

Palm Trees, Xanax, and Dank Memes: Vaporwave's Nostalgia Play

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Abstract

This thesis studies the online multimedia genre of vaporwave (alternatively spelled ‘vapourwave’) as a vehicle of self-expression for certain members of the millennial generation. The genre is the latest milestone in a tradition of appropriation art from a musical perspective, as well as a visual one.

Vaporwave’s practitioners appropriate and recycle material to create works which evoke nostalgia for the recent past, especially the aesthetics of the late 1980s and early 1990s, early internet art and computerised graphics from the same period.

The musical aspect of the genre follows similar themes, and samples obscure or forgotten music and sounds (such as TV commercials or computer operating system sounds, for example). The central question which describes the thesis is, *‘To What Extent Do Millennial Worldviews Inform Vaporwave?’* The thesis answers this question not only by understanding millennial worldviews, but also framing that understanding around vaporwave and its nostalgic tendencies.

To do this, numerous media theories (such as the concept of ‘media nostalgia’ and ‘hauntology’, terms credited to Katharina Niemeyer and Jacques Derrida respectively) will be employed to develop an insight into how vaporwave and its millennial audience views past media objects as a source for the genre and its artistic inspiration. Furthermore, the thesis considers the impact that historical events has had on vaporwave’s outlook and that promotes desire of the millennial generation to ‘return to a better time’ (such as the 1990s, when members of the generation were children) through vaporwave’s nostalgia play.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: Max Alexander James Mahood

Date: 19th October 2018

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Chapter I – Introduction

The thesis argues that vaporwave is a form of expression for millennials. As a sample based form of music, vaporwave's producers appropriate and manipulate existing recordings and draw on sounds from the history of computing (for example, Windows start-up jingles) and 1980s pop music. But vaporwave is more than just music and has a prominent visual dimension, which is characterised as a form of appropriation art that draws upon images and iconography of significance to the millennial generation. The thesis also utilises poststructuralist works to better understand vaporwave, as well as understanding the role that 'Web 2.0' platforms (such as Reddit and YouTube) play in the dissemination, discussion and creation of the genre.

Vaporwave's remixing of 1980s and 1990s aesthetics and noise can be seen as a media centric coping mechanism for 'generational anxiety' among millennials; and vaporwave (manifested through the art style and fan-made videos) acts upon millennials' collective nostalgia for a world of pre-9/11 cultural artefacts, and the generation's innocence associated with the event.

The research question is informed by the idea that the millennial generation is frustrated with the lack of upward mobility in life; and this thesis argues that vaporwave is a form of self expression for millennials in a similar fashion that internet memes are a means of dealing with the structural challenges that the generation faces.

What are 'millennial worldviews?'

The millennial outlook is mostly communicated through internet memes, such as 'Millennials are killing...' (Know Your Meme 2016), and the 'Avocado Toast' internet meme, which "became an inside joke among millennials satirizing boomer-generation critics who don't understand the economic hardships of their generation" (Know Your Meme 2017).

Millennials are a generation that is defined in Australia as being born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s, and is generally thought to encompass those born "between 1980 and 2000", as described by Jean Hogarty in her definitions of 'generation units' (2017, p.25), and hold the shared experiences of not only having grown up with 1990s cultural touchstones, but also come of age during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the global financial crisis (also known as the 'great recession') of 2008/09.

These events shaped how this generation sees itself, and has reconfigured what it means to be an adult, where markers of tradition (owning a house, getting married and so forth) have shifted, and "achieving the same standards of living as their parents- the people who taught them, in many cases, what being an 'adult' actually meant- has become less common" (Tan Chen 2018, p.63). Memes in general have become a form of communication among millennials (such as the notion that millennials are 'killing' industries, and the meme about avocado toast) about their situation, where "generations x and y...have amassed less wealth than their parents had when they were young...for the first time in modern history, a whole generation might not prove wealthier than the one that preceded it" (Lowrey 2013).

Mememes such as the ‘avocado toast’ or ‘millennials are killing...’ are a comedic means of dealing with the shifting attitudes of what it means to be an adult (and the economic anxiety that comes with it), and can provide a humorous diversion from the realities of their situation, if only for a short period of time.

Mememes act as a means of self expression to joke about the frustrations that the generation has about their place in society, and from this point, the thesis unpacks how Vaporwave works in this context of self expression, 1990s nostalgia and generational anxiety from the perspective of the millennial worldview, which mythologises the 1990s (such as the meme of the ‘90’s kid’) before the realities that now face the generation unit. The outlook of the generation is coloured by mememes, and this includes vaporwave, with its reification of 90s nostalgia as a place of remembrance through ‘rose-tinted spectacles’.

This ‘nostalgia play’ is achieved by remixing imagery from advertisements (primarily Japanese-language ads from the period), early computer art/web design from the 1990s, and applying filters redolent of VHS tapes that add a fuzzy picture quality, in addition to sampling music or other sounds from the period. In addition to outlining the nostalgia trip that Vaporwave invites upon its creators and listeners, the project also wishes to utilise vaporwave’s artistic tropes to argue the genre’s function as self-expression for millennials.

While concerned with Vaporwave as a genre in and of itself, a particular subgenre of Vaporwave, ‘Mallsoft’, will also be explored in conjunction with a discussion of the type of sampling that is present within vaporwave. The thesis will also develop an understanding for Vaporwave’s connection to nostalgia, and how Vaporwave works within this context, as a product of the internet and using ‘Web 2.0’ mediums for the expression of this nostalgia.

What is Vaporwave?

Vaporwave originated in the early 2010s, on various social media platforms. It was an evolution of an earlier style called ‘Seapunk’, which uses imagery drawn from early computer graphic design (such as the 1990s-era Windows logo), as well as video games such as the Sega Mega Drive game, ‘Ecco The Dolphin’, combined with sampled music that has been significantly altered. These characteristics are echoed in Vaporwave which also heavily samples and draws on the aesthetics from the 1980s and 1990s.

Vaporwave derives its name from the computing concept of ‘vaporware’; a fictitious product marketed by a company purely to boost its image. As a media object that consists of both music and art (such as *Chuck Person’s EccoJams Vol 1*. By Daniel Lopatin, for example), Vaporwave can be analysed from multiple perspectives. The main tropes which characterise vaporwave’s visual dimension include objects such as reconstituted 1980s and 1990s graphics and early web design, glitch art/cyberpunk, classical sculpture and a ‘Miami Vice’ aesthetic, featuring palm trees and muted 1980s-early 1990s pastel colours, such as pink or sea foam green.

Vaporwave also remediates of visuals and sounds from 1990s operating systems (such as Windows 95). Glitsos (2017, p. 100) explains this as “‘memory play’ that takes remembering as its audio visual aesthetic.” This nostalgic function works within Vaporwave as a fascination with 1990s computing not only from a visual point of view, but also utilising sampling by borrowing computing noise in addition to music from the same era to create music.

From a musical point of view, Vaporwave is predicated on the practice of sampling. Source materials for the genre vary quite widely, from obscure 1980s Soul and Funk 12”s, to Japanese pop and funk music from the same period (also known as ‘City Pop’), as well as samples of Western music such as Fleetwood Mac, Toto, and electronic musicians such as Grimes and Michael Gray. Some Vaporwave producers also sample sounds from computer operating systems (mirroring the visual aesthetic themes of vaporwave art).

Thesis Structure

Academic literature directly pertaining to Vaporwave is limited, but existing literature on remix culture, cyberculture (including internet memes/memetics and social media), and media theories assist in analysing vaporwave.

The chapter structure will be as follows: Chapter 2 conducts a review of significant academic literature which pertains to Vaporwave, and outlines the framework that will be used in the thesis. Chapter 2 also segments the literature around three key academic concepts and how those concepts provide a framework to describe the genre of Vaporwave, and how the literature impacts this framework and the project overall.

Chapter 3 discusses vaporwave as a unit of culture and means of online cultural expression and discusses the inner workings of the genre and how it operates in an online space (such as its capacity as an internet meme), and how memes become “a prism for understanding certain aspects of contemporary culture” (Shifman 2013a, p 363). This is achieved by describing vaporwave’s aesthetic and cultural inspirations through three distinct cultural touchstones; these are 1990s nostalgia, futurism/cyberpunk aesthetics and the idea of the American shopping mall and consumerism.

The second section of chapter 3 dovetails with the first, and specifically discusses the impact that the musical technique of sampling has had on Vaporwave and an explanation on why practitioners choose samples which recall 1990s nostalgia. In addition, this section includes significant works of sampled music in an attempt to describe vaporwave’s place in sampling, by tying a handful of examples and a Vaporwave counterpart to a particular work, whether it is musical or written.

Chapter 4 builds upon the nostalgia and sampling perspective described in chapter 3 by introducing a new conception for nostalgia, the idiom of ‘media nostalgia’, where people are nostalgic specifically for media and the memories that it is able to conjure in the mind of a particular audience, while being the “creative projection spaces for nostalgia, as well as acting as the symptoms or triggers of nostalgia” (Niemeyer 2014, p.11). Beyond media nostalgia, other theories (such as hauntology) are employed in order to

answer the question and understand how these theories work within the context of Vaporwave, which includes discussions on significant vaporwave recordings and the impact that they have.

The first of these is '*Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing*' by Macintosh Plus (stylized as リサフランク 4 2 0 現代コンピュ), is used to demonstrate vaporwave's social power as a meme through constant remix, and explain how this track is a crystallization of vaporwave's spirit from a philosophical point of view. The second example of Vaporwave that this chapter examines is '*NEWS AT 11*' by Cat System Corp (stylized as 猫シ **CORP**), and describes that album's connection to Vaporwave's hauntologically-influenced nostalgia play for a 'pre- 9/11' world which can only be experienced within media for millennials. Both of these examples and the chapter intend to position vaporwave as a nostalgic experience for a past that is never entirely present, but is expressed through memetics and Web 2.0 platforms and technologies.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by recounting what has been exposed about Vaporwave in the preceding chapters, and reinforces the notion Vaporwave as a form of memetic culture, with its own internal structure and explains how the genre is predicated on the three main ideas of the thesis. Furthermore, chapter 5 concludes the thesis by defining the genre in terms of media culture and describing how the intersectionality between millennials cultural experience playing out online (that is, the role that social media plays within vaporwave).

In addition, the chapter will also explore how vaporwave is a cultural outlet for the appropriation of 1990s media content and millennial nostalgia, and how the genre is a reflection for the generation's outlook in terms of the musical/cultural landscape, where everything can be recycled. The final chapter also outlines research beyond the scope of the thesis, and discusses opportunities for further research in similar topics related to this project in the areas of music, social media and the application of poststructuralist concepts (such as the Derridean concept of hauntology), in order to better understand them in a critical fashion.

Chapter II – Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is concerned with three key aspects of vaporwave, namely its status as an art form, social media and media nostalgia. The literature review is divided into these three sections which covers the key literature for constructing a framework to analyse vaporwave. In addition, the sections also intend to list the concepts that the literature brings forth, such as hyperreality and hauntology, and how those concepts interact with the three topics and vaporwave as a whole.

SECTION I: Sampling and Appropriation Art

Appropriation has been a recurring theme with all artistic endeavours, none more so than music, from house to hip hop, the blues and rock and roll; and sampling “is like Legos. If you give someone a bunch of Lego block and tell them to put something together, then they have something to work with” (McLeod 2015, p. 85). Sampling is the primary mechanism by which vaporwave is created, as pre-existing works are appropriated, reconfigured and recontextualised.

Andrew Goodwin’s ‘Sample and Hold’ is a much-cited work on the politics of sampling and offers a description of how sampling is markedly different to other forms of music making. Goodwin’s prediction for the future of pop music, was that “the dominant technology in pop’s future is clearly going to be digital reproduction, as established in new processes of music production (such as sampling music computers)” (Goodwin, 1988 p. 34).

The prediction that Goodwin offers is useful in helping us understand where vaporwave fits in to sampling, as “ ‘stealing’ segments from other records is a part of the meaning of the ‘new’ text...the Age of Plunder is in fact one in which pop *recuperates* its history, rather than denying it” (Goodwin 1988, p.47). Goodwin helps us to understand sampling as a form of cultural recycling where new music (or media) not only pays tribute to the old, but recontextualises the old.

