, his emotional control snaps and he screams in a distorted voice, "Don't you tell me how I feel." This use of distortion to symbolize the narrator's angry, solitary side (the side

which allows him to be transformed into a machine) is common throughout the album, just as the clearness of the first refrain represents the narrator's vulnerable side and his humanity. The two repetitions of the first refrain are consistent with the pattern already established in the song of building upwards, while the second refrain is the only thing to stay constant in its original form throughout the song. The constancy of the second refrain suggests that this angry, distorted shell of a human being is in fact what the rest song will construct.

After the second set of refrains, when the song reaches its outro, we are presented first with a section of space sounds (2:59-3:06) and then with only shifting mechanical noises, as if one were panning over a factory (3:07-4:50). This is in contrast with earlier outros, like that of "Heresy," where there was a battle between the noises of animals and of machines; here the battle has been lost for the animals. Finally, partway through the outro (4:19), the repeated lyrics detailing the narrator's aspirations start quietly and gradually grow louder, more distorted, and more inhuman. Thus, "I Do Not Want This," runs the entire gambit of the album's signature musical and lyrical devices and sets the stage for the narrator's vocal disappearance from album until "Reptile," where he will resurface in nearly pure machine form.

# I Do Not Want This and Narrative Archetypes

"I Do Not Want This" presents an interesting case when compared with the four narrative archetypes presented in Almén's article. The song is strangely static from its beginning until the end of the first refrain at 1:04. It starts at a volume and musical density level that is relatively low when compared with most of the album. Surprisingly, it stays at this level for a long time, changing with respect to its mix during the first type two verse, but not with respect to actual level. This thus conveys a sense of order and stability, which is in a bizarre sort of tension with the picture portrayed by the lyrics of someone who is on the edge of losing control of his entire world.

The first type two refrain presents the foreshadowed loss of control. The sudden upward jolt in dynamic level and in intensity is shocking – clearly, the narrator's anger and despair have overcome his self-control. The rest of the song is thus an exhausting experience of listening to the narrator's anger prevail over his self-control again and again. This song is therefore a reasonably straightforward example of the archetype irony, that is, transgression triumphing over order when our sympathy's lay with order in the hopes that it would win out.

### Reptile

In the album's twelfth song, "Reptile," the narrator has returned from his long silence during "Big Man with a Big Gun," "A Warm Place," and most of "Eraser" as someone who is considerably more machine than man. (See table 3 for the form and lyrics.) The narrator is now at a point where even he accepts there will be no return to humanity, singing, "the depths I reach are limitless" (verse 2). He rejects Annie completely and thus rejects the only person who has any potential to save him. Reptile is the first song in which the narrator refers to

Annie not by name, and not directly as you, but rather as a disassociated she, which is symbolic of how far he has removed himself from her.

Table 3: Formal Outline for "Reptile"

| Intro part 1                       | 0.00 - 0.58 |  |
|------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Intro part 2                       | 0.58 - 1.28 |  |
| Verse 1                            | 1.29 – 2.28 | she spreads herself wide open to let the insects in she leaves a trail of honey to show me where she's been she has the blood of reptile just underneath her skin seeds from a thousand others drip down from within |
| Chorus                             | 2.29 – 2.58 | oh my beautiful liar<br>oh my precious whore<br>my disease my infection<br>I am so impure  |
| Break 1                            | 2.59 – 3.35 |  |
| Verse 2                            | 3.36 - 4.35 | devils speak of the ways in which she'll manifest angels bleed from the tainted touch of my caress need to contaminate to alleviate this loneliness I now know the depths I reach are limitless                      |
| Chorus                             | 4.36 – 5.06 | oh my beautiful liar<br>oh my precious whore<br>my disease my infection<br>I am so impure  |
| Break 2                            | 5.07 – 5.50 |  |
| Chorus<br>(repeated<br>and varied) | 5.51 – 6.52 | oh my beautiful liar oh my precious whore my disease my infection I am so impure [4 lines repeated twice]  |

The narrator no longer asks Annie for help, but rather refers to her as the most evil sort of animal mentioned on the album, a reptile. He continues to conceive of her as a sexual object, but rather than a girlfriend she is a whore grossly tainted with many other lovers, who he refers to as insects saying, "she spreads herself wide open to let the insects in," (verse 1) and "seeds from a thousand others drip down from within" (verse1). The narrator is explicit and graphic with his imagery – he no longer has anything to hide, as he has finally reached the point of no return.

