

Collecting Instruments and Records of Music as a Catalyst for Literary Reflection about Remembering and Cultural Memory

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Abstract

As a sound event, ›music‹ is intangible and transitory and cannot be collected – but, at the very least, represented in collections. Music records and diverse other objects of musical culture serve this purpose, especially musical instruments. Collections related to music are exemplary in illustrating that these objects represent something that cannot be captured, fixed, preserved, and materialized. As something that escapes the act of collecting, music is particularly well suited to underline ideas of incomprehensibility, temporality, the unrepeatability of the past – and the limitations of the human imagination. Collecting ›music‹ through representative objects offers the opportunity to reflect on the representation of the unrepresentable and the constraints of such endeavors.

These concepts are illustrated with reference to a number of examples of ›collected music‹. Alejo Carpentiers' novel ›Los pasos perdidos‹ (1953) tells the story of a collection of archaic musical instruments, a metonym of intangible origins and the origins of culture as a whole. James A. Grymes's illustrated report ›Violins of Hope‹ (2014) draws attention to a collection of musical instruments and calls to mind events that could be considered to demarcate the end of culture: the instruments recall Jewish musicians who were victims of the Holocaust, and Grymes retells their stories. – A concluding discussion of the specific meanings held by record collections as representations of music and as media of memory focuses on two texts by Nick Hornby and Umberto Eco.

Musikinstrumente und -aufnahmen sammeln als Auslöser für literarische Überlegungen zu Erinnerung und kulturellem Gedächtnis

›Musik‹ qua Klangereignis lässt sich als etwas Immaterielles und Transitorisches nicht sammeln, durch Sammlungen aber doch immerhin repräsentieren. Dazu dienen die Trägermedien aufgezeichneter Musik sowie verschiedenste andere Objekte aus dem Umfeld der Musikkultur, insbesondere Instrumente. Musikbezogene Kollektionen illustrieren exemplarisch, dass ihre Objekte für etwas anderes stehen, das sich als solches der Lokalisierung, der Fixierung, Konservierung und Materialisierung verweigert. Gerade etwas, das sich solcherart dem sammelnden Zugriff entzieht, kann auf ›Unbegreifliches‹ im übertragenen Sinn verweisen, insbesondere auf Zeitlichkeit, auf die Unwiederholbarkeit des Vergangenen – und auf seine Unvorstellbarkeit. Das Sammeln von ›Musik‹ vermittels repräsentierender Objekte ist insofern ein Anlass der Reflexion über die Repräsentierbarkeit von an sich Undarstellbarem und die Grenzen solcher Repräsentation.

An wenigen Beispielen der Darstellung von ›gesammelter Musik‹ soll dies illustriert werden. Alejo Carpentiers Roman ›Los pasos perdidos‹ (1953) erzählt von einer Sammlung archaischer Musikinstrumente; diese steht metonymisch für die Suche nach ungreifbar gewordenen Ursprüngen und letztlich nach den Ursprüngen von ›Kultur‹ überhaupt. James A. Grymes' ›Violins of Hope‹ (2014), eine bebilderte Reportage, thematisiert anhand einer Sammlung von Musikinstrumenten Ereignisse, die man als Markierung des Endes von Kultur beschreiben könnte: Die Instrumente erinnern an jüdische Musiker, die zu Opfern des Holocaust wurden; Grymes erzählt deren Geschichten nach. – Ein Ausblick auf zwei Texte von Nick Hornby und Umberto Eco gilt der spezifischen Semantik gesammelter Tonträger als Repräsentationen von Musik und als Erinnerungsmedien.

In his study about collecting, the German philosopher Manfred Sommer discusses the fundamental implications of collecting as well as of collector's practices and cultures. Collecting, he argues, implies processes of temporary (or permanent) conservation, of bringing together dispersed objects, of locating them in a defined space, and of (temporary) consolidation. Strictly speaking, only material objects can be collected.¹

Evidently, only concrete material things are possible objects of collecting in this strict sense – in their quality as relatively durable objects in a spatial frame. In a broader sense, however, we can also collect experiences (as Sommer himself asserts) and, through such experiences, personal memories. Nevertheless, these experiences and memories are usually connected with concrete objects which serve as their media of recall, of re-membering. In culture theory, this capacity of material objects to evoke experiences and raise memories has been understood as the result of the objects' narrative potentials: things, according to this fundamental tenet, tell stories. As the cultural theorist Mieke Bal has observed, language is not the only medium of story-telling, but there is a narrative potential inherent in all things – especially in collected objects. Viewed from this perspective, collections might be regarded as functional equivalents to verbal narratives.²

