

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Barron, Lee (2019) A history of realistic rock rebellion: Rush, Heidegger and the spirit of authenticity. *Popular Music History*, 11 (3). pp. 210-227. ISSN 1740-7133

Published by: Equinox Publishing

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1558/pomh.35026> <<https://doi.org/10.1558/pomh.35026>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/41847/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



UniversityLibrary

Lee Barron

A history of realistic rock rebellion: Rush, Heidegger and the spirit of authenticity

***Popular Music History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 2010-227.**

Abstract

While the Canadian rock band Rush has habitually been associated with the theme of individuality, and the literary/philosophical work of Ayn Rand, this article takes a retrospective look at the band's 40-year recording history and argues that the issue of individuality and individual rebellion inherent within the band's music cogently reflects Heideggerian ideas. As such, while the concept of striving to transcend the 'mass' is a key discourse within the music of Rush, it takes on a realistic and often short-lived form that makes sense in relation to Heidegger's conception of the power of the social and cultural 'They'. Consequently, in critically examining key recordings such as 'Subdivisions' and the conceptual albums 2112 and Clockwork Angels, the article argues that Rush stress a form of rebellion that reflects the everyday pressures imposed by social norms, and does not reflect macrosocial struggles, elements central to the work of Ayn Rand.

Keywords: Rush; Heidegger; Dasein; objectivism; prog

Introduction

We were just three young guys who would grow up together in music and in life, going through everything music and life can throw at you. All the while, we were doing what we wanted, the way we wanted to do it (Peart 2016: 15).

On 1 August 2015, at the Los Angeles Forum, the Canadian rock band Rush gave their last performance of their R40 tour, which consisted of a series of concerts that celebrated their 40 years in the music business. The show would be Rush's last as a band due to the announcement of drummer and key lyricist Neil Peart's retirement. Therefore, this date represented the drawing to a close of a line-up that had remained unchanged from 1974 to 2015, a stability that gave the band their distinctive progressive rock qualities of expert musicality and erudite lyrical composition. This article examines Rush from an historical perspective, focusing upon the distinctive philosophical shift that occurred within the band—that of the movement away from the overt influence of the novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand, in favour of an articulation of authenticity with regard to the value of individualism. In relation to popular perceptions of rock music, Simon Frith argues that while pop music is created to appeal to large audiences, rock, in contrast, 'carries intimations of sincerity, authenticity [and] art' (1983: 6). This is especially identified within the context of progressive rock as a genre, that was at its most culturally prominent between 1968 and 1978 and a key influence within the music of Rush. Chiefly associated with British bands such as King Crimson, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Jethro Tull, Genesis and Yes, progressive rock was characterized by 'long, structured and multi-movement compositions with dynamic arrangements [with] ... the prominent use of the concept album, instrumental virtuosity and compositional excellence' (Anderton 2010: 418–19). It has further been argued that 'progressive rock engaged its listeners in a quest for spiritual authenticity' (Macan 1997: 222) in its rejection of 'the throwaway three-minute pop song' (Weigel 2017: xi), and which benefited from a period of musical production that was frequently 'guided by the principle of "art for art's sake"' (Holm-Hudson 2008: 5). While genre is typically understood (in terms of literary, cinematic or musical variants) as a form of category or type (Shuker 2002), or as a 'cluster of conventions [and] a set of expectations' (Neale 2000: 23), Paul Stump argues that progressive rock was always 'a vague and

pejorative term, a kind of virtual category' (1998: 8). This is because, as Edward Macan (1997) states, the form was fluid in the ways in which bands that fell under the overarching category represented symphonic, folk-inspired and rock forms (and sometimes combinations of these traditions). Furthermore, some bands would begin within a rock style and evolve into a distinctive progressive form, as was the case with Rush. Rush was formed in the late 1960s in Toronto, originally consisting of bassist/ vocalist Geddy Lee, guitarist Alex Lifeson and drummer John Rutsey. While their first album, *Rush* (released in 1973) was rooted within 'hard-riffing, Led Zeppelinesque rock music' (Weigel 2017: 148), the band would increasingly manifest progressive influences, especially with the replacement of Rutsey with Neil Peart in 1974. This was a critical development; following Rutsey's replacement, 'Rush's sound immediately became more virtuosic and busy, and Peart's role as principal lyricist introduced philosophical musings and fantasy-oriented storytelling into the band's repertoire' (McDonald 2009: 9). Subsequently, within the albums *Fly By Night* (1974), *Caress of Steel* (1975), *2112* (1976), *A Farewell To Kings* (1977) and *Hemispheres* (1978), Rush would increasingly embrace the central tenets of progressive rock in terms of 'a dedication to technical skill that borders on the obsessive' (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013: 2), while their more streamlined later work would constantly reflect "'high-art" musical qualities' (Keister and Smith 2008: 449). However, while Rush have evoked a number of intellectual ideas, and actively experimented with generic forms, there is an enduring meta-theme of determined individualism and the rejection of collectivism that has served as a recurrent critical theme throughout the band's career. In this sense, they have, from 1974 until 2012 (the date of Rush's final album), keenly reflected progressive rock's perceived association with rebellion and the search for artistic authenticity. Rush rose to international prominence against the historic decline of progressive rock, where most 'of the first-wave bands had wound down by 1978 ... It was the three Canadians who were producing thorny, proudly metaphysical albums and suites' (Weigel 2017: 164) and serving as the 'torch bearers' of the progressive ethic beyond the 1970s (Martin 1998). In this context, this article will explore the progressive issues of authenticity, rebellion and individualism that creatively and consistently characterized Rush's 1974–2012 recording history. In Bradley J. Birzer's (2015) view, Peart's arrival in the band effectively initiated Rush 2.0. From this point, the band moved both lyrically and musically away from a blues-influenced heavy rock sound to embrace a progressive musical style and a lyrical outlook inspired by fiction (from science fiction and fantasy to modernist classics), history and philosophy. This latter element was underpinned by Peart's conception of the individual as 'natural and innovative' while the collective was typically 'corrupt and perverse' (Birzer 2015: 6). This theme would prove to be a consistent one for the period between 1974 and 2012, with songs that extolled clear individual messages to go against the grain of wider society, such as 'Anthem' (1974), 'Something For Nothing' (1976), 'Freewill' (1980), 'Tom Sawyer' (1981), 'Subdivisions' (1982), 'Marathon' (1985), 'Grand Designs' (1985), 'Prime Mover' (1987) and 'Out Of The Cradle' (2002). This was in addition to songs that addressed resistance to collectivist ideologues and ways of living, such as communism and organized religion expressed in songs such as 'The Trees' (1978), 'Heresy' (1991) and 'Faithless' (2007). The theme of the individual pitted against an oppressive collective society informed Rush's two most conceptual and progressive albums, *2112* (1976) and *Clockwork Angels* (2012). Therefore, the theme of the primacy of the individual is one that spans the band's history from their second album, *Fly By Night*, released in 1974, to their final recording, *Clockwork Angels*. While Rush's 1970s output saw them espouse a strident message of individualism that was influenced specifically by the writings of Ayn Rand, this stance softened in the early 1980s to reflect a focus upon the search for individual authenticity, thus reflecting and musically articulating key tenets of Martin Heidegger's philosophy. In this context, the article will take a philosophical-historical perspective to Rush and critically explore key moments from their recording career that illustrate the ways in which the band arguably reflects a Heideggerian approach. The impetus for this argument is based upon the development of Carol Selby Price and Robert M. Price's (1999)