Just as the Ruiner was accused of infecting the human "pigs" with a virus, Annie is now referred to as the narrator's "disease" and his "infection." This stands in direct opposition to the narrator's previous associations of Annie with the role of savior. Now the narrator deems them both evil saying, "devil's speak of the ways in which she'll manifest" (verse 2) and "angles bleed from the tainted touch of my caress" (verse 2).

Finally, as he did in "Closer," ("I drink the honey from your hive") the narrator refers to Annie as having honey, using a thinly veiled euphemism for her having drugs, singing "she leaves a trail of honey to show me where she's been" (verse 1). Thus, "Reptile" employs heavily two of the primary lyrical devices of album, animal imagery and drug imagery. It is the narrator's last cry of bitter anger, and a sort of twisted and a demonstration of a acceptance of his fate before his death in the "The Downward Spiral."

Musically, "Reptile" marks the opposite pole from "Piggy." "Reptile's" intro part 1 begins with a quiet industrial soundscape that has no sense of meter or key. An ascending synthesizer line enters at 0:28 and repeats over the soundscape, but still no sense of beat is introduced. At 0:58 at the beginning of intro part 2, both the ambient machine sounds and the synth line stop and the repeated sound of a much larger machine powering up is played over and over; this repetition introduces meter to the song. The entirety of verse 1 (1:29-2:28) and a great deal of the rest of the song occur over the sound of this much more complicated machine. Thus, the music tells us that the narrator's transformation is near completion, as machine sounds entirely dominate the song. Furthermore, the vocals in the verses of "Reptile" are clearly distinguishable; there is nothing the narrator wants to hide about his resentment for Annie and he has come to accept that there is nothing he can do to reverse his fate (although as the next song, "The Downward Spiral" will prove, he can stop it).

At 2:29 during chorus 1, the background grows increasingly complicated, including chords (rather than just simple lines), a higher synthesizer line, and quieter swarming sounds (the song is after all about Annie and makes many reference to insects). Verse 2 beginning at 3:36 initially seems to be musically identical to verse 1; however, at 3:43 a distorted guitar line is at added and at 4:25 a sound akin to cracking cellophane enters the mix. Thus the sonic texture grows more complicated from verse to verse and a sense of build is created, just as it was in "I Do Not Want This," only now it is the final pieces of the machine that are being added. This same building pattern holds true for the choruses.

Chorus 2 beginning at 4:36 is identical to chorus 1, but for a repeated (very musical) human scream to further complicate and intensify the sound quality. After the second chorus, one can hear a few bars (5:07-5:20) that are tonally similar to "A Warm Place," accompanied by the sounds of human struggle. This section of no vocals continues, but shifts to be made up entirely of distortion and machine sounds; standing in direct opposition to "Piggy." This second break in "Reptile" has virtually no melody, and no unsynthezied or clean instrumentation placing it as the culmination of the narrator's metamorphosis. After break 2, there is a final chorus. Underneath this chorus the narrator screams words that are entirely indistinguishable and sound mechanical and robotic. Thus his human ability to communicate has been entirely removed.

Most of the samples in "Reptile" (and there are many) are taken from horror films (Leviathan, Alien, and A Texas Chainsaw massacre are the ones most commonly suggested by fans, but these are not concretely verifiable). Reznor seems to choose these movies for their sounds of desperation, fear, and destruction—three things that embody the narrator's life at this point in the album. In addition, Mr. Self-destruct, a sort of "inhuman" creature inside the narrator, who is trying to destroy him, puts him in a similar situation to the protagonists of the three above mentioned movies. "Reptile" is the narrator's last song before his suicide and it uses all of the expected devices, namely distortion, synthesizers, and the sounds of machines. It builds a machine on top of him leaving him without his humanity and without a voice to cry for help.