The recuperation and recontextualisation is of the recent media past, not just of pop music, but throwaway incidental music from places such as late night television commercials or computers as a form of playing with samples, which is in turn playing with the media artefacts of the past and giving them a new lease on life. The benefit of Goodwin’s work is that it helps to contextualise sampling through the lens of artistic appropriation and allusion to prior works.

Compared to Goodwin’s stance on sampling, Dominique M. Richard takes the notion of sampling in a new direction, where “In the postmodern, everything becomes reified and decontextualised...we are placed in an apolitical space where consumption is the rule...the post modern world in which everyone lives in isolation, the linear movement of progress has been displaced by a dissemination of discourses” (1994, p.28). In the comparison here between Goodwin and Richard, there is a common thread in that both texts are interested in the reification of past media.

However, the disjunction between these is that Goodwin argues that the practice of sampling is a recuperation of old (musical) texts, while from Richard's perspective, computer music (and sampling) is a symptom of the postmodern condition that divorces texts (in this case, songs that have been appropriated) from any discourses whatsoever. Within the context of the thesis, the former is more appropriate, as it helps to explain the obvious usage of sampling within vaporwave, where everything musical and technological from the past is available for the taking.

'Computer Music and the Postmodern' (Richard, 1994) describes sampled music as being about consumption, and describes a reflection between contemporary society and sampled music. Richard's work demonstrates how 'consumption' (sampling, in this context) is regulated within the genre of vaporwave. What is meant within the context of the thesis' research question, is that sources for vaporwave are divorced from their original temporal, 70s and 80s funk contexts, to create music paired with images which recalls the idea of 'the 90s' or a 'pre 9/11' mode of thought in the millennial imagination.

Tanner's book- *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts* (Zero Books, 2016) further positions vaporwave as a postmodern musical culture as music "transforms from a 'thing' into a stream and finally into a formless cloud that infiltrates our everyday" (p. 56). Tanner's contribution to the corpus of literature is helpful in this instance, as it provides a platform to further understanding as to why vaporwave's sampling works the way that it does, as it takes incidental music and other obscure throwaway sounds from everyday life (such as a computer jingle or piped Muzak) and gives them a new purpose beyond what was originally intended.

SECTION II: Participation in Vaporwave's culture

This section of the literature review will look into how vaporwave functions within the framework of social media and community participation. Much like the first section, the texts used here are of a strictly academic nature.

The three key texts which sketch vaporwave within a cultural context are presented in this section. The first of these, from Straw (1991, p. 373) describes the notion of *scene* as "that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a wide variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization."

The idea of a scene is appropriate shorthand when describing vaporwave as a cultural phenomenon in a mediated social media environment like reddit or YouTube, as it can be thought of in the same way as previous subcultures (such as punks) were mediated in the real world, vaporwave is mediated online, and highly susceptible to changing online cultural practices.

Because of the vaporwave's online nature, it is "constructed as a globally ambiguous and ostensibly anonymous phenomenon in that the artists generally identify themselves using 'handles' rather than real

names” (Glitsos 2017, p. 104). Glitsos demonstrates vaporwave’s anonymity, while Straw describes the musical aspect of it in terms of a social space.

Both of these sources can be applied to vaporwave’s culture, as one theorist describes the social scene, while another provides context to how it works in a manner specific to the thesis. These texts (especially Glitsos) are a crucial part of the literature, as they give the thesis a ‘jumping off point’ in describing vaporwave’s culture as mediated within an online context.

Finally, an important contribution to the body of literature concerning vaporwave’s sociality is addressed. Jean Hogarty’s *Popular Music and Retro Culture in the Digital Era* gives a vivid description of popular music as it pertains to the millennial experience of culture and events (of which vaporwave is a part), in her description of ‘generation units’, which are evinced as “subsets who share a similar sociohistorical location within their overall generation and who express sensibilities that pertain to this common location” (2017, p. 9).

The conception of a ‘generation unit’ is relevant insofar that it helps contextualise the generational scene for which vaporwave and social media (and participatory culture) is a part of, and helps to contextualise the vaporwave scene by describing the cultural and political world that millennials inhabit; and vaporwave - as a form of participatory culture for this specific generation unit- plays out in online discourses, and encourages mass participation in distributing media products, helped along by ‘Web 2.0’ sites such as YouTube.

A particularly important conception of these practices comes courtesy of Henry Jenkins (2012 p. 205), where “allowing consumers to interact with media under controlled circumstances is one thing; allowing them to participate in the production and distribution of cultural goods- on their own terms- is something else altogether.” Jenkins’ observation is key, in that it describes the sociality of web 2.0 content platforms, and how those content producing platforms give users the tools to produce and distribute their own works.

The Social Media Reader (ed. Michael Mandiberg, NYU Press 2012) is a key text for explaining the field in which Vaporwave is situated in relative to other internet phenomena such as memes. This chapter in *The Social Media Reader* explains the pull of websites such as YouTube, as a vector for participatory culture, and engaging in a discourse of remix by interacting with the source material or other users with more experience.

However, a more robust text when it comes to describing millennials and their relationship to online music discourses is the previously mentioned text by Hogarty, as it offers another springboard (Tanner being the first) from which to develop the perspective that the thesis takes as it pertains to vaporwave and millennials.

Of course, describing participatory culture online must also concern internet memes. In the discussion of ‘vaporwave as a meme’, it would be a fatal flaw to not reference the original definition of memes, as found in *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins (1976/2006). Dawkins’ conception of memes as units of

culture lays the theoretical groundwork for memes, while a text such as Davison (in Mandiberg 2012) describes memes in a general internet context.

This comparison of Dawkins' and Davison's conceptions of what memes can be, demonstrates that memes (and by extension, internet memes) are more than a strictly visual or humorous unit of culture and can be myriad of cultural objects, neither explicitly humorous nor visual in nature. From the perspective of internet memes, the speed at which a meme is propagated is infinitely faster, but it is not strictly about the visual, as Davison explained. The original definition of memes (Dawkins) is more appropriate to the discussion, while Patrick Davison's contribution; 'The Language of Internet Memes' would only play a small role in the discussion of Vaporwave's capacity as a meme.

Dawkins' contribution is more suited to describing vaporwave as a meme, as it provides a springboard to showcase that the conception of a meme is not strictly about the visual, it can also be a multimedia project bounded by explicit rules.

Davison in contrast describes the mechanics of internet memes and their transmission within the context of how 'malleable' a particular meme is through online distribution. The work of Xu et al. (2016), on the other hand is better suited to this role of describing memes within the confines of YouTube. While the work is explicitly focused on one particular YouTube phenomenon (South Korean pop star PSY's *Gangnam Style* music video), it would be appropriate in this context to help describe vaporwave as being a partially YouTube specific meme.

Xu et al.'s contribution here is that it outlines what makes a meme 'go viral' on a video platform such as YouTube, and how it is diffused within that space. All three of these sources enable the thesis to develop an angle that Vaporwave is a form of meme from three separate perspectives, from the original definition of memes (to illustrate the diversity of the phenomenon) through to the implementation of the practice within certain online spaces, and how a meme is a 'fluid' concept, not bounded by one concrete description (or type), and that people decide what constitutes a meme. In addition, Limor Shifman also offers a contribution as it relates to memetics and how the concept works.

SECTION III: Vaporwave and Nostalgia.

The literature surrounding vaporwave's connection to nostalgia is incredibly varied, coming from both the perspective of societal forces, as well as technological/literary ones.

Svetlana Boym, and her ideas on the subject of nostalgia, is especially interesting for the 1990s memory trip that vaporwave is and aspires to be. Boym's work is useful in this case, as it describes nostalgia in a general sense, and is a starting point for a discussion on vaporwave and its nostalgic fetish for obsolete technology as a return to the past.

For Boym, nostalgia and technology are entwined, they have "become co-dependent: new technology and advanced marketing stimulate *ersatz* nostalgia- for the things you had never thought you lost- and

anticipatory nostalgia-for the present that speeds with a click...modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values” (2007, pp. 10, 12). This leads towards the central theme of Vaporwave’s nostalgia play that it creates a ‘false reality’ which is imbued with nostalgia for an impossible past. Boym’s work is critical for the literature in this section, as it provides an anchor for the literature employed from this point forward.

An additional text which is concerned with the creation of an ‘alternate reality’ is the aspect of ‘the real’ which is something that “can be reproduced an indefinite number of times...since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is a hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere” (Baudrillard and Poster 2001, p.170). Baudrillard’s concept of hyperrealism and the real, helps contextualise nostalgia within the thesis, as it provides a description which dovetails with Boym’s descriptions of nostalgia, in that it serves to create a nostalgic space online.

Vaporwave, this nostalgia demonstrates that people involved with the genre create its own reality, which exists independently of our own media reality. The literature for the section concerned with vaporwave’s nostalgia play helps us understand why the genre and its participants recontextualise material to create nostalgia for a time that did not exist in our own timeline. The use of cultural products by vaporwave (both the genre and its practitioners), act in this way to create artificial memories of the past, which uses media and imagery from vaporwave’s ‘target era’ (the late 1980s and 1990s) to create an interactive, manufactured nostalgia.

Glitsos’s (2017, p. 105) contributes to a description of Vaporwave’s nostalgia trip, as listeners “plug into the complex and collective (re)production of memory as a form of play, albeit one that is produced at the margins of liminality.” This builds upon the notions of nostalgia and hyperreality, and helps to understand the connection between Vaporwave and nostalgia in the context of Vaporwave, as the other texts in this section help describe nostalgia in a generalist sense.

However, an additional text referencing nostalgia must be included here. This text is Simon Reynolds’ 2011 book, *Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to its Own Past*. For the subject that this section is tackling, and in regard to the question, this book is the ideal candidate for a discussion on Vaporwave’s nostalgia play. Evidence for this comes from a chapter discussing Vaporwave’s thematic ancestors- hypnagogic pop and hauntology- where the fetish of the youth sparking renewed interest in older technology comes to the fore.

Reynolds explains this as “there is a massive cult among the young for dead media and outmoded appliances...this fascination with obsolete technology seems related for just-barely-remembered pop culture of the eighties...and early nineties” (2011, p.351). Interestingly enough, Reynolds’ work goes on to state how important the manufactured nostalgia is for the past-even mentioning Daniel Lopatin’s *Nobody Here* on the very next page.

The video for *Nobody Here* is a crystallization of vaporwave’s ‘manufactured nostalgia’, as it encapsulates the nostalgia that Reynolds is describing (by using a sample from a well known 1980s power

ballad, paired with a video with a VHS-like filter), while simultaneously describing the concept of ‘media nostalgia’ as it relates to millennial nostalgia in regard to technology.

Building upon the discussion around nostalgia, a more specific discussion around nostalgia, which focuses on the praxis of nostalgia for physical media, which is something that Vaporwave taps into as an inspiration for its audio visual aesthetic. This perspective comes from Dominik Schrey who explains that media nostalgia is a recent phenomenon. The first ‘casualty’ of media nostalgia was the vinyl record, as Philips’ CD came on the market in the early 1980s.

Schrey’s description informs us that “this was one of the first moments when the scope of imminent media technological changes became evident to a broad public, creating an instant sense of nostalgia for the supplanted recording media” (2014, p. 31). While this originally occurred when vinyl records were supplanted by CDs, the same media nostalgia is being applied in the vaporwave community, by remixing technological tropes from the 1990s (such as computer graphics reminiscent of Windows 95, as an example of the ‘vaporwave aesthetic’, something which will be defined in chapter IV).

Schrey’s analysis is particularly relevant, as it contains a discussion regarding media’s authenticity in the digital age, where “the logic of hypermediacy enjoys the opacity of representation and highlights or even multiplies the signs of mediation. These two cultural logics of immediacy and hypermediacy do not only coexist, they are mutually dependent” (p.32).

This logic is exemplified by the resurgence of cassette tapes and vinyl records being an area of particular interest, especially with respect to the remediation of such technology as it can create a ‘nostalgia’ among younger listeners, with obsolete, analogue technology sounding more ‘real’ than their modern, digital descendents.

An important concept within the corpus of texts (in addition to the concept of nostalgia/media nostalgia) is hauntology, a term coined by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* (1994). Much like the media nostalgia and Vaporwave-specific sources above, the notion of hauntology is explored in a more explicit context in *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014).

This source is better suited to the topic of vaporwave, as Fisher’s writing expands on Derrida’s concepts, making them more relevant to music and the discourses surrounding it within the context of nostalgia. Other journal articles, such as ‘What is Hauntology?’ and ‘The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology’ help to support *Ghosts* in building a case for the claim that Vaporwave is hauntological.