Heideggerian approach to Rush in *Mystic Rhythms: The Philosophical Vision of Rush*, which focused upon the band's early to mid-1980s output. Price and Price argue that Rush's music can be read to evoke Heidegger's notion of Being, or 'Dasein', and the search for authenticity in relation to the socially and culturally pervasive 'They' who 'prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness' and instills a sense of 'averageness' (Heidegger 1962: 164). Taking a retrospective examination of key moments from the recording history of Rush, the article explores the ways in which the musical and lyrical motifs of Rush reflect the phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger in a sustained manner, especially within their post-1970s music. This is so because Rush propose an ethos that is built upon a pervasive desire or drive to resist, to strive for personal authenticity, even if such a quest is difficult, if not ultimately impossible. In this sense, Rush's songs are frequently positioned from the stance of individual being, from the 'I'. Yet, such an ethos means that Rush's music, even at its most committed, never fully accorded with the ideology of Ayn Rand (with whom Rush are commonly historically linked), whose literary heroes triumph over their respective social 'They'. Instead, the article argues that Rush's music has long since evoked this essence to reflect a distinctive Heideggerian outlook, a factor that is discernible within key songs such as 'Subdivisions' (from the *Signals* album), but more conceptually when their *2112* and *Clockwork Angels* progressive rock albums are compared and contrasted—albums that signified both the beginning of the mature Rush sound and the end of their recording career.

1974: Neil Peart and Rush's philosophical turn

1974 was a pivotal year in the history of Rush. The band released their debut album, *Rush*; and Neil Peart replaced John Rutsey on drums, who left the band for health reasons (Peart officially joined the band on 29 July). In terms of style, *Rush* was a blues-influenced rock album that consistently evoked Led Zeppelin/acid-rock influences, and while it did have one extended track, 'Working Man', the album did not exhibit any real progressive forms. However, Peart's arrival marked a dramatic and decisive change within the band:

It's hard to imagine an example in which hiring on a new drummer transformed a band as much as it did Rush. Previously a spirited Led Zeppelin-loving band harder than almost anybody in 1974, Rush found themselves the following year pretty much inventing a new genre of music—namely progressive metal (Popoff 2017: 16).

Peart instantly complemented Lee and Lifeson's multi-layered and complex musical compositions with numerous lyrical references to authors as disparate as Mark Twain, J. R. R. Tolkien, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Steinbeck, T. S. Eliot, Edward Abbey, Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden, Walt Whitman, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson, A. J. Cronin, John Barth, Daphne du Maurier, Voltaire, and, most notably, Ayn Rand. Peart would also reflect upon historical events (most notably within the songs 'Bastille Day' and 'Manhattan Project'), political critiques, philosophy, and the rejection of the power and influence of organized religions, further reinforcing Rush's status as a distinctively 'intellectual' band. This perception has resulted in a range of academic works that have examined the music of Rush from a number of philosophical perspectives (Price and Price 1999; Berti and Bowman 2011; Friedman 2014) exploring the influence and expression of philosophers as varied as Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Carl Jung, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. As McDonald (2009) argues, the first song that Peart, Lee and Lifeson produced (on 1975's *Fly By Night* album) was 'Anthem'. This song not only established the new key division of labour within the band, with Lee and Lifeson composing the music and Peart writing the majority of the lyrics, it also initiated the move towards a progressive and increasingly sophisticated style of bass, guitar and drumming composition and performance. 'Anthem' 'introduced the theme for which Rush would be

most renowned—individualism’ (McDonald 2009: 62). The song took its name from Ayn Rand’s novella, whose influence was a dominant presence within the mid-1970s Rush era, extolling the virtues of self-interest (and selfishness). Peart invited listeners to find their own way in life and reject collectivist modes of being, a theme continued within the ‘2112’ song suite, 1978’s ‘The Trees’ and the 1981 track, ‘Tom Sawyer’. In this sense, many of Rush’s songs that were dedicated to individualism represent musical treatises ‘in which the individual is always contrasted with the crowd, the masses, or the status quo’ (McDonald 2009: 79). However, the Randian elements of this message began to change in the 1980s as Peart ‘seemed to struggle with its contradictions and limitations’ (McDonald 2009: 65). This is not to say that Rush abandoned the theme of the individual; they did not, but it did subtly evolve, while still dramatizing ‘the individual-against-the-masses myth’ and ‘the central goal of middle-class identity: to stand out’ (McDonald 2009: 81). At the end of the 1970s, Rush were still actively committed to the theme of individualism, but Peart had become essentially a ‘left-wing libertarian’ (Bowman 2002: 193) rather than an Ayn Rand disciple. As Peart states of his contemporary outlook:

I know where I fall politically. And I define it better now: I’m a libertarian, but a bleeding-heart libertarian ... It’s enlightened self-interest. Free will. I’ve lived in the US for the last 10 years, and I wanted there to be a health care system. The little bit that there is, it’s a wonderful thing. So that’s an example of what I consider enlightened self-interest. That’s why I’m a bleeding-heart libertarian. Paul Theroux said: ‘A cynic is a disappointed idealist’. But I’m not a cynic. I’m not disappointed. I’ve just broadened my idealism (cited in Elliott 2017).

The theme of individualism within Rush is increasingly evident from the early 1980s, arguably becoming more resonant in its approach to Heidegger and the primacy of establishing authenticity than that of the Rand-inspired mid-1970s period. In this context, I will now critically explore these Heideggerian themes with reference to significant examples drawn from the recording history of Rush, the first of which is the song ‘Subdivisions’, drawn from the 1982 *Signals* album.

Rocking the suburbs: ‘Subdivisions’ and the urge to try to deviate from the norm

As McDonald argues, ‘Subdivisions’ concerns the middle-class world of the suburbs, with their ethos of conformity of values and nine-to-five vocational respectability, or what Peart’s lyrics describe as ‘the mass-production zones’. This represents a factory-like milieu that, via high schools that are dominated by rigid hierarchies of ‘cliques’ that enforce ‘coolness’ and reject alternative identities, serve to create docile employees destined for respectable, but drab and predictable, nine-to-five office work that numb the human spirit and sap individual creativity and freedom. Consequently, the suburbs, as depicted within ‘Subdivisions’, represent “dystopic” spaces that provide a starting point for fantasizing about escapist journeys’ (McDonald 2009: 31). Price and Price contend that:

‘Subdivisions’ ... brings home to many young Rush fans that face of conformity that they most often see: the anonymity of the suburbs. Here the forces towards conformity are two. First is the very structure of suburban life, with its limiting, stifling options. Second is the gravity of peer-pressure that is so hard to defy (1999: 34–35).

In positing escape strategies, the song points to ways in which high school students fend off the spirit of the suburbs through visits to bars or carnal activities in the spaces of their cars, while some dream of the ultimate escape to the city, where they can be truly individual. And yet ‘Subdivisions’ pulls back from this notion of escape to stress that for most, the city will simply be the zone of adult employment, as this is the norm of industrialized, capitalist societies. Consequently, while the desire to break free is manifest, the reality is that for most this mode of individualism is a short-lived fantasy:

The song points to the fact that many young people, some more self-aware than others, light out for the city, but many of them lack the fortitude to succeed. They end up selling 'their dreams for small desires/Or lose the race to rats/Get caught in ticking traps'. For many of these suburbanites who try but fail to conquer the city, they 'start to dream of somewhere/To relax their restless flight/Somewhere out of a memory of lighted streets on quiet nights'. In other words, they return to the suburbs and melt back into the crowd, defeated (Friedman 2014: 75).

Price and Price argue that the song is fundamentally about escaping from both suburbia and the city and work to carve out a dream-like 'third space' in order to attain a condition of Heideggerian 'authentic selfhood' (1999: 39). This is because, as they argue, 'Martin Heidegger said that we flee the terrible risk of personal "authenticity" and take refuge in a kind of "lowest common denominator" existence' (Price and Price 1999: 21–22) and display a propensity to 'fall in with the crowd' (Guignon 1984: 329). In their view, 'Subdivisions' represents the call of authenticity, if only in the form of fantasizing about an alternative to suburban order and its employment future, which for most is all that can be done. Consequently, it 'is no coincidence that "Subdivisions" ends ... with a busy clock-slave beginning to dream, beginning to journey to that zone of refuge' (Price and Price 1999: 40). In terms of the nature of the social subject, Heidegger typically refers to Being as Dasein (derived from the German 'das sein'—'to be') that constitutes 'Being-in-the-world'—a space in which humans are absorbed into. It is important to note that for all of the abstraction that Heidegger's ideas communicate, the 'world' is very much the world of the 'everyday', and we are absorbed into the world and meaning through our interaction with social 'Others', or the 'They'. Therefore, living in the world inevitably means perpetual interaction with the Being of others, which leads to reflection upon the nature of personal Being, and that of others. Yet this sense of the world refers to all of the experiences that impinge upon and influence an individual, such as the country that they reside in, its culture, their family, friends or employment. Consequently, a social actor is influenced by their immediate world, the world into which they have been effectively 'thrown' into. Applying these aspects of Heidegger's thought further to the music of Rush, the idea of resisting social and cultural expectations is discernible in the lyrics and compositional style of 'Subdivisions'. While the *Moving Pictures* (1980) and *Permanent Waves* (1981) albums contained shorter songs, they still showcased extended progressive pieces ('The Camera Eye', 'Jacob's Ladder' and 'Natural Science'), with an increased use of keyboards. This instrument became dominant on the *Signals* album, with 'Subdivisions' effectively representing the band's embrace of an 'electronic sound' (Weigel 2017: 166). Indeed, the band argued that the move away from the extended 'rock opera' format that reached its peak with *Hemispheres*, towards shorter songs based upon different cadences, still represented a progressive commitment to artistic development. Geddy Lee (cited in Reed 2018) states of Rush's commitment to musical experimentation:

People associate prog rock with a challenging style of music, and it certainly can be that. But if you're starting to fall into past habits and develop a methodology that's too comfortable, it's not progressive.