#### Conclusion

Thus, *The Downward Spiral* provides an example of an album, which depicts a narrative through both its lyrics and its music; however, the album does not go about literally telling a story line for line, as a rock opera or a musical theater production would, but rather tells its tale in a way, which is both more texturally subtle, and which leaves more unanswered questions for the inquiring listener to interpret for him or herself. I have talked about the ways in which *The Downward Spiral* relates to those historical trends which influenced it, notably the Dada movement, the Beatniks, the development of the dystopian novel, and those concept albums that came in the decades before it (namely those of David Bowie, and Lou Reed).

Both the album as a whole and individual songs (specifically "I Do Not Want This" as was discussed earlier) relate interestingly to Liska's four narrative archetypes. On one hand, the album presents a situation where the mechanical order imposed by the Ruiner triumphs over the transgression of the album's narrator (even if this transgression is only in the narrator's head) – in this way, the album is a tragedy. On the other hand, Mr. Self Destruct succeeds in transgressing upon the narrator's body, and turning him into a machine, triumphing over the narrator's own attempts to impose order and control over his own mind – in this way, the album falls under the category of irony. Thus Reznor creates a complicated and layered plot, the facets of which fall under multiple different narrative archetypes. Finally, I will discuss how this work, and

narrative works in general, have influenced my own writing and the recording I have done for this thesis.

## The Future Imperfect

For the compositional portion of my thesis, I have recorded thirteen songs from a fourteen song album, which I wrote over the course of the last two and a half years (the fourteenth song is an instrumental, occurring between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> songs that requires a large orchestra and which I did not have the resources or the time to record). This album details the journey of two young adults named Alice and Demian, who set out into a series of underground tunnels in search of a girl by the name of Sierra. Sierra would be about the same age as both Alice and Demian, but she went missing as a child of about 6-7 roughly ten years prior. Both Alice and Demian become convinced for separate and independent reasons that Sierra was intended to be the love of each of their respective lives, and thus they must find her or risk living out their days alone. Part way through the album, after they have become hopelessly lost in the watery, underground tunnels, Alice realizes she has made a horrible mistake and the love of her life is right before her eyes (Demian). Demian, an unwavering idealist, unfortunately does not see things the same way.

Despite the fact that I personally have a very specific narrative in mind, and am able to impart to those listeners of my music with whom I come into direct contact (namely the readers of this paper) my conception of this narrative, I recognize that all of the details of the story are not clearly represented in the lyrics. Rather, the lyrics present a poetic framework for the story, which is open

to multiple interpretations, including those entirely external from the story I personally have in mind.

The album is presented in two halves on either side of the instrumental. Throughout the album there are reoccurring words and themes, which gain different meanings as the story progresses, and which ground the listeners in the fundamentals of the story and of the characters. Some examples include, first, the reoccurring notion of walls and barriers, and how these wall and barriers can or cannot be broken; second, the juxtaposition between obsessively looking at maps vs. succumbing to being totally lost (both figuratively and metaphorically); third, a fixation with meeting vs. subverting generally unreasonable expectations; and finally, references to Plato's forms and lusting after perfection vs. settling for reality. These juxtapositions are reflected in both the lyrics and in the music, and I was deeply affected by the same sort of polarities presented in *The Downward Spiral* and in other albums, notably *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* by the band Wilco, and *Tallahassee* by the band, the

I have included the full lyrical content in Appendix 1 at the end of this thesis. As I consider the lyrics to be an essential part of this music, it is my hope that the music will be listened to in conjunction with reading the words. Enjoy!

## **Appendix 1: Lyrics**

# 1. Very Convincing

What we need is, a jumping off point how 'bout old cartography archives? Maps no one looks at, that'll be sufficiently useless, that'll only get us more lost,

and that's what we want.

That's what we look for.

What we as splinters of carbon need - just stay alive.

It's what we dream about.

What we as the spineless want – sharp-eyed.

Where I take you, these roads not to be followed. Can't use these jaws to swallow. It's a consequence. Find the compass. This place gets too magnetic. I think that we've been misread. It's a steep slope.