The concept of hauntology helps explain the mode which vaporwave works in, and a secondary text for this is *Self Reference in the Media* (Bishara and Nöth 2007). While much of the book is relevant to the topic, the final chapter ‘Metafiction and Metamusic: Exploring the limits of metareference’ by Werner Wolf provides the background to a discussion about nostalgia and hauntology as it pertains to Vaporwave.

This is done in comparison to the works of Fisher, in that Wolf’s article concerns itself with the idea of self-referentiality in media and music specifically. These two texts provide the framework for a detailed

discussion on the nature of vaporwave, both as an art movement and a culturally critical memetic concept. These ideas link with the question insofar as millennials' collective nostalgia as a generation unit (as described by Hogarty) for a pre-digital, pre 9/11 past has been reified through the sampling and aesthetic and technological allusions to a 'better past' that vaporwave signifies for that generation. Taken together, these ideas (Sampling, Social Media and Media Nostalgia) help to paint a picture with the relevant academic and cultural literature that surrounds the phenomenon of vaporwave, and how exactly it is disseminated throughout the information superhighway.

Chapter III – How did we get here? Vaporwave’s family tree.

Section I. Introduction

This chapter describes the musical and artistic forces which characterise Vaporwave, and trace the genre’s history, as well as the wider ecology of sampling practices. The chapter’s primary aim is to situate Vaporwave within a long tradition of appropriation art, which draws from a variety of media to create new works. This chapter will also explain Vaporwave from the perspective of sampling and appropriation art, and how the genre works simultaneously as a form of sampling and as an online media phenomenon, which is disseminated on platforms such as SoundCloud, Bandcamp and YouTube, but discussed on websites such as Reddit.

The research question “*To What Extent do Millennial Worldviews Inform Vaporwave?*”, refers how Vaporwave’s culture is symptomatic of the disillusionment faced by millennials, who hold their creation of Vaporwave as a nostalgic outlet for childhood (primarily the 1990s), using imagery and sounds to recall and parody the period.

Vaporwave’s nostalgic allure is a reconstruction of western millennial childhood memories, especially as it pertains to media and technology. This is evident in the themes and works sampled in the creation of vaporwave, from appropriating early versions of Microsoft Windows for artistic endeavours, to sampling smooth jazz and ‘Muzak’ and touchstones such as 1990s cable TV.

Millennials aware of the vaporwave movement therefore utilise samples to capture the ghosts of their perceived media pasts, and turn those ghosts into sample-based music, as a nostalgic memorial for their collective media past, as evidenced in the sub genre of vaporwave, mallsoft.

The connection between Vaporwave and nostalgia is further reinforced in the genre’s surrealism, where samples are used in a way in which redditor ‘joshuatx’ describes it as being “cathartic for many who remembered that era because it brought back so much we seemingly forgot or even denied liking media wise...vaporwave was all about rediscovering all of this era-the future past that never occurred, the zeitgeist of the late 80s and early 90s that was scrapped and replaced” (reddit 2017). These comments from the vaporwave community from the subreddit ‘r/Vaporwave’ highlight the way in which samples are used in a new technological context.

In this way, samples are divorced from their origin, where the samples become nostalgic ammunition for the recent past and therefore memorialising the past; as if “the hopes created by post war electronica or the euphoric dance music of the 1990s have evaporated- not only has the future not arrived, it no longer seems possible” (Fisher 2014, p. 19). The aspect of Vaporwave which attempts to tap into this nostalgia, by remixing sounds and songs from the recent past, is the musical technique of sampling.

Sampling divorces music, sound and other objects, from their original contexts and imbues them with new meaning. Goodwin (1988, p. 37) describes sampling as a process to “digitally encode any sounds,

store them and enable manipulation and reproduction of those sounds with almost infinite parameters and no discernible loss of sound”.

While this process describes the operations found within digital sampling and the manipulation of sound (such as the processes found in the Fairlight CMI and its infamous ‘Page R’ sequencer, for example), it is a process that has a surface level resemblance to sampling within vaporwave. Sampling within the context of vaporwave does utilise digital technology, but the process is more akin to the cultural practice of the curation of samples much like hip hop, rather than digital synthesis of samples as Goodwin describes it.

The premise of music sampling is that anything may be digitally recontextualised from its original form to be included in, or to, create entirely new work- it “uses reality as a point of departure to an alternate, metaphysical sonic vocabulary...a process that unfolds in direct relation to the imperfections of technology” (Rodgers 2003, pp. 315-16). Interestingly, sampling within the context of Vaporwave is performed as such to give the listener the illusion of listening to vaporwave on a skipping CD or worn out vinyl record.

The genre uses samples in this way that highlights the nostalgia for a media era which millennials were children, and the memories of this older technology highlight an aesthetic which is present on albums such as *‘Laserdisc Visions’* by New Dreams Ltd., with references to technological vapourware, such as the Sega Saturn or Laserdiscs by Panasonic (TheClayKinderSurprise 2014), which utilises samples that are reminiscent of late 1980s and early 1990s technology.

Vaporwave, however, is not just concerned with music. More broadly it is a form of appropriation art (much like Marcel Duchamp’s series of ready-mades), where cultural objects are given a new lease on life and ‘recycled’ into a new or similar artistic form, often removed from the original work’s temporal context.

An important point to consider here is that sampling, within the context of appropriation art, is that “the origins of samples might very well be less important than the ways in which sampledelia artists use them to create new works” (Demers 2006, p.110). Taken together, it can be inferred that vaporwave is a modern artistic equivalent to Duchamp’s ready-mades, as it takes common, already existing technological objects and sounds which hold nostalgia for millennials, and repackages it as an artistic practice with musical sampling as a core component of the vaporwave movement.

Definitions of the practice from a cultural standpoint come courtesy of John Oswald, where he states that those who sample “now have the means to assemble their own choices, to separate pleasures from filler...pawned and ripped-off electronics are usually not accompanied by user’s guides with consumer warnings such as “this blaster is a passive reproducer” ” (Plunderphonics.com, n.d.).

This quote indicates that for Vaporwave producers, sampling corporate Muzak, elevator music and the like, is a selective process and sampling with the help of new technological paradigms allows the producers the freedom and agency to achieve their musical ends. Continuing this theme of agency when

discussing sampling, Reynolds (2011, p. 321) writes that sampling technologies have “enabled the user to mangle distort and transubstantiate the material.” Vaporwave then, is just another iteration of sample-based music.

Vaporwave takes a plunderphonic approach in sampling technique insofar that the audio is given the ‘vaporwave treatment’, whereby the sample is slowed down and ‘chopped and screwed’ to create a psychedelic experience from other music or sounds (while maintaining the nostalgic elements of vaporwave).

The result of this is what can be called a plunderphonic approach, where “the use of ordinary electric or acoustic instruments is absent or minimal in this type of work...everything has been sampled from somewhere else” (Holm-Hudson 1997, p. 19). It is this environment of the ‘endless remix’ that vaporwave is molded by, sampling random pieces of sound and shaping them into a different context altogether, as a rebuttal to perceived ideas of musical authorship from a romanticist point of view.

Vaporwave “takes the digital life and historicity of the internet as its subject matter...it becomes central to the creative practices defining the genre, acting as a shared horizon of meaning, content medium and production studio...Vaporwave situates itself entirely within the texture of virtual life” (Born and Haworth 2018, pp.601,605). Vaporwave, much like its ideological predecessors (*musique concrète*, *hip hop* and mashup artists such as Girl Talk) rely on the intertextuality that sampling facilitates, as well as the infrastructure that has helped it to grow by being created and disseminated online and using the historicity of the internet as its inspiration.

Unlike its predecessors, Vaporwave arrived at a point in the early 2010s, where online infrastructure and people’s use of it was developed enough to understand how quickly memes can spread. Vaporwave used the age of the internet and maturing audience of millennials (and their collective nostalgia for their childhoods) as a source for what the genre samples, in both a musical and aesthetic sense.

Before a discussion on Vaporwave’s use of sampling can be explained, it is vital to understand the genre as it is defined through adherence to some particular set of rules or principles. The genre is predicated on the idea of nostalgia, which Boym defines as “a romance with one’s own fantasy...as result of a new understanding of time and space...the fantasies of the past, determined by the present have a direct impact on the realities of the future” (Boym 2007, pp. 7-8).

The idea that nostalgia is a ‘rose-tinted’ perspective of the past impacting the present and future is a key belief of vaporwave as a form of practice, thanks to the genre’s endless recycling of material from a time (the 1990s) that the millennial generation recalls fondly.

Boym helps us to understand Vaporwave as a form of nostalgia play, and sampling technologies and the freedom that it gives the user help to facilitate the fragmentary appropriation and redeployment of an idealized version of the past. Nostalgia invoked sampling is used as a means for millennial self-expression, in the face of the generational obstacles.

Vaporwave is one vehicle of millennial self expression, in a similar vein to internet memes, as outlined in the introduction. The concept of a ‘nostalgia play’ is specific to media in this case, and involves the person recreating past material where there is a generational nostalgia (as seen in vaporwave’s use of 1990s media artifacts), into a modern version which idealises the past.

This concept uses the term ‘play’ as, thanks to the interactivity brought about by Web 2.0 platforms, allows users to experience and manipulate media materials that they have nostalgia for, in contrast to the actual internet of the 1990s, which was a one-way communication system.

An extension of the idea of nostalgia which is particularly relevant to vaporwave is the notion that the genre is inherently hauntological, which is that the genre is consistently beholden to the textual relics of a pre- September 11, 2001 world. This date is important to the Vaporwave community, as it marks a point where 猫 シ CORP explains that “the old world died. It’s like the whole planet opened up and changed, and not for the better” (Chandler 2017).

Vaporwave’s use of pre 9/11 media relics highlight the genre’s millennial nostalgia play, and this claim is supported by Fisher, in which he describes the current media climate where “we live in a time when the past is present, and the present is saturated with the past” (2013 p.49). This saturation and ‘haunting of the past’ becomes clearer through the lens of media nostalgia, where there is a longing to ‘return to a simpler time’.

Vaporwave’s media-induced nostalgia is predicated on a longing for “the state of the world they [media texts] represent in contrast to today’s societies, which are highly saturated with new media technologies” (Menke 2017, p. 640). The genre could be described as a soundtrack for lament for the past’s vision of what the future could be; and that vaporwave is a means to reclaiming an idea of the past.

A salient example of Vaporwave’s sampling praxis (reinterpreting sounds and aesthetic themes from the past) is the song ‘B:/Start Up’ by Blank Banshee (Blank Banshee 2012). The 70-second track uses samples from a 1990s Apple Mac start up chime, and the Brian Eno penned Windows 95 startup sound clip. Combined with these arguably dated sound effects is a simple drum beat and a handful of chords played from a keyboard.

The interest in objects from this era recall nostalgic memories that are associated with the genre’s expanded ideas of ‘vaporwave aesthetics’, which reincorporates objects from the 70s/80s/90s era as part of the artwork which goes along with the music as being ‘haunted’ by the nostalgia for old technology.

Allusions to these include the cover art of *Chuck Person’s Eccojams Vol. 1*, which features elements from the Sega Mega Drive game console and the game *Ecco The Dolphin*, the art work for 猫 シ Corp’s (At this point, I wish describe the meanings of the Asian character in the handle of Cat System Corp.; which uses the Chinese character for ‘cat’ (pronounced in Japanese as ‘Neko’), and the first letter in the English loadword for ‘system’; システム, pronounced ‘Shi-su-te-mu’) *Class of ’84*, which incorporates artwork that is reminiscent of the work from the Memphis school of 1980s design, and Nouveau Life’s *New*

World, which incorporates elements from 1990s computer games and corporate logos, most notably the font used on IBM computers.

An additional example comes from a collaborative effort between ‘PEGA 速力(speed)’ (from the US) and コンベヤ (KONBEYA- ‘Conveyor’) (from Nagoya, Japan), where smooth jazz that has been manipulated in the Vaporwave style is paired with visuals from 1980s Japanese commercials including 1980s word processors, cigarettes, cars, and alcohol (eazy/P/eazy 2015).