As a transient and fleeting event, music is immaterial and transitory, and therefore not immediately available as a collector's item. However, the more a society appreciates the cultural value of music, the more significant the production and reception of music becomes for the individual and for the collective, the more it becomes a desideratum to place music within the realm of collecting. Different kinds of material objects serve as collectibles in order to collect music, for instance objects connected with musical composition and performance.

Likewise, the supporting media of recorded music performances, such as records, are (even more popular) »music« collector's items. Indeed, the term »album«, commonly used for vinyl discs, was derived from the idea of a collection because

it refers to the collected music pieces on the disc. There are many objects within the realm of music which form the basis of collections and even fill museums, objects belonging to the broad field of music culture (as, for example, the objects shown in the Musicians' Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville / Tennessee or the manuscripts and items intended to trigger certain memories in museums dedicated to famous composers). Of course, musical instruments and technical devices created to perform music are particularly favored objects of collecting. They are »semiophors« in the sense of Krzysztof Pomian's theory of collector's items³: they refer to immaterial realities and facilitate communication with dimensions of reality that are beyond direct sensual experience. Through collectibles that represent »music« in whatever sense, time becomes an important issue in collecting – not only the time taken-up collecting and the time for which the collection will last, but also the time indirectly represented as the »time of music«. Collections of musical instruments or records, in a way, have the purpose of »collecting time« by preserving material objects that stimulate individual or collective memory. More than other collection types, »musical« collections and their items refer to time, to the idea of timeliness and to the fleeting, and thus they are a reminder of the tension between the durable and the passing, between defined spaces and processes of transgression.

In works of literary fiction as well as in literary essays and reports, there are many and quite different texts about collections that represent »music« (performed music, music of the past, specific cultural practices of music, etc.). These texts have to be distinguished with regard to their respective subjects and themes, but they all share one feature: as texts about music they refer to time, at least implicitly. The following examples consider the representation of »music«: the first two access music through descriptions of instrument collections, the third and fourth captures it as recorded music. Alejo Carpentier's novel »Los pasos perdidos« (Lost traces), first published 1953,⁴ focusses on a collector of instruments. James A. Grymes's »Violins of Hope« (2014)⁵ contains a series of fatal reports about different historical violins and their players. Nick Hornby's collection of short essays entitled

1 Manfred Sommer: *Sammeln. Ein philosophischer Versuch*. Frankfurt (Main) 2002, p. 9.

2 Cf. Mieke Bal: *Kulturanalyse*. Transl. by Joachim Schulte. Frankfurt (Main) 2006, p. 120. »Ich werde das Sammeln als Erzählung erörtern. Nicht als einen Prozeß, über den eine Geschichte erzählt werden kann, sondern als etwas von sich aus Narratives.« *Ibid.*, p. 122.

3 Cf. Krzysztof Pomian: *Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln*. Transl. by Gustav Roßler. Berlin 1998, esp. pp. 40-44.

4 Alejo Carpentier: *Los pasos perdidos*. Cuba 1953, 3rd ed. Mexico 1966.

5 James A. Grymes: *Violins of Hope*. New York 2014.

»31 Songs« (2002)⁶ contemplates rock and pop songs of the past decades. Umberto Eco's novel »La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana. Romanzo illustrato« (The mysterious flame of queen Loana. Illustrated novel; 2004)⁷ tells of the protagonist's remembering processes and the means he uses in order to stimulate his memories.