Let the first wave come, with the setting sun, the training's done. I'm beautiful and I get my way. Let the first wave come, with the setting sun, the training's done. I'm beautiful and I get my way. X5

### 2. Wonderland

Here's where it seems to be heavy.
Try to avoid what's sharp.
The slow step of deformity.
The bumping and shredding of soft parts.
No glory, fewer cards - how dark.

Cold, paint, and dirty, flowing fast, and too far.
The muddy process of reaching - sickly sexing arms.

What freezes, and what sparks - how dark.

But the quiet says to me, "Go find the turning point." and the turning point says to me, "Come join."

The exodus from Wonderland will be lonely and not worth fighting, but the demons that haunt Wonderland, hold on tightly.

And I'm not one to have needs, but I can't breath.

Here's where we're all kinda ugly.
We rape and pillage the queen.
The creatures are cracked up and nasty.
The psychedelics, the psychos, the scene.
One red, one thousand greens
where we feed

Ankle snapped in the rabbit hole.
Alice not innocent and numb.
A sweaty climb from the rabbit hole.
Alice used and done.
There are dreams, a warm heart, not dark.

But the quiet says to me, "Go find the turning point." and the turning point says to me, "Come join."

The exodus from Wonderland will be lonely and not worth fighting, but the demons that haunt Wonderland, hold on tightly.

And I'm not one to have needs, but I can't breath.

#### 3. Forms

The most geometric of rooms, here the silence breaks itself in equal parts to subdivide the voice.

The most oblique of hearts.

No defensive holes for blind Narcissus, a rare discussion piece.

An air of perfection

lets him keep to himself; lets him keep no one else. A friendless, shameless god of perpetual loneliness. I keep them fresh. My wounds let me know I'm alive. I might as well be dead, every kind of deprived.

But Demian says,
"Only right angles,
clean rooms, precision,
and the raising of walls,"
and Demian's going
to be no one's savior.
He's nobody's lover.
Saving is starving yourself. X2

I'm the child of forms, of morals and fantasies tided. A youth stillborn in the platforms of my mind.

# 4. The Process of Packing

Fate makes us stronger but it's gonna take a lot to give this weight, to make the story a little bit longer. It's gonna take a lot to insert our names. And it's not that strange that I'd feel afraid. It's a little bit strange that I feel okay anyway.

We take strangers for traveling partners and so we leave ourselves with lots left to say. We take partners for constant competitors, and so we let ourselves let go of the day. This is where we stand, where our shadows lay, not hand in hand, but within blows range any day.

These are oddities that bring us together.

Note, neither of our lives dictate goodbyes.

These are the sureties we force on forever,
but nothing in this world could change my mind.

With anything but style, we push away.
In double file,
I'm ready for the change any day.

The process of packing, what an unfortunate self-portrait. This is where our dreams become disproportionate. The process of packing, we can all get along, up until the point when it all goes wrong. And it always goes wrong.

The process of packing, what an unfortunate self-portrait. This is where our dreams become disproportionate

#### 5. Maps and Legends

These towns on rivers are beacons for war. These towns on rivers usually need their legends more, or so people say, and that's good enough to blame.

The six-year-old angel, all gold hair and beads. The distant-eyed angel, all scrapes and strange needs. And when she ran away, nothing got in her way.

She emanates amethyst to qualify the gray. Walking sideways down narrow byways. Things will never be the same. Just don't get in my way.

You're gonna play the hero, if I promise to always play it straight and you're gonna play the hero, and I will make a point of being too late.

And you're gonna play the hero.

You're gonna play the hero.

You're gonna play the hero and no one ever said that things would turn out okay.

She dreamed of colors that play nice in the dark. An undimming creature, all white light and sparks. And her lost is our game. Best not get in my way.

If she's given up on us, get ready for the flood. If it's gonna be the two of us, let's let her be the judge. I am willing to wait. You won't get in my way.

You're gonna play the hero, if I

promise to always play it straight and you're gonna play the hero, and I will make a point of being too late. And you're gonna play the hero. You're gonna play the hero. You're gonna play the hero and no one ever said that things would turn out okay.