Within the 1980s/90s nostalgia inherent to Vaporwave’s visual culture, it also includes a retro-futurism/cyberpunk aesthetic, where it is a signifier of Vaporwave’s position as the soundtrack for millennial nostalgia. The cyberpunk aesthetic of Vaporwave mythologizes the future, as it was depicted in the aforementioned film. This is depicted within Vaporwave artwork, with albums such as 2814’s *‘Birth of a New Day’*, 猫 シ Corp’s *‘Palm Mall Mars’* and Hong Kong Express’ *HK*.

The visual aesthetic of these examples, which share tropes of cyberpunk (the large megalopolis’, the Asian characters and motifs, and the neon colour schemes), serve to create what Sexton (2012, p. 562) has termed as the “technological uncanny...in which technologies can contribute to a condition in which time feels out of joint.” The visuals, along with the sounds that these recordings use as audio text, point to a specific term that is central to the overall Vaporwave experience and is additionally responsible for explaining why Vaporwave’s aesthetic is the way that it is.

The final piece of the triumvirate that describes Vaporwave’s visual culture is the genre’s obsession with the American conception of the shopping mall. While malls exist all over the world, the genre repurposes motifs and physical aesthetics from a 1990s rendition of a shopping mall, the neon colour schemes associated with the American mall in particular.

A special sub-genre, Mallsoft, is the clearest example of the genre’s fascination with the aesthetics of the American mall and its decline. Mallsoft is described as “distinct as it is to be left on while the listener does other things. The repetition of the music eventually forces its way into the listeners mind subconsciously, to be recalled at a later date as a memory of something that may or may not have happened” (reddit n.d.). Indeed Trainer (in Glitsos 2017, p. 103) describes vaporwave (which could also be said of mallsoft) as “not its own thing, but echoes of other things...vaporwave’s ‘mall aesthetics’ mimic sedative tones of the shopping centre soundtrack that accompanies the consumer in that soundscape”. Some examples of the ‘shopping centre/consumerism’ feeling of the mall gives to vaporwave are *‘Palm Mall’* by 猫 シ Corp and *HOUSEWARES* by 식료품 groceries.

The idea of the mall and consumerism for Vaporwave owes a great deal to the idea of nostalgic memory for media objects, and this is leveraged through the lens of what Healy (in Glitsos 2017, p. 104) describes as “‘compensatory nostalgia’, which stems from the paradox between remembering and forgetting in Western culture, which occurs as a result of media saturation.” Vaporwave’s nostalgia play is predicated

on a remembrance, a mourning of the past expressed thorough music, as a memorial to collective millennial childhood.

This remembrance is haunted by the promise of a technological utopia but the events that shaped the world (9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis), has shaped nostalgia for the media, technology and popular culture of millennials' collective childhoods, as "the more futuristic past was supposedly more youthful, original, heterogeneous and forward-looking...it emerges from the hauntological structure of feeling and the belief that the unlive past was a better place" (Hogarty 2017, pp.3, 5). Vaporwave, "is the baggage of the 20th century catching up with us" (reddit 2015).

The use of reddit in this way highlights the communal nature of vaporwave, as the 'hive mind' of the website can help to unpack the meanings of the vaporwave genre, using reddit as a place of discussion. Vaporwave is a means of coming to terms with the events that shaped the millennial generation by reviving the cultural touchstones of that generation and creating new units of culture, and using online mechanisms such as reddit to participate in the culture.

Because of these historical events and cultural baggage, Vaporwave can be seen as haunted by the broken promises of a technological utopia, as imagined from the child-like perspective from millennials' collective nostalgia for past media. An explanation of the haunting of media is explained by Menke, in which citing Davis (1979), he explains this mechanism as one where "societies sometimes experience discontinuity of collective identity due to a crises caused by societal change" (2017, pp.629-630).

The 'haunting of media' is directly linked to a child-like nostalgic perspective for past media, as it is related the memories that the now adult millennial generation have for the technology of the formative years, and vaporwave is a means of dealing with a collective media identity among millennials.

Menke goes on to describe coping mechanisms that can be found within media texts "as being strongly related to a social or even societal context...nostalgic remembering is biased towards the positive aspects of the past and tends to disregard what has been negative" (Menke 2017, p.629). Using Menke's description, vaporwave is a reimagining of past media texts which are cultural touchstones for millennials, and fashioning the collective techno-media nostalgia (using Web 2.0 platforms as a means of distribution), into a music and artistic movement, which is bound with the 'ghosts' of collective media memories.

The clearest example of Vaporwave as a nostalgic salve for the present comes from the subgenre of Vaporwave known as 'Simpsonwave', which samples visuals from early episodes of *The Simpsons*, with a VHS filter and further combined with Vaporwave music, "to represent the adult longing for a childhood they thought they had" (FrankJavCee, 2016). An example of Simpsonwave is the song '*SUNDAY SCHOOL*' by Youtuber Lucien Hughes (Hughes 2016). The video is a collage of visuals from an early episode of *The Simpsons*, and the Blank Banshee song '*Teen Pregnancy*', which samples '*The Message*' by Grandmaster Flash, dialogue from the Degrassi Junior High TV show and '*Sunshine Recorder*' by Boards of Canada (Whosampled n.d.).

Hughes collates these fragments of media together to create collective nostalgia for his and others childhoods, growing up in the ‘golden age’ of *The Simpsons*, from the 90’s to the early 2000s. This global media nostalgia is something that will be further explored in the second chapter; however, it was pertinent to mention it at this point to signpost the genre as a whole.

I have described Vaporwave as a soundtrack for lost futures, a form of coping with the hand that millennials have been dealt with regard to the world that they have come of age in, an age where “neoliberalist policies have caused the decline of the welfare state, the rise of the cost of living, and the increased casualisation of labour” (Hogarty 2017, p. 3). Vaporwave can potentially be seen as symptomatic of this disillusionment of the system that millennials find themselves in, and the music is a way of dealing with the realities of adulthood by using nostalgia for an ambiguous, mediated past as a coping mechanism.

This is facilitated by the world wide web, as “geographically speaking, Vaporwave has no material origin... it is constructed as globally ambiguous and an ostensibly anonymous phenomenon in that the artists generally identify themselves using ‘handles’ rather than real names” (Glitsos 2017, p. 104). The use of handles rather than real names adds to the mysteriousness of vaporwave, as listeners reflect on their own media nostalgia through the images and samples used rather than focusing on a specific individual.

Because of the online nature of the genre, Vaporwave’s practitioners have a flexible and near-immediate way of accessing and exploiting previously lost or obscure media texts compared to previous iterations of sample-based music examples such as Hip hop, which relied on physical records and required practitioners and fans to be physically present. The nostalgia within vaporwave comes through from the use of these old texts from the 1980s and 1990s (such as Simpsonwave or Mallsoft, with the infamous Kmart Tapes, a collection of music and in-store advertisements posted online by ex Kmart US employee Mark Davis).

Vaporwave’s use of these millennial cultural touchstones, signify that these forms of “‘old media’ should be regarded as a cultural construction through which people make sense of the impact of media change within their social and material environment” (Natale 2016, p. 593). This reorganisation of old media into Vaporwave is a question at the heart of this chapter, which primarily is to help understand the genre’s place in the canon of sampling more broadly.

Section II. Vaporwave and Sampling

Sampling in Vaporwave takes on a postmodern aesthetic, where “in the postmodern, everything becomes reified and de-contextualised...we are placed in an apolitical space where consumption is the rule (Richard 1994, p. 28).” This statement helps us to understand sampling as a form of ‘consumption’ for Vaporwave, as it reinterprets old, forgotten material to create a new auditory reality for those forgotten materials.

Vaporwave's 'upcycling' of obscure or forgotten media texts is largely thanks to the 'hive mind' of users who populate corners of the web such as Reddit's r/Vaporwave subreddit, which thanks to the site's system of 'upvotes' and 'downvotes' and threads, people are able to discover new Vaporwave releases shared with the community.

The vaporwave texts then propagate the escapist nostalgia trip offered to listeners. The nostalgia trip (along with the visual culture described above) is a crucial element of the Vaporwave experience, an audiovisual experience where "the listener draws upon their own repository of past experience but only in order to plug into the complex and collective (re)production of memory as a form of play...vaporwave is undoing and deforming memory in order to construct a phantasmal and liminal remembering experience in which memory both happens and does not happen"(Glitsos 2017, pp. 105-6).

Vaporwave's memorialising of the recent past through samples emphasises the spectral nature of the genre, by being simultaneously present and not present, which is further disseminated through the infrastructure of sites like reddit, where debates around the 'vaporwave aesthetic' inform the phantasmal nature of the genre.

Vaporwave's use of samples in this spectral fashion, is one where music is "woven out of looped moments that are each like portals to far flung times and places, the sample creates a musical event that never happened; a mixture of time travel and séance" (Reynolds 2011, p. 313). The combinatory effects of the sampled sounds and appropriated images and text, create a "kind of retro aesthetic, but one that is produced through contemporary data systems" (Glitsos 2017, p. 107).

The retro 1990s aesthetic combined with the affordances that Web 2.0 platforms such as Soundcloud give users, highlights the normalisation of sampling. Vaporwave can be thought of as a product of the musical environment where "sampling is no longer exceptional, but, rather, embedded in the commercial (and much other) popular music practice...a kind of 'post-sampling' musical environment wherein sampling and other musical practices intermingle" (Behr, Negus and Street 2017, p. 224). With this idea that sampling is no longer revolutionary, vaporwave producers exploit the ghosts of millennials' collective media nostalgia, by applying samples (not necessarily music alone) that are reminiscent of that period (the 1990s) to create music and distributing it using modern communication techniques.

An example of this trance-like state of the memory play of reinterpreting sounds other than music, and a place where 'post-sampling' comes together is courtesy of Vaporwave artist, '**Zadig The Jasp**'. An example of this short 42-second track '*Mist*', is taken from his album '*新世代*' (Romanised as 'shinsedai'- trans. 'a new generation') (Zadig The Jasp 2017). The commercial in question that is used in this way to create the 'music', is an early Japanese-market commercial for the Honda NSX sports car (mycub 2006) (originally released in 1990).

'Mist' remediates the ghostly sounds from the commercial and the narrator to create an otherworldly effect which 'consumes' the listener's attention. The **Zadig the Jasp** example is particularly interesting,

as it utilises sounds from the media environment and archival nature of websites such as YouTube, in addition to actual music, creating a point of difference by splicing and slowing of the environmental sounds present in the original commercial.

Further examples of found sounds come from works such as *‘Far Side Virtual’* by **James Ferraro** (Hippos in Tanks, 2011). The opening track, *‘Linden Dollars’* (MaryPimpa 2012) is an original creation, but uses the noises and up-tempo sounds that were found in many 1990s computer operating systems, such as early versions of Microsoft Windows, to create a positive feeling. Additionally, the ‘found sound’ paradigm of Vaporwave sampling is highlighted again with the track, *‘Nightvision (Overture)’* by *Esc 不在* (fuzai-‘absence’) (threEchelon 2012).

This track samples a familiar environmental sound, in this case the Windows 95 start up sound (composed by Brian Eno), and reinterprets it with loops, distortion and panning effects to create the ‘remembering experience’ as argued by Glitsos, where the track exists in a memorial purgatory of remembrance of using Windows 95.

These examples point to the theoretical beginnings of sampling, specifically the use of sounds that one finds in the wider world. An example within the Vaporwave community of utilising the sounds of real life for the production of music is the album *‘ショップ @ ヘルシンキ’* (trans. ‘shop at Helsinki’) by **猫シ CORP**, where live recordings of crowds can clearly be heard within the synthetically produced computer music.

Vaporwave’s connection to sampling is symptomatic of the technology and back catalogue of music that is available to Vaporwave producers, in which Sexton (2012, p. 562) notes that “it is undoubtedly a condition that has increased with the rise of digital technologies and the ability to gain access to a range of recordings and styles from different periods with relative ease”.

The use of sampling from past media (not just music, but other recordings of noise) within Vaporwave, marks it as a form of music in which time feels stuck or otherwise in constant retreat, and the genre’s use of samples reflect this, as “vaporwave seeks out that which is stripped away in order to recapitulate the chronic obsolescence permeating contemporary consumer culture” (Glitsos 2017, p. 108). Vaporwave’s recycling aesthetic is most prevalent in the history of sampling, however.

For the discussion of sampling techniques and how it pertains to Vaporwave, is the musical subgenre of *‘musique concrète’*, first pioneered shortly after the end of the Second World War. *Musique Concrète* took sounds and voices and manipulated them, to “explore the musical possibilities of sounds sampled on 78rpm records, and, from 1951 onward, magnetic tape” (Palombini 1993, p.14). An example of *musique concrète* is *‘Apostrophe’* by Pierre Schaeffer (1950).

