

## *Preparing the Arrival of the Gods*

*Friedrich A. Kittler*

I will start with a simple double question from Jimi Hendrix's 'And the Gods Made Love', the first track on *Electric Ladyland*: what does 'Electric Ladyland' mean? And why should the gods make love? (Afghanistan, Iraq, do they not matter?)

These questions, I've neglected them so long. Being a child of the Second World War, I've written for many years on the feedback between media technology and warfare. England's great pop musicians of my age – to my knowledge – did much the same thing. When the Rolling Stones declared their sympathy for the devil, the Second World War was musically ever present: Mick Jagger sang of himself as a general commanding a tank during the blitzkrieg. And there was Roger Waters, singing about the Falklands War, when a mourning wife or girlfriend stood 'upon Southampton dock, with her handkerchief and her summer frock' to 'bravely wave the boys goodbye again' (Pink Floyd, 'Southampton Dock').

Recently, however, some sudden event or inspiration – Plato would even call it a god – has changed my mind. I decided to try the opposite. If you come to think about it, the opposite of war isn't just peace, war's uncanny aftermath. The opposite of war, by Jove, is love. This was already known to the earliest Greek

philosophers who placed Aphrodite and Neikos, that is love and strife, high above all other gods and elements, be they heaven or earth, fire or water.

Speaking and writing on love, however, proves to be much more difficult than on war. The gods have left us and goddesses such as Aphrodite even more so. Even the nymphs, their humble companions (as T. S. Eliot has it), ‘are departed’ (33) from our meadows and forests, springs and lakes. No one, when drinking fresh water from a spring, would give its nymph a little flower, as was the custom for every girl in Homer. An economy of exponential growth, as Thomas Pynchon has denounced it, tries to destroy, maybe in vain, an economy of mutual gifts. Thus, not only the gods have left us, but also their traces on earth. The temples are in ruins and with them all the dimensions that Hölderlin recalled under the absolutely not Christian names of the salvation and the holy [*des Heils und des Heiligen*]. The task of thought, therefore, following Heidegger, consists these days in opening at least some spaces of the salvation which could prepare the holy which then in turn would make room for the arrival of the gods.

Fortunately, this task of ours is neither new nor unheard of. It has been done once before – namely at the beginning of Greek poetry. As Herodotus wrote long ago, it was from the poets Homer and Hesiod that the Greeks received the names and stories of their gods. As Wade-Gery, Cambridge’s great classical scholar, wrote in the 1950s, it was for Homer’s sake that a nameless Greek adapted the Phoenician consonantal alphabet to the Indo-European vowel system (11–15). That is why his twenty thousand hexameters have survived verbatim for almost three millennia. That is why you can read Greek, and only Greek, poetry without understanding a single word.

In doing so, Aphrodite may come back again. Because the greatest Greek poetess, Sappho from the island of Lesbos, has called her goddess to come, we too can call her.

*Poikilótron áthanat Áphrodíta  
paí diós dolóploke líssomai se  
mé m’asáisi méd’ ontáisi dámma,  
pótnia, thúmon,<sup>1</sup>*

Deathless Aphrodite of the spangled mind,  
child of Zeus, who twists lures, I beg you  
do not break with hard pains,  
O lady, my heart,

but come here if ever before  
you caught my voice far off  
and listening left your father's  
golden house and came,

yoking your car. And fine birds brought you,  
quick sparrows over the black earth  
whipping their wings down the sky  
through midair –

they arrived. But you, O blessed one,  
smiled in your deathless face  
and asked what (now again) I have suffered and why  
(now again) I'm calling out

and what I want to happen most of all  
in my crazy heart. Whom should I persuade (now again)  
to lead you back into her love? Who, O  
Sappho, is wronging you?

For if she flees, soon she'll pursue.  
If she refuses gifts, rather will she give them.  
If she does not love, soon she will love  
even unwilling.

Come to me now: loose me from hard  
care and all my heart longs  
to accomplish, accomplish. You  
be my ally.

(Carson, *If Not, Winter* 1–5)

Sappho, it is said, wrote nine lyrical books on topics such as love and marriage, gods and heroes. From all these songs this

hymn to Aphrodite is the only one to have survived complete. All others have been mutilated or even destroyed by fanatical Christian monks. That is why we can follow, in this instance only, the very flow of Sappho's invocation from beginning to end.