Written from the perspective of the protagonist and in the form of a fictitious autobiography, Alejo Carpentier's novel »Los pasos perdidos« tells the story of a collector of archaic instruments which are destined to be exhibited as part of a public scientific collection. In the context of the novel, these instruments become metonymic representations of volatile time, of the origins of music, and of the origins of human culture in general. With regard to its plot the novel is, in part, reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's »Heart of Darkness« (1899), as the protagonist – a musicologist, music ethnographer, and composer – travels into the Amazonian jungle and thus »back in time«. Encouraged by the curator of a scientific collection of archaic musical instruments, he attempts to obtain instruments for their academic collection.⁸ In addition to this official purpose of his field trip, his research investigates the musical practices of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon, hoping to verify a scientific thesis about the origins of human music. He uses records that document performances of Indian musical practices in order to ascertain where to find this kind of music, which he identifies as »original« in an emphatic sense. He succeeds in tracing archaic musical performances as ritual elements of social life and he finds the archaic musical instruments for which he was searching. Read in sequence, the episodes that refer to musical instruments

6 Nick Hornby: 31 Songs. London 2002.

7 Umberto Eco: La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana. Romanzo illustrato. Milan 2004.

8 »Así, me había orientado hacia la casa del Curador, cuyo Museo Organográfico era orgullo de una venerable universidad. Baio este mismo techo había trabado yo conocimiento con los percutores elementales, troncos ahuecados, litófonos, quijadas de bestias, zumbadores y tobilleras, que el hombre hiciera sonar en los largos primeros días de su salida a un planeta todavía erizado de osamentas gigantescas, al emprender un camino que lo conduciría a la »Misa del Papa Marcelo« y »El arte de la Fuga«. [...] me apasioné por los métodos de clasificación y el estudio morfológico de esas obras de la madera, del barro cocido, del cobre de caldera, de la caña hueca, de la tripa y de la piel de chivo, madres de mopdos de producir sonidos que perduran, con milenaria vigencia, bajo el prodigioso barniz de los factores de Cremona o en el suntuoso caramillo teológico del órgano.« Carpentier 1966 (note 4), p. 24.

juxtapose the protagonist's progress with his return to the origins of human culture, here represented by musical performances, especially by the playing of musical instruments. Little by little, the protagonist and instrument collector leaves his academic background behind (physically, but also mentally), and with it the space of civilization, science, and historicism. It is the very sphere of historicism which, at the beginning of the novel, is represented by an ethnological museum containing old Indian musical instruments and more. In this context, the instruments are named and classified, but they are not used for performances anymore. The Indian instruments are regarded from a historical perspective: as precursors of the more refined instruments of European music history.

Gradually coming closer to the original space of Indian culture, the protagonist and narrator at first experiences a hybrid-cultural world, shaped by both Indian and European influences. In a relief which is part of an old church, he detects an Indian Maraca among European instruments – and this depiction of different instruments serves as a symbol for the hybridity of local cultures over the last centuries. Indirectly, it also represents the history of Cuba and of Latin America since the arrival of the conquistadors.

»[...] de una iglesia quemada quedaban algunos contrafuertes y archivoltas y un arco monumental, presto a desplegarse, en cuyo tímpano divisábase aún, en borroso relieve, las figuras de un concierto celestial, con ángeles que tocaban el bajón, la tiorba, el órgano de tecla, la viola y las maracas. Esto último me dejó tan admirado que quise regresar al barco an busca de lápiz y papel, para revelar al Curador, por medio de algunos croquis, esta rara referencia organográfica. Pero en esto instante sonaron tambores y agudas flautas y varios Diablos aparecieron en una esquina de la plaza ... Detrás de la imagen había brotado un himno, apoyado, en vieja sonoridad de sacabuche y chirimía, por un larinete y un trombón: /'Primus ex Apostolis / Martir Jerosolimis [...]«.⁹

In contrast to their function at the museum, the old Indian musical instruments are still in use in the hybrid space of Western and indigenous cultural traditions. The protagonist's journey back into history finally leads him to an indigenous tribe that has not yet been influenced by Western culture to a significant degree. These musical performance practices

9 Carpentier 1966 (note 4), pp. 122-123.

seem to have remained more or less unchanged during the course of time. When the collector discovers the archaic instruments, he views them as representatives of an original first era in the history of mankind. Moreover, he feels as if he himself had entered another time dimension because these instruments are still played in the indigenous tribe's world; the music itself fills intervals of time that appear to pre-date human history.