Developed while Schaeffer was a member of the Groupe Recherche Musicale, *musique concrète* is defined by its relationship to sound, as “the effects created by different manners of exciting sound-producing bodies, and by electroacoustic manipulations of recordings of these sounds...the performer is

unnecessary” (ibid, p. 16). Using ‘Apostrophe’ as an example of the practice, the signal wafts from ear to ear is made up of a combination of human voices, off-kilter piano and mechanical noises (Norrock Androll 2010) to give an eerie feeling of sampling-as-time travel, and highlight the usage of raw sound in *musique concrète*.

Without the need for a physical performance, *musique concrète* is purely the manipulation of noise in the creation of music (this trend is also seen in a similar fashion in ‘Close to the Edit’ by the Art of Noise (1984), where sounds such as voices and a car’s starter motor are manipulated in order to construct music).

The idea of ‘sampling as time travel’ is increasingly relevant to Vaporwave as it is an aforementioned ‘soundtrack for lost futures and nostalgia’, and the link between *musique concrète* and Vaporwave is that both media are hauntological, where electronic sounds are described by Fisher as “the electronic sounds produced between the 1950s and 1990s remain sonic signifiers of the future- and as such they are signs that the anticipated future never actually arrived” (2013, p. 45).

Du Pop a l’Ane, by Bernard Parmegiani (1969), is more familiar to those who understand sampling from the perspective of hip hop or indeed Vaporwave (as a curatorial exercise) which blends music and other sounds together. Parmegiani’s work creates a ‘sound field’ which is described as “moving inside a maze built using all four dimensions rather than the usual two...sounds circled around the listener’s head, swooped and veered, receded and surged” (Reynolds 2011, p. 384). Within the realm of Vaporwave, this perspective of shifting, dynamic sound is taken to the extreme in ‘**Chuck Person’s Eccojams Vol. 1**’, a self released digital file which is considered to be the beginning of the Vaporwave genre as a whole.

Released in August 2010, *Chuck Person’s Eccojams Vol. 1* is listed as the very first release on lucidarchive.com, a Vaporwave catalogue. The hour-long album is a melange of 1980s pop hits, albeit chopped and screwed with to the point of near unrecognizability. Sampling everything from Fleetwood Mac, to Toto and Teddy Pendergrass, the album pushes what one would consider sampling to its limit, in the same spirit as *musique concrète*. However, an example of both *musique concrète* within Vaporwave is found in Internet Club’s alternate name 新しいデラックスライフ (trans. ‘New Deluxe Life’), and the album ‘世界から解放され’ (trans. ‘liberated from the world’).

The bizarre, often incomprehensible noise is considered by some to barely qualify for the label of music, with one YouTube commenter describing the album as “This isn’t even Vaporwave anymore; it’s just very weird music concrete” (VaporMemory 2015). Central to the idea of sampling within Vaporwave, is the undercurrent of parody that the genre provides.

The parody angle comes from Vaporwave’s postmodern sampling ethos of consumption, using music as an appropriative tool where “rampant consumerism allows artists to wilfully mix media to create a new form of artistic appropriation that erases time and space...the commodification of the past and its stereotypes is still a product of the capitalist market” (Tanner 2016, p.33). The commodification that

Tanner alludes to is present in what Demers (2006, p. 134) describes as *sampledelia*, where artists “assemble and manipulate them to create meaning and to demonstrate their connoisseurship through the savvy placement of both obscure and well-known sounds.

A cornerstone of *sampledelia* is the notion that there is no single definitive version of a work”. The statement that Demers makes points to Vaporwave’s trope of what I will call from now on, ‘appropriative recycling’, whereby samples are appropriated within the genre as a way of commenting on nostalgia for the past- both in imagery present within Vaporwave, and the sampled songs themselves.

An example of this is ‘ホーリーゴースト (*holy ghost*)’ by Christtt, where a sampled song (in this case, ‘Transparency’ by D’Eon (Whosampled n.d.)) (after being given the ‘vaporwave treatment’ of slurred vocals and heavy reverb effects) is paired with visuals from an *Inspector Gadget* film to breed millennial nostalgia (christtt 2013). This tradition of appropriative recycling continues with Vaporwave, as it owes its existence not only to sampling’s cut-and-paste paradigm, but also the collective media memories of the millennial generation who created the genre.

Vaporwave follows *musique concrète* and hip hop in that to create new music out of 1990s cultural touchstones (for millennials), the genre curates these raw sounds that establish them as signifiers of the millennial imagination, that “fragments of noises can lend themselves to musical construction by means of electro acoustic manipulations” (Palombini 1993, p. 16). What is meant here, is that sampling is even small snippets of noise can be used in the construction of music, a curatorial process shared by *musique concrète*, hip hop and vaporwave. From a contemporary point of view, this is a process that has been made easier by the interconnectivity of the internet in the procurement of sounds.

Sampling within vaporwave also relies on the use of ‘Web 2.0’ platforms in order to facilitate discussions about sampling and a participatory rhetoric about what is considered ‘aesthetic’, as well as spread vaporwave as a genre of music. Vaporwave’s sampling technique is inherently plunderphonic, as it remixes musical resources in such a way to create new meanings out of ephemeral texts such as cable TV background music, commercials and Muzak from sources where such music (such as the ‘K-Mart Tapes’) was regarded as throwaway.

The meanings for the genre’s millennial audience is one of nostalgia, as the samples presence in the music and art of vaporwave are linked towards nostalgia (as Boym defined it) for the sounds and visuals of the millennial childhood media diet – reimagined on websites such as YouTube in a way which revives the media ghosts of the recent past.

Chapter IV – Vaporwave as Ghostly Media

The primary focus of the previous chapter was outlining the inner workings of the vaporwave genre, along with an abridged history of the practice of musical sampling, and how the practice led towards the genre of Vaporwave. The result of which has ended up in taking samples from the musical past and blending the tracks together, filtered with an art style which alludes to the historicity of the internet. This chapter utilises media theories in order to better understand the genre's nostalgia, which is primarily concerned with the intersectionality of media-specific nostalgia, combined with the concept of hauntology.

In addition to these parameters, the chapter also understands Vaporwave through the lenses of wider media theories which are salient to the question. This chapter builds on the notion that vaporwave is a form of 'mourning' for the millennial 1990s imagined childhood, and a re-engineering of those elements into a simulacrum of a musical statement comments on this 'mourning' attitude within the genre and the community at large.

This is achieved through the idiom of a 'vaporwave meme', where users appropriate tropes of the hauntological 'imagined 1990s childhood' present in vaporwave and distribute it through social media channels such as Facebook. The chapter explores these theoretical concepts as they relate to the genre within the fields of social media, participatory culture and internet memetics, and how all these concepts taken together develop an understanding of vaporwave from a theoretical point of view.

More than a musical genre, this chapter identifies vaporwave as a media object that expresses the romanticism for older technology held by millennials. An example of this is the surge in vinyl record sales since the start of the decade, or the "fetishised commodification of the analogue object (like the ubiquity of the analogue audio cassette as an icon on T shirts, tote bags and smartphone covers)" (Schrey, in Niemeyer 2014, p. 28). Bearing this statement in mind, it is therefore important to furnish the chapter with guiding principles of media nostalgia to understand the 'meta-musical-archive' that Vaporwave is, and its connection to technological nostalgia.

What Schrey is referring to with the modern-day fetishised analogue object, is that the icon of vinyl records and cassettes is merely a signifier that something is 'media nostalgic', and these appear within vaporwave as a 'manufactured' nostalgia focusing on 1990s technology, such as the ubiquitous 3 ¼ -inch floppy disk, and how that fits into vaporwave's nostalgia play of millennial techno-nostalgia.

While 'raw' nostalgia was outlined in chapter 1 as "a fantasy of the past", media nostalgia is more specific. An example of the 'nostalgic' elements within modern media, is found in TV shows with tropes of eighties revivalism in the case of the Netflix drama *Stranger Things*, or the German television drama *Deutschland 83*.

The revivalism in modern media, such as examples above, "produce content and narratives not only in the nostalgic style but also as triggers of nostalgia...media can be used as an ersatz stand in for former rituals, feelings or past, without replicating them exactly" (Niemeyer 2014, pp. 7,12). Niemeyer's definition of

media nostalgia traces the concept in such a way, that it is simple to understand why vaporwave is so heavily invested in the memorialisation of the past, with a specific focus on the media culture of the 1990s, American mall culture, 1980s and 1990s visual styles and the archaic (by today's standards) computing technology of that era, more of which will be described below to better understand the term of vaporwave aesthetics.

Another crucial milestone for this chapter and its investigation of Vaporwave and people's relationship to it, is a neologism of Vaporwave being considered as a 'nostalgic simulacra'. This is an incorporation of media-specific nostalgia, clothed in a spectral cloaking of the hyperreal, a kind of synthetic musical reality, where the music and the images present a frozen past in the face of the current age.

Hyperreality is a state which is "the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere...a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging within itself, an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (Baudrillard, in Poster 2001, pp. 170,173). With this in mind, it can be said that Vaporwave is a self-aware form of appropriation art, which provides the millennials who were too young to experience it, a sort of idealised version of the late 1980s and early 1990s- which Vaporwave is thematically connected to- and in a constant state of self-reference.

Vaporwave can be thought of as an escapist musical genre which appears on multiple formats, as not only has the genre been present since its inception online within confines of cyberspace, vaporwave has also been released on cassettes and vinyl records through sites such as Bandcamp. Vaporwave's hyperrealism is built upon Baudrillard's argument that "hyperreal events, no longer having any particular content or aims, but indefinitely refracted by each other, that they are precisely unverifiable by an order which can only exert itself on the real and rational...but which can do nothing about that indefinite recurrence of simulation...what society seeks through production, and overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it...the hyperrealism of simulation is expressed everywhere by the real's striking resemblance to itself" (ibid, pp. 182,183). This description of hyperreality and simulation from Baudrillard achieves enables us to position Vaporwave as a sort of simultaneous music/non-musical works which have no clear objectives beyond being 'a e s t h e t i c'.

Alternatively, Vaporwave's tropes that signify a particular work as 'a e s t h e t i c' only exist in a 'spectral' sense. That is, Vaporwave only exists for itself, as it 'vaporises' the samples into a play which is a simulacra of itself (that is, the genre's imagined sense of media past), much in the same way that Vaporwave's name is a intertextual reference to Vaporware- where vapourware products exist within the realm of hyperreality- being outside the real.

Vaporwave plays upon *techno-media* nostalgia for obsolete technology, and taps into millennials' collective nostalgia for the soundtracks and technology of their childhoods, such as computer start-up jingles, old commercials or background music from cable television. Cultural elements such as these are present within vaporwave as a linkage to the audience's collective media past, as "this nostalgia can be

the content or style of media representation, and, beyond that, media themselves can become an object of nostalgia” (Schrey 2014, p.29).

In this case, vaporwave is an interesting subject, as the specific nostalgia that the genre generates for millennial consumers of vaporwave is not necessarily part of the ontological fabric of reality; it is a reality which has no equivalent in our own – vaporwave is a simulacrum of what the future appeared to be conceived as in 1980s and 1990s. These notions play into an idea of what ‘vaporwave aesthetics’ are, which are described below.

What is a e s t h e t i c?

It is here that I wish to address the introductory section by further describing the trope of what ‘aesthetic’ is within the vaporwave community. The title of the thesis itself (‘Palm Trees, Xanax and Dank Memes: Vaporwave’s Nostalgia Play’) is a reflection of the genre of vaporwave and its artistic preoccupations. The ‘palm trees’ motif is representative of the tropical/ 1980s themed artwork of vaporwave (such as the use of dolphin’s in the artwork for *Chuck Person’s Eccojams Vol. 1*, or 猫シ CORP’s album, ‘*Palm Mall*’), while the ‘Xanax’ and ‘Dank Memes’ portion of the title speak to the anxiety millennials feel in regard to their place in the world, and Dank Memes refers to the absurdist memes that some members of the millennial generation use to communicate their feelings with.