In this sense, both the lyrical and compositional nature of 'Subdivisions', in which 'synthesizers would usurp guitars for the main riffs' (Popoff 2017: 80), exhibited a push against progressive generic expectations, while showcasing compositional dexterity and complexity, even if some hardcore fans lamented the loss of the overtly progressive sound and wished for a return to the Rush of the mid- to late 1970s (McDonald 2009). However, in the face of such criticisms, the commitment to individuality and authenticity that runs through the recording history of Rush is cogently captured in Geddy Lee's statement that Rush's creative ethos was based on the commitment to 'making music that we want to make. And we've always done that to satisfy us first' (Lee cited in Lore 2015). In terms of Heidegger's

thought, as Watts (2011) notes (in a manner that neatly accords with the thematic nature of 'Subdivisions'), it requires an act of supreme existential courage to remain 'free', because society will endeavour to return 'rebellious' Dasein to the 'correct' path through the dominant pressures of society (such as the need for continual employment to pay mortgages). As a consequence, while individuals may dream of escape from the 'ticking traps' of employment, and may even achieve this, most cannot. There is a price to pay for breaking out from 'thrownness', because 'to go against the expectations of the They frequently involves being socially rejected and invariably is emotionally painful' (Watts 2011: 55)—consequences that are the foundation of Rush's most historically significant album, 2112, in terms of thematic content and the circumstances that surrounded its composition.

Resisting the 'They': 2112 and the challenge of authenticity

Throughout the 1970s Rush became increasingly progressive, with fantasy literature-infused extended tracks such as 'By-Tor and the Snowdog', 'The Necromancer' and 'The Fountain of Lamneth' cementing their reputation as a progressive rock band by 'fully exhibiting the genre's penchant for extended, intricate, multi-sectioned suites' (Lambe 2012: 1). Literary influences were also becoming increasingly evident, especially in relation to the writing of Ayn Rand. As Peart recalls within his autobiography, *Traveling Music*: 'To a 20-year-old struggling musician, The Fountainhead was a revelation, an affirmation, an inspiration' (Peart 2004: 218). The Fountainhead represented a literary expression of Rand's Objectivist philosophy, based on the view that humans must always act for their own rational self-interest, never sacrificing themselves to others, nor sacrificing others to themselves (Rand 1964), articulated within her earlier science fiction novella, *Anthem*. Set within an imagined collectivist society, *Anthem* concerns 'Equality 7-2521', a state-mandated street cleaner, who begins to rebel against the collective through the development of individualist behaviour, a dangerous trait within a society that has no concept of 'I', only 'We'. In the course of his work, he discovers a lightbulb that constitutes proof of an earlier, superior civilization; yet when he presents the object to the ruling 'Council of Scholars', they reject and destroy it. Disillusioned (but enlightened), 'Equality 7-2521' escapes into the wilderness where he makes the final breakthrough to individuality (and authenticity), proclaiming: 'I Am. I Think. I Will' (Rand 1995: 94). *Anthem* provided the key inspiration for Rush's 2112 album, which represented a significant turning point in the band's fortunes. Rush translated *Anthem* into a science-fiction tale set on the planet Megadon, telling the 'story of a noble young man in a mythical future who rebels against a theocracy that has banned the relics of the past world' (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013: 100). Aside from the lyrical influence from Rand, the recording of the album was itself articulated as an act of defiant individualism by the band, and a defining moment in their history. This was because in the wake of the relative commercial failure of the band's 1975 album, *Caress of Steel*, Rush were subjected to recording company pressure to produce a commercial success. As Neil Peart recalls:

We were urged to be 'more commercial', write some 'singles'. So, in our contrarian fashion, we recorded an ambitious and impassioned side-long piece about a futuristic dystopia, along with a few other weird songs, and released our fourth album, 2112, early in 1976 (Peart 2016: 17).

For Geddy Lee, The Fountainhead was 'an artistic manifesto' (cited in Hann 2018), whose heroic architect refused to compromise his values and his aesthetics, resonating with the band's outlook in terms of composing 2112. As Lee states:

[When] you're a young band that's in a greedy business like the music business, and there's so much pressure on you to compromise your music and write threeminute love songs, when you read a book like that it has a profound effect on you in terms of reinforcing your belief that it should be about making the music you want to make, and not the music someone else wants you to make in order to line their pockets (cited in Lore 2015).