»Allí, en el suelo, junto a una suerte de anafre, estaban los instrumentos musicales cuya colección me hubiera sido encomendada al comienzo del mes. Con la emoción del peregrino que alcanza la reliquia por la que hubiera recorrido a pie veinte países extraños, puse la mano sobre el cilindro ornamentado al fuego, con empugñadura en forma de cruz, que señalaba el paso del bastón de ritmo al más primitivo de los tambores. Vi luego la maraca ritual, atravesada por una rama emplumada, las trompas de cuerno de venado, las sonajeras de adornos y del botuto de barro para llamar a los pescadores extraviados en los pantanos. Ahí estaban los juegos de caramillos, en su condición primordial de antepasados del órgano. Y ahí estaba, sobre todo, ditada de la cierta gravedad esagradable que reviste toto aquello que de cerca toca a la muerte, la jarra de sonido bronco y siniestro, con algo ya de resonancia de sepultura, con sus dos cañas encajadas en los costados, tal cual estaba representada en el libro que la describiera por vez primera. Al concluir los trueques que me pusieron en posesión de aquel arsenal de cosas creadas por el más noble instinto del hombre, me pareció que entraba en un nuevo ciclo de mi existencia.«¹⁰

The protagonist's hallucinatory experience of the »origins« of music – evoked or recalled by the playing of old instruments – inspires him to compose a piece of music. He conceives an ambitious musical project, a threnody (song of lament). However, he is unable to finish it, unable even to write it down, for reasons which are not entirely random: The primordial forest is no place for writing. All that remains of the contact with the origins of culture are memories. The collected instruments – once integrated into the scientific collection – allegorically refer to the irreversible distance between contemporary civilized culture and the original, indigenous culture the protagonist sought out. Only when played by the indigenous people themselves did they serve as »living« media in order to literally

re-evolve the past. Once transferred to the museum, however, they are destined to become collector's pieces, they simply become exotic objects, thrilling but alien to the place in which they are exhibited: from now on, they remain mute. In this respect, the collection of musical instruments serves as an allegory of musealization as a process of entombment.

James A. Grymes's book »Violins of Hope« (2014) consists of a sequence of reports about violins, their former players and owners during the Holocaust. The narrative text is subdivided into a series of relatively independent chapters and combined with a number of reproduced photographs. In contrast to Carpentier's novel about the search for the origins of human culture, the chapters refer to historical events which might be characterized as marks of the end of human culture. The report considers musical instruments which belonged to Jewish musicians during the 1930s and 1940s and re-awaken memories of their former owners. Taking the instruments as a starting point, and a collector as his central point of reference, Grymes re-tells the stories of Jewish victims, chapter by chapter, instrument for instrument. The individual chapters contain reports of violins that played a role in the lives of different Jewish musicians; the protagonists are players of Klezmer as well as performers of classical orchestral music, professional and non-professional musicians. The instruments were all part of the violin collection of the instrument maker Amnon Weinstein (b. 1939) – and some still are. Weinstein's father had founded the collection after his emigration to Palestine in the late 1930s.

The violins often are named after their owners in the chapter titles, indicating their metonymical function with regard to those who played them and whose fates are the books' central concern.¹¹ In a way, this suggests that the instruments are regarded as relatives or even doubles of the players, that they are the real protagonists of the following narratives. Grymes too, it seems, is indebted to the idea that collected things tell their own stories.

Each of the violins is evocative of their players, mostly identified persons, but also of anonymous musicians. Even

11 The table of contents includes: Prologue: Amnon's Violins; 1. The Wagner Violin (in this case the name is derived from Benedict Wagner, 18th c.); 2. Erich Weininger's Violin; 3. The Auschwitz Violin; 4. Ole Bull's Violin (the violin of the Norwegian virtuoso Ole Bull was played by a Jewish immigrant in Norway during his exile); 5. Feivel Wininger's Violin; 6. Motele Schlein's Violin; and Epilogue: Shimon Krongold's Violin.

10 Carpentier 1966 (note 4), p. 181.

in the latter case, they stand for individuals in an emphatic sense, for their life stories and for their musical ›voices‹. The history of National Socialism, World War II, and the Holocaust is represented indirectly by the re-telling of selected episodes, by sketching personal fates – stories that are metonymically represented by violins and that form an imaginary ›orchestra‹, directed (to speak metaphorically) by Amnon Weinstein. As in real orchestras, sometimes the members leave the ensemble in order to go their own ways; others join the group. In a similar way, instruments are restituted to the families of their former owners or given to museums; new acquisitions come in and fill the gaps.