One can consider vaporwave as being ‘haunted’, where the subject is both ghostly and simultaneously viral in its distribution online, where the ‘rules’ of Vaporwave, is that it must conform to what ‘a e s t h e t i c’ is within the community. This qualifier of ‘what is a e s t h e t i c’, describes the visuals of an ‘audio geocities’; an aesthetic which celebrates the nostalgia millennials have for the early internet and informed 1990s computer culture. Another aspect of what is considered a e s t h e t i c is the inclusion of ancient Greco-Roman busts (such as the use of Doric columns in the artwork for ‘*新世代*’ by Zadig the Jasp, or the bust of Helios in Macintosh Plus’ *Floral Shoppe*), as a visual pun in regard to notions of classical aesthetics.

While I have described three important elements of vaporwave’s visual culture (that is, Vaporwave is characterized through things being considered ‘aesthetic’ (stylized within the Vaporwave community as A E S T H E T I C)), it is necessary to understand what vaporwave aesthetics actually are. Glitsos (2017, p. 103) offers a starting point, and describes the fundamental tropes of the Vaporwave aesthetic:

Countless memes, tributes and homages to the ‘vaporwave aesthetic’ borrow directly from the Floral Shoppe album cover themes: a Roman bust against a neon pink background featuring a city skyline at dusk adorned with Japanese language characters (Glitsos, 2017 p. 103).

While music and sampling practices are important aspects of the Vaporwave experience, they do not tell the full story of the genre. I wish to expand on the description of vaporwave’s visual signature outlined above by Glitsos.

The genre's signature is concerned with a specific visual rather than audio aesthetic. The vaporwave aesthetic draws from three cultural tropes for its visual inspiration: Nostalgia for the 1990s, a cyberpunk/hauntological aesthetic (in which the promise of the future is haunted by the conceptions of the past, and creates a simulacra of that past, as I described in the connection between vaporwave and Baudrillard's concept); the American idea of the mall and consumerism, and public spaces in general. While all Vaporwave has these three elements to varying degrees, each unique element has certain artists associated with it (such as 猫シ CORP with Mallsoft, or 1980/1990s nostalgia, from artists such as Vektroid/Macintosh Plus).

The first of these stems from millennials' collective memory of the technology and media available at the time. These include colour schemes which are associated with the 1980s and early 1990s such as neon pink and green, characters from Asian writing systems (not exclusively Japanese, they also include Korean *Hangul*) and retouched photographs to make the visuals appear grainy or as if the images were captured on an early camcorder to achieve a 'retro 90s/VHS aesthetic'.

The 1990s nostalgia which feeds this aspect of Vaporwave's visual culture not only includes these aspects outlined above, but it also harbours allusions towards 1990s computer operating systems (such as the Windows 9x family, which includes 95, 98, ME and 2000), 16 and 32-bit video game visuals and graphics, as well as 80s and 90s design ephemera, such as computers or cars.

An example of this nostalgic visual signature is featured in the video for the track '*Vaporwave お土産*' by TOYOTA セリカ (trans. *Vaporwave Souvenir* by Toyota Celica) (Kapitol 2014), in which the video is a compilation of late 1980s and early 1990s car commercials. Many of these cultural elements tap into the nostalgia for vaporwave's audience, simply because it is considered to be a reminder of the times they grew up in as children, and as a result associate these with warm, fuzzy memories.

The final component of what is 'aesthetic' within vaporwave is traced to the American conception of consumerism and that culture's idea of what a shopping mall is, that is, large and brash, with bright colours and neon lights. Furthermore, vaporwave aesthetics are not only entirely focused on the visual, but the musical as well. While the genre relies on sampling, the choice of library or incidental music used in cable television and other audio-visual sources which create recycled music out of 'non-music' (such as library music or the aforementioned Kmart Tapes).

The source for vaporwave's musical choices also borrows from sounds associated with computer operating systems, and samples from obscure and popular soul, funk and smooth jazz music (culled from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s), the samples used also include non-western music, primarily from Japan known as 'city pop', a kind of music reflective of the late 1970s and early 80s Japanese pop music which is representative of the optimism of the post Second World War economic miracle, "a type of music that was reflective of the new, shiny, modern Japan" (Stevem 2018) is featured prominently within vaporwave.

It is in this way that vaporwave implicates the concept of hauntology within media as an obscure form of electronic music; Vaporwave is subjected to the cultural whims of electronic music in general. Electronic music itself “had succumbed to its own inertia and retrospection...what haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the 21st century is not so much the past as all the lost futures that the 20th century taught us to anticipate...The culture would continue without really changing, and where politics was reduced to the administration of an already established (capitalist) system” (Fisher 2012).

Vaporwave, as an hauntological construction of music and obsolete technology, questions the freezing of electronic music by creating a narrative which is frozen in the past, which hinges on the nostalgia for an imaginary past.

I wish to expand on this idea of Vaporwave as being part of the technological uncanny, as Sexton previously described it. His approach to hauntological constructs is similar to Fisher’s in relation to electronic music and its technology. Hauntology is marked by “a reflexive approach: the foregrounding of technologies and explicit references to media texts (and sometimes broader cultural links) from other eras draws attention to the manner by which many hauntological artists signal that their work is about the past and a ghostly infiltration of the present” (Sexton 2017, pp. 562-63). These references to past media texts reimagined with the present technologies recall the discussion about what media nostalgia is from a fundamental level, and help tie the concept in with hauntology.

An example of this hauntological link within the realm of Vaporwave is Macintosh Plus’ *‘LisaFrank 420, Modern Computing’* (stylised as [リサフランク 420 現代コンピュ]), from the *Floral Shoppe* album. ‘Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing’ is constructed in such a way to reify the ghosts of almost limitless possibility that the early internet foisted upon us, such as the internet facilitating a ‘celestial jukebox’, as coined by Paul Goldstein in 1994.

Lisa Frank 420 is a hauntological construction, which highlights the impact of the sights and sounds of the early internet and home computing had on the millennial generation as children. ‘Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing’ plays with early childhood memories in regard to technology; with the song’s eerie, glitch-laden atmosphere reminiscent of 1990s computer software with its occasional unreliability, snatching its user back to reality. Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing exemplifies Vaporwave’s nostalgia play by recontextualising an overlooked Diana Ross song (a media artefact of the 1980s). The stretching and breaking of tracks and incidental or library sounds create music which evokes feelings of *hypnagogia* in the primarily millennial listener.

Vaporwave’s media landscape is concerned with the ghosts of the 80s and 90s, as the 1980s “involved the systematic destruction of traditional conceptions of community and self, the slow dissolution of the future, and, arguably, the end of musical progress” (Hogarty 2017, p. 25). This end of musical progress is “constantly haunted by the ghosts of the more futuristic past” (ibid), and this past is what Vaporwave uses

as its hypnagogic feeling of nostalgia for the millennial listener; tapping into the generation's collective media past.

A definition of this feeling and why it is important to Vaporwave in general, is described by James Ferraro (creator of *Far Side Virtual*, see chapter 1) where it is suggested that “all these eighties sounds seeped into the consciousness of today's twenty-something musicians when they were toddlers falling asleep (and thus in the state of semi consciousness known as ‘hypnagogia’). He speculated that their parents played music in the living room and it came through the bedroom walls muffled and indistinct...with the impact of the Radiophonic Workshop or library sounds on the hauntologists-to-be, it might conceivably account for the emotional pull of the eighties sound palette on these musicians” (Reynolds 2011, p.346).

This statement is particularly applicable towards Vaporwave, insofar that the genre's cultural ideal is both hauntological *and* hypnagogic, with songs such as ‘Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing’ transporting the listener to a temporal simulacrum with older technology (and motifs from that technology). The older technology and its associated motifs are not only being recycled and recontextualised; but also a place where they are celebrated within a subcultural framework which is simultaneously hauntological and media-nostalgic, as it can transport the listener to associate vaporwave with the sounds of their childhood.

An example of this is 猫シ Corp.'s ‘*NEWS AT 11*’, where in an interview with Bandcamp, 猫シ Corp (whose real name is given as ‘Jornt’, see chapter III for an example of Vaporwave's nomenclature) describes the nostalgia inherent to the generation responsible for vaporwave. His description, a generation which “born in the 80s and early 90s who witnessed the world's globalisation and grew up with slow dial up internet...it [Vaporwave] has been a nostalgic journey to the past” (Chandler 2017).

Chandler goes on, describing the genre as an archive for the “material culture and sounds of their childhoods...and to act as if things have continued as their nostalgia reconstructs it” (ibid). This ‘reconstruction’ is present in the idea that Vaporwave is ‘hauntological’, as it resurrects the media ghosts of the past.

Tanner (2016, p. 35) describes hauntology as a branch of thought where “the past notions of the future have in someway failed, causing a disruption of time as an orderly sequence of past, present and future.” Vaporwave, in using this position with respect to hauntology, is a form of music and aesthetics which is three things: (media) nostalgic, hauntological and self-referential, in terms of it being a media object that is stuck in a period where the technical limitations of the internet seemed endless.

The soundtrack of the genre is lifted from the technological uncanny and the imagined sense of past through sounds and iconography associated with the internet's early days. Indeed, Vaporwave can be considered as a genre where ‘time is out of joint’.

For Macintosh Plus (aka Vektroid), the choice of an obscure Diana Ross song to use for this song (along with other 1980s soul artists, such as Sade), speaks to the *habitus* of the genre's sampling habits, where it

involves choosing sounds, songs to sample from and imagery to reappropriate which echo an imagined, nostalgic sense of past from the cynical position that millennial adults occupy.

In this way, Vaporwave is a reaction and a return to technology of the past through the lens of nostalgia. Examples aside from ‘Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing’ which demonstrate the hauntological/hypnagogic intersection within Vaporwave, is *ECO VIRTUAL- ATMOSPHERES 第1* (I m p e n d i n g R i o t 8 3 2015), and ‘식료품 groceries : 슈퍼마켓 *Yes! We're Open*’ (Vapor Memory 2016).

The use of nondescript samples in subgenres such as mallsoft recalls a time or place that the listener may not have been aware of existing, which further solidifies the example of vaporwave’s hauntology-driven media nostalgia.

Vaporwave’s overall habitus (with regard to choices in what music or sound is sampled), is linked towards a musically knowledgeable class - internet users of the millennial generation, who are musically and media literate to use musical/noise samples. The user appropriates samples of music and 80s and 90s *objets d’art* to conduct a form of music whose characteristics of media self-reference, sampling and media archivism is played out within online spaces, utilising those discursive modes of knowledge and thought (a subject that this chapter will return to) which play in online spaces such as Reddit.

Essentially, what Vaporwave’s habitus creates is one where sampling and the imagery of the past are the primary means of expression, where a return to the past played out in online spaces, where prolific artists such as **Macintosh Plus (aka Vektroid)**, **INTERNET CLUB** and **猫シ CORP.** set the agenda and as a result, possess a “discursive means of distinction...those in possession of subcultural capital are conversant with, and are able to an extent to define the parameters of ‘cool’...trawling through the niche oddities of commodity culture” (Whelan 2006, pp. 62-3). This conception of Vaporwave’s habitus being tied into samples, nostalgia and memory through the social and memetic infrastructure of the internet, allows vaporwave great flexibility with regards to its source material and vaporwave’s being as a meta-historical archive.

Vaporwave being a commentary on the historicity of early digital life and the media archive is defined where the source material is self-referential in nature, in a “nostalgic layering of sonic garments from different eras (Reynolds 2011, p.200).” This layering effect is especially relevant to Vaporwave, as it points to the genre’s lust for the ‘collage’ of intertextuality as a means of referencing other media. Self-reference within the context of the question can refer to “the fact that a sign (system) merely points to itself or to similar (or identical) elements within the same system and, second, a signifying practice that creates a self-referential meaning, elicits a...reflection on itself, other elements or the system as a whole” (Wolf 2007, p. 305).

With regard to the notion of nostalgic self-reference, consider the aforementioned ‘Lisa Frank 420, Modern Computing’. The Vaporwave community has reinterpreted Macintosh Plus’ reinterpretation of

Diana Ross' *It's Your Move* by remixing the track. Examples include the 'Mallsoft Edit' (visded 2016), or applying it to a humorous 'meme-able' situation (Rock Me, Joey Santiago. 2016), or other media platforms (such as the Nintendo Wii) (blueinklingboy 2018).