The band's defiant stance paid dividends, as 2112 was a commercial success. The song suite consisting of 'Overture', 'The Temples of Syrinx', 'Discovery', 'Presentation', 'Oracle: The Dream', 'Soliloquy', and 'Grand Finale' adapted Rand's source material, but retained its fierce individualism to become what Peart described as 'a cycle of songs about the rediscovery of music' (cited in Nooger 1976). Conceptually, the world of 2112 is one of a Soviet-style collectivist nightmare (symbolized by a red star emblem), and controlled by the tyrannical 'administrative priest "Collective"' (Bowman 2002: 202) who control the Temple of Syrinx of the Solar Federation. Here Rush recasts 'Equality 7-2521' into an individual who discovers an acoustic guitar in a cave (instead of a lightbulb). Macan's conception of the progressive rock 'multi-movement suite' as a means of 'using music to "paint" a picture, "narrate" a story, or "describe" a philosophical concept' (1997: 21) is central to the narrative, as Lifeson provides the sonic cues of the instrument gradually being tuned, and then gradually mastered, with ringing chords that aurally signify the beauty of the creative artefact that was created by a now long-forgotten society that valued individual achievement. The crux of the song suite comes when the hero takes the potentially life-changing guitar to the 'Hallowed Halls of the Priests', convinced that they will be as enraptured as he is with the sounds of music he can produce, and so will rediscover the glories of a better age of individual freedom. In response, the collective rejects the guitar because their society has no need for it: the Priests produce their homogenous literature, art and music (created via mechanization through their Great Computers). Thus, far from being inspired by the creative potential the instrument offers, the Priests destroy it, an act justified by their rationale that the people need only 'think about the average'. While clearly exhibiting the influence of Ayn Rand, to the point that Stump (1998: 258) would argue that Rush 'were Thatcherite/Reaganite politics made music', 2112 also contains elements of a Heideggerian quality with regard to what the philosopher calls 'thrownness'. This concept is an important one within Heidegger's thought as it charts the ways in which, as social subjects, we have no choice with regard to the 'world' into which we are born into, with its attendant religious values, cultural identity, environmental nature and familial space. The individual Dasein did not choose any of these worldly factors, but they represent a fundamental force in the influence of both the present and future nature of their Being, a process that transforms the Dasein's 'facticity':

Our facticity is the sum total of our current situation, combined with what this enables us to become in terms of our own future possibilities; in other words, every morning when I awaken, and at every moment of my existence, I am faced with the responsibility of choosing what I can be on the basis of what I have been and what I am (Watts 2011: 52).

For Heidegger, the state of being 'thrown' is a perpetual one in the existence of the Dasein as it is thrown from the past, into the present, and then into the future, but is still influenced by the past, resulting in an incessant struggle between the desire to fulfil autonomous capabilities and personal promise, and the influence of 'thrownness'. This is achieved through the relationship between what

Heidegger calls the 'Everyday Being-one's-Self' and the 'They', the 'Others' who are constantly 'there' in an individual's everyday existence, transforming it into a 'Being of the Other'. This 'dictatorship' of the 'They' tends to impose a status of 'averageness' on an individual Dasein, with the outcome that:

We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they ... take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and act as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The 'they', which is nothing definite ... prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness (Heidegger 1962: 164).

The result is a state of averageness, a mode of being that suppresses the exceptional to induce a process of the 'levelling down' of the possibilities open to the individual. Hence, the 'Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self which we distinguish from the authentic self—that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way' (Heidegger 1962: 167). This 'thrown' state means that individuals constantly carry their past with them, which is a set of conditions that influence and restrain present and future behaviours and possibilities, rendering the person as an inauthentic 'They-self' because they forget their unique sense of being and their ability to live authentically due to assimilation into the surrounding everyday world that is provided by the 'They' (Watts 2011). Within 2112, the 'They' of the Priests control all aspects of life, having created a collectivist society defined by social homogeneity into which, from a Heideggerian perspective, the populace are 'dropped into a world with which it must cope' (Wendt 2015: 18). Therefore, Heidegger's description of the state of Dasein within this 'thrown' state echoes the Priest's refrain within 'The Temples of Syrinx', when they declare that they have taken care of all music, literature and pleasure-producing art, reflecting Heidegger's description of life under the influence of the 'They' as one in which 'We take pleasure as They take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as They see and judge' (Watts 2011: 53). In evaluating the Ayn Rand influence within 2112, Ralph Chapman states that Rush captured 'the youthful idealism of being able to overthrow the powers that be, to assert yourself as an individual with new ideas [and] the freedom to do what you want' (cited in Popoff 2017: 36). The issue of Rand's idealism is telling, but the element of being free to do whatever you want to do is not, and this again evokes the ways in which debate concerning authentic individualism is balanced with considerations of the reality that surround such a stance. While the attempt to break free from the 'They' and recognize individualism through the discovery of authentic music is a significant factor within 2112, the climax of the song cycle differs markedly from that of Rand's Anthem. The Randian aspects of the song suite come in the way in which the Priests discover that, with the discovery of the guitar and individual musical expression, they 'cannot stop human curiosity and creativity from finding new and better ways of doing things' (Horwitz 2011: 260). Nonetheless, the weight of the 'They' is powerful, and the desire of the protagonist to share his music with the people and change the world is crushed by the Priests. As Weinstein and Weinstein (2011) observe, from the destruction of the guitar, the hero descends into a delirium, dreaming of the old ways and the potential return of the 'Elder Race' that created the guitar. However, unlike 'Equality 7-2521', who escapes his totalitarian world and is free to educate himself in his own wilderness idyll, 2112's protagonist descends into despair and ultimately commits suicide rather than continue to exist within the all-controlling averageness of the Priestly 'They'. As such, 2112 re-writes the optimism of Rand's novella to become 'a work of romantic pessimism' (Weinstein and Weinstein 2011: 281). 2112 offers no individual-led triumphant revolutionary challenge that upends the status quo, but rather displays a brief breakthrough to an authentic state that lies beyond the social and cultural power of the 'They', momentarily reversing what Heidegger argued was the habitual state of the individual 'falling' into the world of the 'they-self'. Significantly, this same spirit was evident within Rush's making of the album, as their most significant recording 'made their career. In their desire to go down with a bang, they changed the entire trajectory of their history' (Birzer 2015: 25), which would end with their first true concept

album, *Clockwork Angels*, released in 2012, and which represented both a philosophical progression and a confrontation and self-reflective return to their own musical legacy.