You make these isolations, they are your insolence. You've got these expectations, they have no consequence. And you will honor my delusions of grandeur. X3

### 6. Sierra

These stories are all about mountains and space. We dream of constants, of big things for getting in our way. Our laws are all broken up by her smile. She's the reason we measure altitude in miles.

Dream the nymphete on the narrow bed.

Perfect symmetry, you'll show her the lining of your head.

Pretty girl makes a backlit sky.

Pretty girl's got tunnels in the center of her eyes.

And they tell you lies when they tell you everything's gonna be all right.

The fall of the high Sierras was heard in the subarctic regions of the world, and love is called Sierra and she's digging towards the center of the earth. And our streets strike for the center.

And what's precious gets pressed under the stones.

And the little things show on the surface, if only the earthquakes would just leave me alone.

Harsh pull of the atmosphere, gravity tries and fails to drag us out of here. I'm the one with the V for surrender. No one will ever no what takes place here.

Red glow of the harvest moon, the stars sit and wait and watch us move. Probability states we'll find her soon. It's a matter of patience not one of truth. It draws near, but obsession tastes nothing like fear.

The fall of the high Sierras was heard in the subarctic regions of the world, and love is called Sierra and she's digging towards the center of the earth. Under the inverted cliffs I can still hear her moan, "Sierra."

Sierra.

# 7. Instrumental: Discovery – Turns – Dark Places

# 8. The Imperfect

It's a sign of the times that you're over.
It's a sign of the times that you made a mistake.
You touch the inside of my mouth in search of a warm place, the bones on the back side of my face.

Tiny cracks in the floor.
The search for the perfect form.
Underground cartographers,
lovers, it's unrealistic.
The signs of something frantic.
Searching, never lost.
Exploring, can't be lost.
A center kind of lost.

It's the air that feels older than your body. Blame the water with more salt everyday. Blame the distance for the switching of polarities. Always always loves proximity.

An imperfect resonance, a property of tunnel walls, of falling, won't you follow me?
We are not gonna find it.
We are never gonna find her here.
What's not out there.
What's not anywhere.

Know there are more reasonable fears than drowning. The only river here is less than one foot deep. Know that I'd love to dip my hands in the mantle. We're nowhere near the center. (2x)

# 9. Slow Leaks

This brings on the cataclysm, and with your permission, I'm going to find a different way to walk. Way to talk, about the indisposable, undiscussable issue of our being wrong.

Above us I envision perpetual daylight. I spent 36 hours waiting to see the sun rise. I'm only partially sure of the color of your eyes. Cut my shoulders walking through stalactites.

This cave's empty, you've gone static, and I'm scared.
The roots we pulled underground, they are solid, and we are solid, but not satiated.
I think that I'm slowly loosing faith I think that I miss the rain.

Given enough time, everyone settles. Enough time, everyone hollows. It's a good thing. Active imagination's, a good thing, but not self realization.

Around us there's nothing, no boundaries to trace. Two bodies breathing deeply in a very dark space. Our footsteps keep falling within the growing waves. I get tired of pronouncing your name.

You've gone dormant.
I feel manic.
It's not fair.
We're feeding on spirits.
We are starving and
we're the future.
I think that I've probably lost faith.
I think that I
need the rain.

Given enough time, everyone settles. Everyone settles. Everyone settles.

#### 10. Hairline Fractures

The purple fire's in embers and I can't be helped to stoke it. I can taste surrender, but I won't be forced to watch this. What a painful coincidence, the beauty in your stature. What a perfect consequence, these thousand hairline fractures.

The cage is all but broken, and you're bending bars almost like an embrace.

Please take this as a token of everything I'll later wish I didn't say.

Here is my defensive stance, the betrayal of myself for you.

So would you like to see me dance?

I'd do anything to see through you and all of this is true.

I'm already sacrificed.

A feeling blinding white and razor sharp.

I'm already purified.

Printless fingers halfway through my heart.

Hands up for the wire. I'll give you whatever's left from the fire. (3x)

The flaws in my perception are clarified more slowly than I would have liked.