As a specialist for the repair of violins, young Amnon followed his father's and grandfather's professional tracks. Born in 1939, and based in Israel, he lost many relatives in the Holocaust and his life is shaped by the collective trauma. The violin, especially as an instrument used to perform Klezmer music, plays a crucial role in Jewish culture, and many famous violin virtuosos of Jewish descent confirm the close connection between the history of Jewish culture and the history of playing the violin. Amnon's personal passion is dedicated to old and broken instruments, especially those of Holocaust victims or their descendants. Doing so, he compensates the status of Jewish ›diaspora‹, and by repairing many instruments, he contributes to the attempt to restore Jewish life and culture to a certain degree.

»Amnon was finally ready to reclaim his lost heritage. Five decades after his family had been destroyed, he started reflection not only on the Holocaust but on the role that music – specifically the violin – played in Jewish lives throughout that dark period. He began locating and restoring violins that were played by Jewish musicians during the Holocaust.«¹²

As metonymical representations of Jewish musical culture, of Klezmer music, of Jewish composers and virtuosos of classical or entertainment music, the violins can be regarded as metonyms of Jewish history. The collection of violins as a symbol of cultural unity bridges the distance between different generations – of Jewish generations, but also in a broader sense of the generation of victims and of those who try to re-construct their fates.

These fates sometimes seem to materialize in the violins' state of conservation. Grymes's book also suggests that

things may tell their stories on their own, even if – or rather: even more intensely, if they are damaged. Many of the Weinstein violins can be restored; some, however, are too badly damaged as a result of their history. Some instruments are kept as parts of Weinstein's collection, others return to their former owners and their families or find new owners. Some instruments, however, cannot even be ›identified‹: their provenance remains unclear. The stories behind them cannot be reconstructed and retold, but in these cases the instrument collection serves as a particularly poignant indication of what cannot be represented. From Amnon's perspective, especially the instruments which cannot be repaired are of a specific symbolic value: they represent historical processes of destruction which are beyond repair – and the loss of memories related to forgotten individuals.

»One of the instruments [of a collection of instruments that were played in the ghetto] was damaged beyond repair. Amnon has left it in the ruined state in which he found it, as a testament to the thousands of other instruments and the millions of lives that were shattered in the Holocaust. Amnon considers the unidentified violins to be the most precious instruments in his collection. They are not expensive instruments like the Ole Bull Guarneri that Ernst Glaser brought to Bergen or the Amati that Feivel Weinger played in Transnistria. They are simple, unsophisticated violins that represent the everyday Jewish lives and the everyday Jewish traditions that were destroyed during the Holocaust. [...] Amnon continues to collect and restore instruments that were played by Jewish musicians during the Holocaust. Each violin tells its own story. Each violin is a tombstone for a relative he never knew.«¹³

The narrative suggests that, as collected items, the violins – both repaired and damaged – ›survive‹ metaphorically as long as they are used for performance. This special focus on the use of musical instruments for performance provides a link between Carpentier's and Grymes's narratives. However, what is crucial for the ›afterlife‹ of Amnon Weinstein's violins is not only their use as musical instruments (which in some cases has even become impossible because of the damaged state of the violins) but, to an even higher degree, the fact that they stimulate communication.

»In 1999, at the invitation of a German Bowmaker who had seen the German violins in the Weinstein collection, Am-

12 Grymes 2014 (note 5), p. 9.

13 Grymes 2014 (note 5), p. 292.

non gave a lecture on his German instruments at a conference in Dresden for the Association of German Violinmakers and Bowmakers. The success of the presentation and Amnon's insatiable curiosity inspired him to begin searching for other violins with connection to the Holocaust.