In the end: *Clockwork Angels* and non-Randian individualism

Ayn Rand's influence within Rush's music in the 1970s was identified by Neil Peart in an interview with Barry Miles in 1978:

We're certainly devoted to individualism as the only concept that allows men to be happy, without somebody taking from somebody else. The thing for me about Ayn Rand is that her philosophy is the only one applicable to the world today—in every sense (Miles 2015).

This fervent adherence to Rand would progressively dissipate, with Peart especially declaring within later interviews that he had decisively moved away from her work (see Hiatt 2015). This did not signal an abandonment of the theme of individuality, but rather its re-negotiation as Peart would subsequently describe himself as a left-leaning 'bleeding heart Libertarian' who believes 'in the sanctity of the individual, but also for the need to help to benefit those in need' (cited in Birzer 2015: 18). The issue of the individual versus the collective remains a conceptual idea that animates *Clockwork Angels* in its focus upon the search for personal authenticity in the face of a domineering and over-arching 'They'. Given Rush's longstanding 'progressive' status, *Clockwork Angels* would be the band's first fully conceptual album (the song suites 2112 and *Hemispheres* only represented side one of each album) in which all of the songs are linked into a single story possessing 'thematic unity and development throughout' (Martin 1998: 41). Thematically, akin to 2112, *Clockwork Angels* is a science-fiction story consisting of a series of interlocking songs: 'Caravan', 'BU2B', 'Clockwork Angels', 'The Anarchist', 'Carnies', 'Halo Effect', 'Seven Cities Of Gold', 'The Wreckers', 'Headlong Flight', 'BU2B2', 'Wish Them Well' and 'The Garden', representing a twenty-first-century evocation of a key 1970s progressive rock trope: 'epic subject matter drawn from science fiction' (Macan 1997: 3). The clock pointing to alchemical symbols on the album cover art is tellingly set to 12 minutes past nine (or rather, 21:12). The album constitutes a self-referential evocation of their own history and constitutes a spiritual sequel to the conceptual album that cemented Rush's musical direction, international success, and the result of their dogged creative individualism and anti-commercial stance. The music contains a series of self-referential motifs that evoke the band's history, such as the Led Zeppelin-infused blues-style riffs within 'BU2B' and 'Clockwork Angels', and a musical homage to the earlier 'Working Man' (from their first album) within 'Headlong Flight' (Bosso 2012), in addition to bass riffs that evoke songs such as 'Bastille Day' (from the 1975 album, *Caress of Steel*). Consequently, *Clockwork Angels* was a new work, but one that consciously re-connected with their historical rock roots and clearly resonated with their first mature progressive recording, 2112. While these returns to the mid-1970s Rush were clear, the ideological nature of the album stressed a different kind of individualism. In terms of narrative form, the album draws influence from Voltaire's *Candide* (with additional allusions to Joseph Conrad and Daphne du Maurier), while the central narrative concept is a Steampunk adventure, as it draws upon the literary genre that conveys a Victorian world characterized by mechanical flying machines and clockwork humanoids (Taddeo and Miller 2013). *Clockwork Angels* is the story of Owen Hardy, a young man who slowly begins to discover a wider world that exists beyond his life of 'rule-based conformity' within the apple orchard of Barrel Arbor (Birzer 2012). The stage of *Clockwork Angels* is one of airships and 'streamliner' trains, technologies powered not by coal-fired industry, but by an alchemical 'coldfire', a process created by the all-powerful, and seemingly benevolent ruler, the 'Watchmaker'. In similar ways to 2112, the album concerns a protagonist who ultimately comes to see beyond an accepted social order, and then seeks to transcend it. Owen leaves his village to journey to the hitherto unseen 'Crown City', and then on to a series of dramatic adventures that include desert cities, pirate-like wreckers, and an encounter with

an archindividualist ‘terrorist’ named the ‘Anarchist’, until finding his own personal life path in the story’s climax. In support of the release of the *Clockwork Angels* album, Neil Peart (with the science-fiction author Kevin J. Anderson) produced a novelization of the album to deepen the story of a predictable world controlled by the ‘Watchmaker’ and his *bête noire*, the ‘Anarchist’, who bombs railways to disrupt the ‘clockwork’ order of the Watchmaker’s society and its ‘mass-produced lives’. Hence, the character of Owen finds himself in the centre of two polar ideological positions: the complete regulation of all aspects of life represented by the Watchmaker, and the ultraindividualism endorsed by the ‘Anarchist’. Yet the *Clockwork Angels* album and novel endorses neither stance as they both represent unreasonable and unsustainable positions: ‘extreme order versus extreme freedom’ (Anderson and Peart 2012: 306). In essence, the *Clockwork Angels*’ concept is the chronicle of one young man’s search for authenticity; and unlike the protagonist of 2112, Owen’s acquisition of individuality is the one little victory of the story. Hence, by the end of the adventure, Owen Hardy, the ‘optimistic dreamer’, becomes ‘an individual by getting to know himself as well as the world and by making his own choices’ (Anderson and Peart 2012: 280), and *Clockwork Angels* is the ‘bleeding heart Libertarian’ repudiation of the radical individualism espoused by Ayn Rand. To return to Heideggerian contexts, while in the mid-1970s version of Rush the ‘Anarchist’ would undoubtedly have been the hero of the narrative, the dreamer finds authenticity within the world of the ‘They’. As Birzer (2015: 116) states of the nature of the ‘Anarchist’ character: ‘He is an individualist, but to such an extreme that he knows no community. He has abstracted himself from everything and from all’. Alternatively, Owen Hardy represents a distinctive ‘third way’, a character who does not change the nature of his society, nor spirals into hopeless existential despair, as with the protagonist in 2112. Instead (evoking Voltaire’s hero, Candide, who retreats to a rural idyll at the close of his adventures), Owen Hardy finds a similar plenitude. *Clockwork Angels*, then, ends with a now free-thinking Owen finding peace in his garden, and even though the Watchmaker continues to govern wider society and ‘keeps to his schemes’, at least one person has forged his own path. In this sense, Owen Hardy reflects Dasein’s initial state of inauthenticity, which ‘owes much to it being swallowed up, as it were, in the objects and concerns of the world around it’ (Deranty 2014: 93). This ontological state is keenly reflected in Owen’s initial acceptance of the Watchmaker’s world order in which there is no perceived lack or want, as the Watchmaker caters for every need, and yet, the concept is predicated on the realization that it is not enough. In this regard, Rush echo Heidegger’s stress that being authentic:

entails a kind of shift in attention and engagement, a reclaiming oneself, from the way we typically fall into our everyday ways of being ... an action predicated upon clear and focused listening to and heeding of one’s unique capabilities and potential ... and carving out one’s unique and authentic place in and approach to the world (Sherman 2009: 4).

The call within the song ‘Caravan’ builds its chorus upon Owen acting on his persistent inner call to ‘think big’, and leave his pre-determined life behind. Thus, *Clockwork Angels* conceptually rejects both the collectivist ‘Priests’ and its doomed hero, to instead embrace the personal search for, and attainment of, an authentic sense of self within the ultimate expression of the progressive rock form, the concept album, the format that ‘encouraged people to listen carefully and contemplate’ (Johnes 2018: 122).

From first to last: Rush’s philosophical history

In Bill Martin’s critical appraisal of Rush and their progressive rock style, while the politics of 2112 (viewed from his avowedly Marxist perspective) are problematic, he nevertheless argues that ‘the good side of Rush’s engagement with A.R.T. was that the fellows were interested in heavy ideas’ (Martin 1998: 271); and this was a spirit that arguably spanned from 1974 to 2012. While the leitmotif of Rush has focused upon the primacy of the individual, it evolved through the band’s 40-year

recording history, and markedly so. While Neil Peart has stressed the influence of a number of fiction writers and philosophers within his lyrics, in examining key moments within Rush's career, the 1970s Ayn Rand presence gave way to a later, alternative approach. Within their discussion of the 1980s-era songs 'Grand Designs' and 'Subdivisions', Price and Price make an interpretative connection between Rush and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, as they state in relation to the common condition of social actors:

We conform to the 'herd' and the mass, but such existence is inauthentic, it is coping out; we were intended for better things. Rush says the real thing is buried, like gold ore or a diamond beneath a ton of rock. That means two things: first, it's worth finding; second; it's not going to be easy (McDonald 2009: 80).

Indeed, establishing an authentic self is difficult within Heidegger's philosophical understanding of the world, but the consequences of this state are far-reaching, because If Dasein discovers the world in its own way ... and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way (Heidegger 1962: 167). Nevertheless, this is not an effortless task. As Sheehan (2015: 139) explains, when '(personal) ex-sistence embraces its (structural) ex-istence, Heidegger says one is "authentic", the self-responsible author of his or her own finite life'. While this may be beyond the abilities of what most social actors are 'thrown' into, Rush's music, especially from the early 1980s, serves to articulate this struggle and captures the Heideggerian view that 'each of us is solely responsible for what his or her life adds up to "in the end"' (Guignon 1984: 332). While the 2112 song suite communicated this message in keeping with Rand's aggressive brand of self-interested individualism (although with elements that leave room for a Heidegger-like perspective), the later Rush progressively exhibited an ideological approach that evokes Heidegger's search for authenticity—the state representing 'how one lives' (Guignon 1984: 334)—finding a potent expression within *Clockwork Angels*. In the wake of Neil Peart's announcement of his retirement due to chronic physical conditions resulting from his 40-year touring career (Lev 2015), *Clockwork Angels* was Rush's final studio recording. It is fitting that Peart's final individual character, Owen Hardy, overcomes the challenges of his world to achieve a truly authentic life. Consequently, one appraisal of Rush as 'a band of very good and constantly improving musicians who were interested in difficult, extended compositions that were motivated by philosophical ideas' (Martin 1998: 270) is a perfect summation, and one that would continue to the very end of their career. Therefore, the elements of Heidegger that Price and Price (1999) discerned within the *Signals* and *Power Windows* albums of the early-to-mid 1980s, I have argued, continued to develop throughout the 1990s and 2000s, and found a potent and sustained expression on *Clockwork Angels*, a recording Peart (2016: 52) would herald 'as the masterpiece we had spent our career working toward. We were not going to beat it'. This would be the perfect final album and end to a recording history that, from July 1974, became based upon the synthesis of an evolving philosophical expression of individualism with a drive to continually musically experiment and push generic boundaries, regardless of the expectations of any critical 'They'.

References

- Anderson, Kevin J., and Neil Peart. 2012. *Clockwork Angels*. Toronto: ECW Press.
- Anderton, Chris. 2010. 'A Many-Headed Beast: Progressive Rock as European Meta-genre'. Berti, Jim, and Durrel S. Bowman, eds. 2011. *Rush and Philosophy: Heart and Mind United*. New York: Open Court.

Birzer, Bradley J. 2012. 'Rock as Mythos: Rush's Clockwork Angels'. *The Imaginative Conservative*. <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2012/06/rush-progressive-rock-as-mythos.html> (accessed 6 July 2017). —2015. *Neil Peart: Cultural Repercussions*. Colorado: Wordfire Press.

Bosso, Joe. 2012. 'Interview: Alex Lifeson talks Rush's Clockwork Angels track-by-track'. *MusicRadar*, 25 May. <https://www.musicradar.com/news/guitars/interview-alex-lifeson-talks-rushs-clockwork-angels-track-by-track-545614> (accessed 15 February 2019).