The holes in my deflections, solidified by growing tears in the night.

You're already sanctified, an addition that leaves you somewhat less blessed.

I'm completely stratified, too many pieces too thinly pressed.

I'm already sacrificed.

A feeling blinding white and razor sharp.

I'm already purified.

Printless fingers halfway through my heart.

Hands up for the wire. I'll give you whatever's left from the fire. (2x)

Hands up for the wire. You can take anything that's left on the pyre.

### 11. Sometimes It Helps to Villlainize You

It was an admirable effort on your part. You invent weaknesses that you were meant to give in to and what is it you think that we've been through?

I've got standards that I'm living up to.

This is only biology, no pretensions of heart.

The shapes you can make so well with your flesh, of no interest.

And what is it you think you can do that feels new?

I've got standards that I'm living up to.

Nothing will affect my happiness, no nothing will affect me.

Though you try to break my happiness, nothing can upset me.

No nothing can affect me.

No nothing can upset me.

This is all sorts of an unwieldy mess.

Lose the dissatisfaction you're far too dependent.

No quality of words can make you perfect.

Take it straight through the ears, it'll hurt less.

You were ill-starred at your inception.
All I can do for you is a moment's lapse from fortune.
Nature it's full of inertia.
All lips they lose the skin that gets kissed.

Nothing will affect my happiness, no nothing will affect me. Though you try to break my happiness, nothing can upset me. No nothing can affect me. No nothing can upset me.

# 12. The Light on Course

The subtleties that have long escaped you, like a process of condensation, raindrops in their last stage, groundwater and digging.

Here's to knowing through erosion, and your hollowed-out sense of devotion. Hands off the partially formed thing, it's sharp rocks and water rings.

Watch your back kid.

No one's going to pull you from the rubble, breaking the ground so you can make new maps.

The collapse or connection of one synapse to another. One of these things is not like the other.

You're clever and you've other character flaws.

The familiar need to strangle a warm thing. I'm victim to too much searching.
This is the last place and I've done everything to not be Japanese gum and not be the open one. How'd I end up Echo?
This is not the punishment of Christian gods.

Keep your distance.

I'm going to cause you all sorts of trouble. As if these things can come out in the dark. The collapse or connection of one synapse to another. One of these things is not like the other. You measure distance, but the proportions are all off.

It's a faith-based earthquake in an unknown location.

Treat the planetary shift, as our departure from the station. This is absolutely nothing, but a muscular elongation.
These are the places where joints go, and these are the things you think you already know.

### 13. Our Relationship with the Edge of the World

It's about integrity
and the ultimate raising of walls.
It's about maturity
and keeping with your character flaws.
It's not all that you hoped for
and it's nothing that you need.
It's about sustenance,
and I'm all about, have always been about, greed.

Our relationship with the edge of the world, it's the end of the world, the sand on your feet, you'll leave.
What family?
In the ocean's extension, these were good intentions.
You'll leave me along, and I'll let it alone.

Structure's on fire.
Directionless desire.
Our bad impressions of liars.
Who do you think can judge more me or you?
It'll all true.

I'm as good as my hands and you're as good as your speed on tunnel land.

Do you call this reasonable?

I think it's rational.

It's justifiable.

Who do you think can judge more me or you?

Here's what we'll do,

you run as fast as you can,

I'll show you my speed on surface land.

Our relationship with the edge of the world, it's the end of the world, the sand on your feet, you'll leave.

What family? In the ocean's extension, these were good intentions. You'll leave me along, and I'll let it alone.

# 14. Expectations

All the blues that I remember are actually grey. And to say that I need to hurt you, it's partially true. I am really going to miss you when you're not here anymore. At least two of those things were a lie.

And I expected fog, or at least a little rain. And I still can't say I've done things I'm not ashamed of. And nature doesn't have the decency to cover it up that I've been crying.

It's important to know when you're at an ending. It's important that you know where your boundaries lie. I am absolutely sure that we've reached an ending. So, please consider this your extended goodbye.

And we expect to be reimbursed in full for every single map that no one bothered making. And what is time for, if it's not for wasting? Maybe changing.