This was the start of the Violins of Hope project.¹⁴

Grymes's book tells the story of a highly symbolic collection, not only of its formation but also of its public reception and impact, of new individual fates connected with the instruments as part of the collection. The book's chapters not only tell the violins' fates but also focus on the activities of collectors, musicians, and representatives of the interested public – as the following episode about Seffi, a young Israeli, illustrates:

»In 1999, Seffi heard a radio program in which Amnon talked about the Wagner Violin and the other German instruments in his collection. This inspired Seffi to visit Amnon's workshop in Tel Aviv and finally tell him the story of Motele Schlein's Violin. Amnon pledged to restore the instrument, which still remained in the battered wooden case that Motele¹⁵ had used to sneak explosives into the storeroom of the Soldiers Club.«¹⁶

»Seffi [...] donated the violin to Yad Vashem with the stipulation that it be available for performances. It has since become a permanent feature in Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum in the Resistance and Rescue Gallery [...] Sixty-five years after Motele played his violin for the last time, the instrument came alive again on September 24, 2008. In a historic concert at the foot of Jerusalem's Old City walls, a twelve-year-old boy named David Strongin was handed Motele Schlein's Violin. He joined a dozen other children performing on the Violins of Hope in front of an audience of three thousand.«¹⁷

Implicitly, both Carpentier's and Grymes's texts about collecting and about collections of musical instruments persistently raise the question whether the past can be evoked – be it by the appropriation of knowledge, be it by memory or post-memory. In both cases, the authors' concepts of narration are strongly shaped by the idea of ›re-vocation‹ (recall) – both in a metonymical and a metaphorical sense: music of

the past is actually ›re-evoked‹ by playing old instruments – just like episodes of history are metaphorically re-evoked in memory. However, in both cases, the project of intentionally re-evoking the past is presented as ambiguous, as the re-evocation of the past is evidently a highly artificial enterprise, dependent on contingencies, personal passions, and individual perspectives. Therefore, collecting as such serves only as a promoter or catalyst of memorization processes – if it is successful at all. The collectors portrayed by Carpentier and Grymes try to re-evolve the past, and at least Amnon Weinstein succeeds in attracting a large public. When the old instruments are used once again, the music performed seems to catalyse a special kind of communication with the ›past‹; it even seems to recall events that are far beyond the listeners' personal experiences. This may be no more than a suggestion, but it is a powerful one with its own performative effects.

Discs and other technical means of recording music are popular collector's items. From the first half of the 20th century onwards, vinyl discs of larger formats were called albums when they contained more than one piece of music. Generally speaking, the cultures of collecting and those of producing and listening to recorded music have been strongly linked throughout the history of phonographs and phonograph discs, tape recorders and tapes, cassette recorders and cassettes, including the more recent media of recording such as digital recorders and files. Evidently, these devices allow the listeners to collect music in a way that differs remarkably from all representations that were used before. In a way, play-backs are still representations, but in the course of technological progress it has become increasingly difficult if not impossible to distinguish them from original performances. Yet the question to what extent collectors of play-back media are interested in ›original‹ music at all may be neglected here in favor of another aspect: as with novels and narratives about collecting musical instruments, literary texts about listeners of recorded music can be interpreted as texts about memory – about memorization processes as an attempt to evoke the past, and about the unbridgeable distance between the present and that which came before. One might expect that users of technical devices which play certain musical pieces again and again may feel less irritated by the experience of volatile time than listeners to original musical performances. However, although the listener of a phonograph disc or a cassette may regard themselves as the unrestricted master

14 Grymes 2014 (note 5), pp. 58-59.

15 Motele was a member of the resistance movement. Cf. the chapter about Motele's violin.

16 Grymes 2014 (note 5), p. 280.

17 Grymes 2014 (note 5), p. 281.

of repetition, the idea of timeliness and transience sometimes dominates – at least in literary narrations about disc and phonograph users.

On the one hand, collecting records (as a mode of collecting music) appears as another way of managing and overcoming the power of time and transitoriness; in their imagination the protagonists of literary texts return to the past or at least recall it in vivid memories. On the other, the encounter with the past is reflected as imaginative, if not as self-suggestion. To a higher degree than musical instruments, technical media of recording are reflected from the aspect of their own aging: it takes far less than one generation to render them old-fashioned, as with the very pieces of popular music that are played on the phonographs and cassette recorders. In Nick Hornby's book »31 Songs« (2002) about the music of his youth and in Umberto Eco's novel »La misteriosa fiamma della regina Loana. Romanzo illustrato« (2004) about a collection of old-fashioned things, including vinyl records, these devices of sound storage become metaphors: metaphors of transgression into an imaginary past. In both cases, the technical devices are metonymically linked with memory: they appear as a materialized past, from which sounds of the past emerge. Collections of old-fashioned records and old-fashioned sound carriers seem particularly apt to bridge the gap between the present and the past as long as the sounds are audible. Commenting on selected old pieces of popular music, as well as a few items of more sophisticated rock music, Hornby's collection of records represents his own past as well as the collective life of the 1960s. Listening to the old pieces and commenting on them, the narrator returns to the past in his imagination, but also reflects upon the notion that the course of time is irreversible. The turning of the record – so to speak – turns back time for the listener, providing a sense of time travel.