These examples highlight the nostalgia for Vaporwave itself (as present in the 'mallsoft edit') and the remixing of Macintosh Plus, and other objets de sonore (those which are considered a e s t h e t i c), is part of vaporwave's project of bricolage, where all media that fits the criteria for being a e s t h e t i c can be used and appropriated for vaporwave. In addition, it is useful to describe vaporwave as a 'sonic meme', as the memetic capabilities that the internet has afforded its users and the use of memes as a means of expression can be applied to vaporwave as a vehicle for millennial worldviews.

Memes themselves are typically associated with the internet, but the initial conceptual idea was defined by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene*:

Examples of Memes are tunes, ideas, catchphrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense can be called imitation (Dawkins 2006, p. 192).

With this in mind, the genre of Vaporwave fits Dawkins' definition of a meme, where an idea has spread from YouTube user to YouTube user in an online space. The memetic capabilities of Vaporwave rests primarily on its ability to appropriate and transform (that is, sample) other artists' (musical or otherwise) works, combined with a consistent visual and behavioural motif to ensure vaporwave's status as a meme.

Memes and memetics have since, however, become intertwined with the internet and its prevailing infrastructure, found on websites such as KnowYourMeme, social networks such as Reddit or Facebook; and to a lesser extent on websites such as YouTube (where Macintosh Plus 420 mashups are popular as a form of meme), and internet memes are facilitated by 'Web 2.0' infrastructure in order to grow. where acts of "cultural diffusion is facilitated not only by the viral diffusion of the original content but also by the viral creation inspired by the original content...memes address the diffusion and creation of a whole host of content that can contribute to the recognition of the original culture" (Xu et al. 2016, pp.105,106). Using Xu et al.'s description of memetics, we can begin to understand Vaporwave as a sonic meme.

Xu's description of YouTube memetics can be applied to vaporwave, as what is present in every iteration of the 'vaporwave meme' is a consistent visual and sonic motif. A further description of memetics (as it relates to the 'vaporwave style') is provided from Shifman, as two principles which are used within all forms of memetics (including vaporwave).

Memes as a 'unit of culture' are beholden to "diffused units as incorporating *memetic dimensions* – namely, several aspects that the meme will imitate; and understanding memes not as single entities that propagate well, but as *groups of content units* with common characteristics" (Shifman 2013b, p. 39).

What makes vaporwave a ‘unit of culture’ is how internet users remix existing vaporwave styles (such as the Macintosh Plus remixes above), or appropriate the visual style (1990s nostalgia) which is associated with vaporwave. This inspires other internet users to appropriate the ‘vaporwave style’ (bright colours and music treated with filters) and remix cultural touchstones (usually other music) by only slowing it down.

An example of vaporwave as a ‘unit of culture’ that is easily replicable is the ‘vaporwave edit’ of **Boney M’s ‘Rasputin’** (Fragrance Aisle Aesthetics 2016), which combines the visual style of vaporwave (the washed-out colour palette), with a merely slowed down copy of the original material. In this case, the ‘vaporwave’ edit of a Boney M song may be a blatant copy of the original; the difference here is that the ‘meme’ of vaporwave has spread to the mainstream in this example, with the musical appropriation and visual style being the object that is the meme rather than being an expression of vaporwave itself in any musical sense.

Groups such as Reddit’s ‘r/vaporwave’ subreddit, Facebook’s ‘Vaporwave Sadposting 悲しい少年’ and YouTube repositories such as ‘Vapor Memory’ all contribute to the staying power of Vaporwave’s status as a meme, as per Xu and Shifman’s description of memetics. The meme of Vaporwave is built on the conception that web platforms dictate how easy it is for a meme to be promulgated, in that “a piece of digital media in the modern landscape of robust and varied manipulation software also renders it perfectly malleable...a piece of digital media can be lifted, manipulated and reapplied with little effort” (Davison 2012, p.123).

Therefore, the meme of vaporwave spreads through a definition of what constitutes it, and can be seen as a nostalgic return to millennial’s collective past experiences with media, where the ‘meme’ of vaporwave is reliant on being spread within the subcultural communities online, and whether or not is ‘a e s t h e t i c’.

The ‘vaporwave meme’ is also contingent upon having a connection to past media within personal memory, and the nostalgic aspect of the analogue being repurposed as an escape from the present cultural context in terms of media. Vaporwave’s memetic thrust is that, not only is it a form of ‘anti-music’, taking music and images that were already present in one form or another and reifying it as a critique of consumerism, but the meme of vaporwave (being a product of the internet) focuses solely on past media .

The meme of vaporwave is focused primarily through for a generational melancholia, which is predicated on nostalgia and memory, where “our limitless nostalgia, our willingness to subscribe to an ideology that scrambles our codes of meaning in exchange for material pleasure, our addiction to information, and our distracted, regressive tendencies form the base of a greater societal crisis-a general failure of the future” (Tanner 2016, p. 69). Tanner’s observation helps explain the ideology of vaporwave from a macro point of view, as it is a return to the idealised past (looking at it through rose-tinted glasses).

He observes that futurism and the creation of new, risk-taking ventures in media has become garbled in favour of nostalgia for the recent past, which is filtered through the memetic pull of vaporwave and the media nostalgia that goes along with it. This feeds into the neologism that Vaporwave is a sonic meme, in that as a form of appropriation art, no music, sound or imagery (which is considered ‘a e s t h e t i c’) is safe from appropriation on an ontological level.

For vaporwave’s appropriation ideology, pre-existing music and images are recontextualised into an internet commodity to be remixed, parsed around and disrupted, as “music has lost its sense of futurism, and succumbed to the pastiche and retro-time of postmodernity” (Fisher 2013, p.42). My classification of Vaporwave as a ‘sonic meme’ reflects Fisher’s claim that music has become subject to retro pastiche.

Vaporwave’s plunderphonic approach raids the past for music for a future which has disappeared, but the nostalgia for older technology and a ‘simpler time’ is the core of Vaporwave’s media nostalgia play. Vaporwave “taps into a nostalgia that our generation-threatened by the alienating prospect of market crises, ecological collapse, and general social decay-has unconsciously developed for the optimistic, techno-utopian ideals that defined much of the popular culture of the late ‘80s and early ‘90s” (Reddit 2015). This comment describes the reason for vaporwave’s existence as a media product; it is a return to an idealised past through the millennial interpretation of internet memes, the genre is an interactive (that is, mediated within social networks) part of the media-nostalgia paradigm.

Where the genre is not only media nostalgic (taking elements from the past and recontextualising them in a ‘viral’ manner), but also media-archaeological, which is “concerned with such technocultural processes, is both a self-reflexive method and an archival object of research” (Ernst and Parikka 2013, p. 41). The relevance of media archaeology to the Vaporwave canon is best reflected not only by reddit threads and YouTube mixes (where songs are mashed together in a ‘mixtape’ aesthetic), but by Lucid Archive.com, an aggregator website which has catalogued all Vaporwave releases, from release date to sub-genre (hypnagogic, future funk, etc.) (lucidarchive.com, n.d.).

The media nostalgic/archaeological paradigm is a way for those interested in the vaporwave genre to constantly play with a simulation of millennial childhood nostalgia, as aggregator websites and social media recondition vaporwave and the references to old media within a new temporal context, each time a link is clicked, or a song or mix is shared on social media.

These aspects of Vaporwave give the genre its memetic/nostalgic qualities, and online media is a conduit for the virality for the meme of vaporwave. A defining factor of vaporwave’s capabilities as a meme (aside from the remixability of the genre- Macintosh plus remixes are an example), is the genre’s interest in the retro as an experiential touchstone for millennials.

The fascination with obsolete technology seems related to the nostalgia for just-barely-remembered pop culture of the eighties and early nineties. The kind of kitschy reference points that these hipster bands litter through their records-aerobics, Schwarzenegger films, late eighties

kids cartoons and teen dramas like Beverly Hills 90210- are similar to the bygone ephemera that fill up all those I Love the 70s/80s/90s programmes (Reynolds 2011, p. 35).

Reynolds' statement on 'hipster bands and the kitschy reference points' are themes that are found time and again within Vaporwave (such as the motif of classical sculpture, bright colours and the remixing of old computer operating systems), especially in the case of lost futures and the hauntologically influenced media nostalgia/archaeological paradigm which I have described Vaporwave with. Vaporwave's intertextuality speaks to a crisis of media, where technology has marched forward (as it inevitably does).

For Vaporwave, it is not just media, but the constructs which uphold media are being criticized in a subversive manner, where "with the realisation of global capitalism, postmodern art pulls from various times and places to create a pastiche that reflects the commodification of culture without critiquing it openly. Rampant consumerism allows artists to wilfully mix media to create a new form of artistic appropriation that erases time and space, a move that foreshadows the hauntology of the 21st Century" (Tanner 2016, p. 33).

In this way, Vaporwave critiques consumerism, by using sampled Muzak, consumerist iconography (the 'dead mall' for example) in a tongue in cheek way to deal with the perception that promises of the future have failed, and "those who can't remember the past are condemned to have it resold to them forever" (Fisher 2013, p. 21). Vaporwave reifies samples but at the same time redeploys them to be critical of consumerism, as seen in the genre of Mallsoft. Vaporwave uses samples in a subversive way to create new musical works, as its musical predecessors did in the 1980s and 90s.

Furthermore, Vaporwave's sociality derives from producers and the genre's habitus and cultural capital being mediated in a socially equal setting (that is to say, social media). This concept applies to vaporwave's community, where "life-styles are thus the systematic products of habitus, which, perceived in their mutual relations through the field of habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified" (Bourdieu and Nice 1984, p. 172).

What Bourdieu is suggesting is that a particular group is bound to operate in social settings in a consistent way, and is applied to vaporwave by way of the community participating in music making in the same way, by the use of samples and by a shared understanding of vaporwave's aesthetic conditions. Those who subscribe to the 'vaporwave lifestyle' coalesce with a shared idea of what 'vaporwave aesthetics' are, and "the community of artists and listeners who use the same platforms on which the music is exchanged to discuss the 'meanings' of the music itself and the kind of affective strategies involved in its production and consumption" (Glitsos 2017, p. 102).

Within the community, the idea of consumption is tied to the previously mentioned concept of habitus, and it is also reliant on the idea that "certain goods tend to be favoured by the dominant fraction of the dominant class, and others by the dominated fraction of this class" (Hesmondhalgh 2006, p. 214). This is reliant on the idea that vaporwave producers and its (of the millennial generation) audience run on the same fuel of cultural capital.

In this case, the notion of cultural capital is again furnished courtesy of Bourdieu, where “any legitimate work tends to in fact impose its own perception and tacitly defines as the only legitimate mode of perception... whether or not they have the means of conforming to them, find themselves objectively measured by those norms” (Bourdieu and Nice 1984, p. 29). Cultural capital, using Bourdieu’s description, is within the vaporwave community implicated on two key conceptual ideas; how artists sample sounds that are considered ‘a e s t h e t i c’, and vaporwave aesthetics itself as a socially unifying concept.

Meanwhile, vaporwave’s discursive praxis is married to the idea that the genre is a haunted multimedia archive, where the forms that it takes are a form of self-referential media archaeology. Vaporwave does this in a hyperreal setting, where the only thing connecting fans and producers (aside from subscribing to the same habitus guidelines), is the corner of the internet that uses a consumerist platform (that is, the consumption of media) to create a 21st century *musique concrète* which is culturally frozen (a good example of this is ‘*Liberated From the World*’ by **New Deluxe Life**), and haunted by the ghosts of the past, as it is music which “sheds new light on history instead of trying to make sense of some kind of easy-to-understand historical progression” (Tanner 2016, p. 67).

Vaporwave’s ideology is opposed to modern, 21st century musical culture, where “the destranging of music culture in the 21st century- the ghastly return of industry moguls and boys next door...the increased tendency of those in music culture to dress and look like surgically enhanced versions of regular folk; the emphasis placed on gymnastic emoting in singing-has played a major role in conditioning us to accept consumer capitalism’s mode of ordinariness” (Fisher 2014, p. 21). Vaporwave’s combinatory model of hauntology and media nostalgia disputes this, as it is 21st century music utilising 21st century distribution networks, but out of the ordinary of consumerism, as it requires the audience to relate the sights and sounds of vaporwave to their own media histories of when they were children.

What is meant by the hauntological/media nostalgia model within the context of vaporwave is that it uses past media in a hauntological fashion. This notion is supported by Fisher (2012, p.59), where “the power of Derrida’s concept lay in its idea of being haunted by events that had not actually happened, futures that failed to materialise and remained spectral”. At its core, the media ideology of Vaporwave is centred at returning to a childhood that whose media has become a hauntological construct, which has become an apparition of the past. The past which vaporwave speaks of, is false. The past, for Vaporwave, never existed in the way that it did, all the while taking media from the past and fashioning it into a parodic, hypnagogic cudgel with which to beat consumerism.