Bowman, Durrell S. 2002. "'Let them all make their own music": Individualism, Rush and the Progressive/Hard Rock Alloy, 1976–77'. In *Progressive Rock Reconsidered*, ed. Kevin Holm-Hudson, 183–218. New York: Routledge.

Deranty, Jean-Philippe. 2014. 'The Cruel Poetics of Morrissey: Fragment for a Phenomenology of the Ages of Life'. *Thesis Eleven* 120/1: 90–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513613519590>

Elliott, Paul. 2017. 'The Neil Peart Interview'. *Louder*, 19 June. <https://www.loudersound.com/features/rush-the-rhythm-method> (accessed 26 April 2019).

Friedman, Robert. 2014. *Rush: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Excellence*. New York: Algora Publishing.

Frith, Simon. 1983. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock*. London: Constable.

Guignon, Charles. B. 1984. 'Heidegger's "Authenticity" Revisited'. *Review of Metaphysics* 38/2: 321–39.

Hann, Michael. 2018. 'Geddy Lee on Rush's Greatest Songs: "Even I can barely make sense of our concept albums"'. *The Guardian*, 24 December. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/dec/24/geddy-lee-on-rush-greatest-songs> (accessed 18 February 2018).

Hegarty, Paul, and Martin Halliwell. 2013. *Beyond and Before: Progressive Rock since the 1960s*. New York and London: Bloomsbury.

Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hiatt, Brian. 2015. 'From Rush with Love'. *Rolling Stone*, July: 41–47.

Holm-Hudson, Kevin. 2008. *Genesis and the Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Horwitz, Steven. 2011. 'Rush's Libertarianism Never Fit the Plan'. In *Rush and Philosophy: Heart and Mind United*, ed. Jim Berti and Durrell S. Bowman, 255–71. New York: Open Court.

Johnes, Martin. 2018. 'Consuming Popular Music: Individualism, Politics and Progressive Rock'. *Cultural and Social History* 15/1: 115–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2018.1426815>

Keister, Jay, and Jeremy L. Smith. 2008. 'Musical Ambition, Cultural Accreditation and the Nasty Side of Progressive Rock'. *Popular Music* 27/3: 433–55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143008102227>

Lambe, Stephen. 2012. *Citizens of Hope and Glory: The Story of Progressive Rock*. Gloucestershire: Amberley.

Lev, Michael. 2015. 'For Rush's Neil Peart, a Planned Retirement Beats the Alternative'. *Chicago Tribune*, 9 December. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/> (accessed 14 July 2017).

Lore, Mark. 2015. 'Rush at 40: Geddy Lee Talks the Past, Present and Future'. *Paste Magazine*, 28 December. <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2015/12/rush-at-40-geddy-lee-talks-the-past-present-and-future.html> (accessed 31 January 2019).

Macan, Edward. 1997. *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195098884.003.0003>

Martin, Bill. 1998. *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock, 1968–1978*. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court.

McDonald, Chris. 2009. *Rush: Rock Music and the Middle Class*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Miles, Barry. 2015. 'Rush: "You have no freedom. You do what you're told to do. By the socialists"'. *The Guardian*, 13 May. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/may/13/rush-nme-interview-1978-rocks-backpages> (accessed 14 July 2017).

Neale, Steve. 2000. *Genre and Hollywood*. London and New York: Routledge.

Nooger, Dan. 1976. 'Rush Goes into Future Shock: "Music will not exist in 2112"'. *Circus*, 27 April. <http://www.2112.net/powerwindows/transcripts/19760427circus.htm> (accessed 6 June 2017).

Peart, Neil. 2004. *Traveling Music: The Soundtrack to My Life and Times*. Toronto: ECW Press. —2016. *Far and Wide: Bring That Horizon to Me!* Toronto: ECW Press.

Popoff, Martin. 2017. *Rush: Album by Album*. Minneapolis: Voyageur Press.

Price, Carol Selby, and Robert M. Price. 1999. *Mystic Rhythms: The Philosophical Vision of Rush*. Berkeley: Wildside Press.

Rand, Ayn. 1964. *The Virtue of Selfishness*. New York: Signet. —1995. *Anthem*. New York: Signet.

Reed, Ryan. 2018. 'Geddy Lee on Rush's Prog-Rock Opus "Hemispheres": "We had to raise our game"'. *Rolling Stone*, 22 October.

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/rush-geddy-lee-interview-prog-rock-hemispheres-738828/> (accessed 21 February 2018). Sheehan, Thomas. 2015. *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*. London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield. Sherman, Glen. L. 2009. 'Martin Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity: A Philosophical Contribution to Student Affairs Theory'. *Journal of College and Character* 10/7: 1–8. [https:// doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1440](https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1440) Shuker, Roy. 2002. *Understanding Popular Music*. London and New York: Routledge. [https:// doi.org/10.4324/9780203478806](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203478806) Stump, Paul. 1998. *The Music's All That Matters: A History of Progressive Rock*. London: Quartet Books. Taddeo, Julie Anne, and Cynthia J. Miller, eds. 2013. *Steaming into a Victorian Future: A Steampunk Anthology*. Lanham and Toronto: Scarecrow Press. Watts, Michael. 2011. *The Philosophy of Heidegger*. Durham: Acumen. Weigel, David. 2017. *The Show That Never Ends: The Rise and Fall of Prog Rock*. New York: W.W. Norton. Weinstein, Deena, and Michael A. Weinstein. 2011. 'Neil Peart versus Ayn Rand'. In *Rush and Philosophy: Heart and Mind United*, ed. Jim Berti and Durrel S. Bowman, 273–85. New York: Open Court. Wendt, Thomas. 2015. *Design for Dasein: Understanding the Design of Experiences*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.