Umberto Eco's protagonist Yambo Bodoni, in turn, suffers from amnesia, which turns out to be an indirect consequence of a traumatic experience in his youth. In order to retrieve his lost memories and his lost identity connected with them, Yambo spends several months in his deceased grandfather's country house, where he had lived as a schoolboy during the war. Not only his grandfather had been a great collector, especially of books, magazines and other printed matter, but young Yambo himself had also developed a passion for collecting, especially comics. Among the effects of his grandfather, there is a collection of records, many of them contain-

ing popular music. Whereas Yambo's amnesia metaphorically refers to the collective »amnesia« of post-war Italy in relation to fascism, the record collection represents the collective schizophrenia of the Mussolini era. In part, the songs represent a bright and carefree popular culture while others express fascist ideology and questionable concepts of heroism and self-sacrifice. When Yambo listens to the old songs, the past returns to his memory, at least the collective past. In order to support this effect of feeling transported back to former times, Yambo creates a special installation: listening to the record player, he turns on an old radio – broken except for its lights –, and thus he suggests to himself that the music he hears is not recorded but comes from a current broadcast.

A brief summary: Carpentier's novel and Grymes's narrations explore the limits of memory: Carpentier's protagonist tries to trace a remote time and culture – a past that still seems to be present in the depths of the primeval forest, although beyond access for the civilized world. Musical instruments from this archaic culture may serve as a bridge that connects the beginnings of human culture and contemporary life, and collecting them provides the necessary basis for this connection. Yet only when the instruments are played does the past appear as present for a limited interval of time, and it remains impossible to fix, to materialize, to localize, and to comprehend the strange dimension of reality expressed by this music. In Grymes's stories, instruments similarly bridge the gap between past and present, although again this process does not help understand the past, to describe and to categorize it. The violins of Jewish musicians are connected with the Holocaust and their physical appearance is strongly suggestive, but this part of human history resists understanding and conceptualization. In both cases – in Carpentier's novel as well as in Grymes's reports – the re-evocation of the past as catalyzed by the use of instruments appears as an illusory event, or rather: as an achievement of creative imagination. As soon as the instruments become silent collector's items again, the past appears even more unattainable.

However, the search for lost time is not necessarily a search for pre-historic times or for times of ultimate horror. It may also aim at reconstructions or re-evocations of personal life-times, recalling past events and experiences into memory. Collected items often serve as catalysts of memory; they are frequently even collected in order to take over this function in the future. The invention and construction of tech-

nical devices to record music (and other acoustic events) provide new models of memory that may be compared to the invention of photography, which seems to open up a window to the past and has been widely theorized with reference to this ability. When recorded music is played on a phonograph or a similar technical apparatus, an acoustic window seems to open. The effect is akin to viewing old photographs: writing about these effects, Hornby and Eco try to participate in them, indirectly and via representatives.

As these stories about collectors show, music is a powerful metonym of culture, time and history – and that means: of subjects of human reflection which in and of themselves cannot be collectibles. Music represents cultural practices, it can be described as a temporal genre of art that structures time – and in its quality as a complex of historical phenomena it has a genuinely historical dimension. Therefore, narratives about practices of ›collecting music‹ are, at least implicitly, always narratives about collecting ›culture‹, ›history‹, and ›time‹ – or rather: they narrate attempts and strategies to represent and interpret such fleeting subjects such as culture, history and time. Collecting implies the desire to master one's collectibles and the reality they represent. The collector acquires the items, gives them a place, integrates them into a system of order that is generally represented by a spatial arrangement and combined with naming and categorization. Thus, collectors ›possess‹ their collectibles physically as well as in an indirect sense. Yet what about the realities and experiences, memories, and lost memories that are linked metonymically with these items? Narratives about collections indirectly refer to an enterprise that may be successful on the level of representations, but is ever doomed to fail in the last consequence. Time escapes the human subject's desire to fix and govern it.

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