However, the message of Vaporwave cannot be considered a ‘sonic meme’ without social media’s ability to remediate Vaporwave works within the medium(s) of social media. While this goes hand in hand with memetics, Vaporwave also can be seen as subscribing to ‘participatory culture’ (something which this chapter will return to). What allows Vaporwave the classification of ‘sonic meme’ is its remedial capabilities, especially when concerned with a website such as YouTube.

Remediation within in the context of media “entails the translation of media forms and practices, the extension and complexification of media networks... YouTube similarly participates in this double televisual logic both through the immediacy of its extensive, seemingly global monitoring and through the hypermediacy of its multiple networks of YouTube users, bloggers, news media, social networkers and so forth” (Grusin 2009, p.61). Within this context of Vaporwave, YouTube and social media in general, the genre runs on a memetic/archival logic.

The ‘sonic meme’ of vaporwave within its fandom is operating in an media archaeological position, which is “in direct reference to and contact with its objects-just as technological media operate not within a ‘deep’ hermeneutic space but on a ‘flat’ level, both materially and logically” (Ernst and Parikka 2013, p. 67). Vaporwave’s archival logic works on people spreading the meme of vaporwave throughout a network of likeminded community members within discursive spaces where vaporwave is discussed, listened to, critiqued, appreciated and of course in the case of websites such as lucidarchive.com, literally catalogued for a new vaporwave fan to discover new music.

The use of websites such as lucidarchive.com enable vaporwave fans to navigate the marker’s of what those on social media describe as being ‘a e s t h e t i c’ (following the trends of the ‘VHS/1990s aesthetic’, for example). From the perspective of vaporwave’s social culture, Vaporwave and its primarily millennial audience rely on social media as a vent, archive, discussion point and communal platform to discuss the themes of Vaporwave- namely; alienation, frustration and disillusionment with consumerism.

All of these are bound by a logic which is hauntological in nature, as it disrupts the nature of contemporary media platforms (despite the fact that Vaporwave is largely unknown outside the confines of cyberspace) by talking about a form of ‘anti-music’, where contemporary popular music and the consumerism that goes along with it, is repudiated through the stitching together of musical samples from the past; while simultaneously taking the retro-futurist logic of contemporary popular culture and problematizing this logic through the genre itself and the platforms it exists on.

Tanner describes Vaporwave in this way as being hauntological, where “the artistic mode of realising this failure of the future that was promised in the past. It is the dismantling of the definitions of past, present and future and is absolutely political in its critique of capitalism” (2016, p. 35). An example of this is **INTERNET CLUB (aka New Deluxe Life)**, where the themes of cyberpunk and consumerism meet in the middle in **NEW MILLENNIUM CONCEPTS**, with its ‘dark’ soundscapes giving the listener the feeling of being in the future, but the music and dialogue within highlight a return to the past.

This is also prevalent in 猫シ CORP’s ‘*News at 11*’, which deals with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks by using the album itself as an archive for snippets of commercials and dialogue from the morning of the attacks, and is described in the YouTube comments as “Vaporwave taking its last breath before the 9/11 attacks. It was not only the literal fall of the twin towers but also of the not yet born Vaporwave culture and today we can only emulate the fictitious nostalgia of this amazing sound” (Vapor Memory 2016). This comment, combined with the ‘mourning’ nature of **NEWS AT 11**, typifies the entire aesthetic

of Vaporwave- as a haunted form of music, which is nostalgic for an imagined sense of past (in terms of cultural commodities), to deal with the present and an imagined sense of future for music.

Tanner describes Vaporwave's operation as an "act of reframing our history, of allowing us to revisit the corporate music of previous decades and to reevaluate its emotional appeal...it accomplishes something contemporary music rarely does. It invites us to react emotionally to a genre of music that has subversive potential" (2016, pp. 70-71). Vaporwave's subversion of mainstream musical culture is, therefore, a form of rebellion and nostalgic longing for the generation that created it and the social media platforms on which it operates.

Chapter V – Conclusion

The implications found during the course of the research helped to argue the idea that the cybercultural phenomenon of Vaporwave is a vector for millennial worldviews, which has been studied through three separate aspects. These aspects include the fields of culture (including musical sampling, and how Vaporwave is a function of it and appropriation art), social media (and the participation therein amongst the Vaporwave community), and nostalgia (more specifically media nostalgia).

While these three aspects are important elements of Vaporwave, the ground that this project has broken is framing the genre as part of a wider force of nostalgia for the millennial generation. There is commonality between millennials' collective media nostalgia and vaporwave - both share a desire to return to a 'better time'.

While this description is indicative of nostalgia itself, the better time invokes a hauntological spirit, and this spirit feeds on a desire for obsolete technology, as "the hypnagogic movement can be seen as an aesthetic response to the growing feeling that time is speeding up" (Guesdon and Le Guern, 2014, p. 78). In this instance, Vaporwave acts as a means of freezing or slowing the passage of time, in an effort to capture it and display a collective nostalgia for millennials' media pasts.

This desire is expressed in the aforementioned album 'NEWS AT 11' (See chapter IV), which is thematically concerned with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. The album's use of samples highlighted the commercials and idioms moments before the terrorist attacks took place, leaving the album as a repository of the recent past, where it is frozen in time.

Both the preservation of the material culture of the recent past, and the resurrection of the material, musical and aesthetic culture of Vaporwave highlight the genre's nostalgia play. The culture that millennials grew up with is celebrated (furnished with cheesy library music, old computers with Windows 9x OS's, etc.), and has become part of retromania as signifiers for childhood memories and for a future that never came to pass.

The ideological project of Vaporwave is imbricated with the archival nature of the internet, where the past is simulated, creating a feeling where the past is 'conjured' out of thin air, where "time is out of joint" (Derrida 1994, p. 49). The media nostalgia of Vaporwave is contingent on millennials' retreat into their own media pasts, a past where technological progress has halted, and social media adds fuel to that retreat into the past through the idiom of participatory culture.

By utilising YouTube and Reddit posts as secondary sources within the framework put forth by the research question; I have demonstrated vaporwave's status as a meme from an interactionist point of view. Denizens of the Vaporwave community interact with the source material, whether it is through Facebook comments, Bandcamp messages or YouTube comments - the genre spreads towards other people who may have inadvertently stumbled upon it (as is the case with YouTube and its 'suggested videos' tab as an example).

In addition to the understanding of Vaporwave's memetic capabilities and cultural form, the common thread through chapter IV was the discussion of Vaporwave's nostalgia play. Links to YouTube videos and descriptions of these videos served an illustrative purpose of how the genre works at an artistic level, and the use of YouTube videos in this manner also underlines the archival nature of websites like it, including the Vaporwave archive, lucidarchive.com. The use of academic texts in this regard helped to frame vaporwave's abilities to invoke the nostalgic by describing the ways it is constructed, and describing the genre's retro-futurism.

The important takeaway from this chapter was the description that it is a genre which is reconstructing the idea of the past in millennials' collective mind as a way of dealing with their present situation through the participatory rhetoric of internet meme culture. The role of YouTube and sites like it is the 'reconstruction' of a reality that had no temporal significance in our reality.

The role of social media highlights the importance of concepts such as hauntology, hyperreality and simulacra/simulation has when describing Vaporwave's ideological engine; at least in terms of archiving the thoughts and feelings of the people interacting with the genre from the perspective of mediated nostalgia. What has been achieved here is a description of the genre of vaporwave, but also how the genre's sociality works within online discourse (that is, deciding what is and isn't 'a e s t h e t i c').

The final piece of Vaporwave's theoretical vehicle is its wider culture. While the genre relies on invoking mem (e)ories in its audience through the digital archive of social media, it is also worth repeating the impact of sampling history and the history of appropriation in art and its impact on the style of vaporwave. Descriptions of the culture of vaporwave relied on prior academic literary works, but it also involved a significant contribution from describing the genre from this writer's point of view.

The idea of a musical sample is the most fundamental building block of vaporwave, and may conceivably stem from millennials' experiences with services such as LimeWire and other file sharing services like it. The lessons taught in these spaces from the past proved that all culture is there for the taking, following in the footsteps of the likes of Pierre Schaeffer or John Oswald for a plunderphonic technique in shaping the genre through sampling.

Vaporwave's contribution to the concept of sampling is predicated on the temporal significance of where the samples are obtained from. While initially the genre sought samples from seventies and eighties pop music (as was the case in the appropriation of Diana Ross to create Macintosh Plus' *Lisa Frank 420/Modern Computing*), the genre has since grown to include what may be derisively labelled as 'musical trash', such as samples from computers, commercials and obscure (or entirely foreign) elements of media culture, which also bled into other forms of culture adjacent to vaporwave using the same nostalgic pull and 'Web 2.0' platforms.

Another important discussion when describing vaporwave is the neologism of 'appropriative recycling' of cultural content. In order to develop this point when describing the culture of Vaporwave, it was necessary to situate the genre within the realm of *retromania*, as Simon Reynolds described the concept

where everything that is old is new again, that bands and artists recontextualise sonic cues from the past into the present. This idea of technologically determinist progression being halted is something that is appropriate to both vaporwave and my concept of appropriative recycling within media, in that the past is forever being reified and resold to the media consuming public.

This is present in vaporwave, with its remediation of older ideas of what the future could be, as something which is repackaged as a 'haunted' format of music and aesthetics using examples of past media through samples and collage art. The culture of Vaporwave is influenced by millennials' desires to return to an unknowable and lost past through the subjects that vaporwave deals with (retro futurism and a critique of consumerism) through its vision of media nostalgia. This nostalgia is a signifier of that unknowable past, and it is a return to childhood - a pre 9/11 childhood when the possibilities of the internet and hopes for the medium were at its apex.

Another aspect of the question here is that Vaporwave is informed by these factors, but it is also subjected to modern internet culture. The creation of vaporwave is set out within a system of socially mediated set of rules, and what is included within these rules (that is, what is 'a e s t h e t i c'). It includes the construction of a critical perspective at the pastiche state of modern consumerism through the media and its iconography usurped into a new paradigm of appropriation art.

Within this framework, Vaporwave is informed by millennial worldviews insofar that the genre is a memetic form of music and images. While internet memes are nothing new, the spirit of vaporwave as musical meme is a new contribution to memetics. It is one which is couched in a haunted, cynical critique of consumerism and the desire for millennials to return to their own nostalgically tinted media pasts. This is through the appropriation of certain colours, sounds (such as computer noises) and cultural touchstones from the recent past- and finding solace in the social media bubble that others share in the social media music meme that is vaporwave.

To summarize, Vaporwave is informed by millennial cynicism over consumerism and the retro turn in popular culture and holds a mirror up to it and consumer capitalism and problematizes the generation's relationship to these elements. Vaporwave is also informed by the generation's engagement with social media and its ability to deliver things expressed in a memetic format. The 'meme' of vaporwave characterises objects, sounds and images from the generation's collective childhood, as 'a e s t h e t i c'.

Additionally, it creates a 'false nostalgia' for the millennial childhood (expressed through media) for a reality that diverged from our own; and the imagery, sounds and overall aura of Vaporwave attempt to reify the (imagined) past as a media nostalgic, spectral phenomenon.

Opportunities for Further Research

While this thesis was concerned with vaporwave and how it has been shaped by the social and cultural forces which impacted millennial generation (such as the popularity of internet memes), further research warrants a more in depth understanding of vaporwave and the mediums which lead to its creation.

Subsequent research projects intend to build upon what has been presented in this project (that is, internet culture and music), but in a more developed fashion.

The research model for the literature will be a hybrid one, which combines the cultural impacts of media with insights into the history of internet culture and transformative media that is synthesised through a media archaeological framework. As any further research projects build upon what has already been covered in this thesis, the subject matter will be similar; covering music, internet media and the culture that surrounds it.

There will also be a special focus on the archival nature of social media channels such as YouTube or Reddit, and an explanation of the sociality of these through a framework which combines the topics covered in this thesis in a more advanced and nuanced fashion. The literature employed in this fashion is an expanded catalogue of creative works and academic theories, such as the inclusion of a Habermasian and interactionist point of view, for instance.

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