The poem starts by stating that the poetess suffers from something that only wily Aphrodite can cure, so the unhappy lover uses her poetic voice to call the goddess to come. This wish, however, immediately turns into a memory of things past. As the Canadian poet Anne Carson has brilliantly shown, the whole poem centres on Sappho's dialectal word '*dēûte*', which paradoxically means 'now' and 'again' at the same time. To put it in other words: Sappho, for the first time in European history, calls Eros, the god of love, simultaneously bitter and sweet.<sup>2</sup> Aphrodite is bitter insofar as she is actually missed; she has been sweet insofar as she came from Zeus, her father – that is, from heaven itself – to the dark black earth of Lesbos. All this Sappho tells us in the simplest and most colloquial terms. Even the sparrows which pulled Aphrodite's golden chariot through the air are not the bloodless poetic metaphors they'll become for later poets. On the contrary, sparrows, hares and doves, given their famous fertility, stand for the sexual aspect of the goddess. Aphrodite is no deity in whom men and only men believe, but a presence and manifestation of nature as a whole. Here is a quotation from a great German classical scholar who, just after the Second World War, distinguished the Olympian gods from monotheistic religions as follows:

The gods of the Greeks are a necessary part of the world, and this is reason enough why they should not be linked exclusively with national boundaries or privileged groups. How could there be any gods but those whose existence is self-evident, inherent in nature itself? Who, for instance, would gainsay that Aphrodite exists? Everybody knows that she is as active among all other peoples as she is among the Greeks; even the animals are subject to her rule. It would be downright absurd to maintain that one does not 'believe' in Aphrodite, the goddess of love. It is possible to neglect her, to pay no respect to her, as was done by the huntsman Hippolytus [in Euripides' play], but Aphrodite is present, and active, none the less. (Snell 25)

Precisely because poets, not priests, conceived the Olympian gods, Greek cult, ritual and myth are not religion at all. This crazy activity founded on faith or belief will only begin with the Romans and end up only today. Sappho, on the contrary, simply trusts in the power of her song. She bids the goddess to come again, now for a second time. She remembers how Aphrodite's own human voice once appeared against the background of many a sparrow's wings – just as music always emerges from a background of noise. She remembers Aphrodite laughing in the face of her own desperation. Simply because gods are immortal, they can witness human pain but not feel it. That is why Aphrodite, instead of sympathizing with desperate love, has the magical power to change the mind of the implied third, Sappho's beloved maiden, who, instead of fleeing her, will and must soon do the opposite. However, even before Aphrodite makes this explicit promise, she reminds Sappho of the fact that their whole dialogue is always already a repetition. So, when her words come to an end and Sappho, in the last stanza, finally takes over again, the number of encounters with the goddess amounts to three. Greek gods, just like music, seduce by sheer iteration. You can't even tell whether they are mortal or immortal. Whenever a human lover and a beloved human come together they turn into gods. They appear to each other more graceful, more beautiful; in short, more divine. And this is, as Nietzsche has strongly argued, no mere mutual illusion, but a biological fact to be observed in singing birds, peacocks and mortals alike. You simply cannot tell whether Sappho's last stanza is addressed to the goddess or the beloved. Its solemn cry '*Élthe moi kai nun* – Come to me now' – applies to them both. Thus, it names the secret of love. 'My ally', Sappho's final name for Aphrodite, speaks of even more: lovers come together just like warriors.

As long as Greek poetry didn't turn into mere literature, that is, from Homer and Sappho until Sophocles, this 'come to me now' would never disappear from their epics, lyrics and tragedies. As long, however, as we silently read it on printed paper, its sound and music have always already vanished. Aristotle and his followers did everything to destroy the letters of Greek musical notation by supplying Attic script to Alexandria's museum. That is why,

in order to recall Sappho's music, her actual environment, to our minds and ears, we should attend to another of her fragments:

here to me from Krete to this holy temple  
 where is your graceful grove  
 of apple trees and altars smoking  
 with frankincense.

And in cold water makes a clear sound through  
 apple branches and with roses the whole place  
 is shadowed and down from radiant-shaking leaves  
 sleep comes dropping.

And in it a horse meadow has come into blossom  
 with spring flowers and breezes  
 like honey are blowing  
 [ . . . ]

In this place you Kypris taking up  
 in gold cups delicately  
 nectar mingled with festivities:  
 pour.

(Carson, *If Not, Winter* 7)

Here we can begin to understand Sappho's poetry in its sensual and magical environment. The place where she composes and sings to the sound of her seven-stringed lyre is a holy meadow surrounding one of Aphrodite's many houses. Because Greek temples are neither crowded with Christian believers nor emptied by post-Christian masses, they accommodate only a godlike statue and prescribe that mortals worship outside in the sunshine. In other words, when Sappho performs her song, young maidens will dance around her just like nymphs, following the length of each single syllable. Moreover, all this aphrodisiac play takes place among flowers, fragrances and gentle breezes whose equally sensual and verbal presence always already answers the call for Aphrodite. In other words, when sleep falls down like honey, two women spread on soft cushions will have enjoyed each other. No Greek was ever scandalized by the fact that Sappho's preference, at least

before her happy marriage, was for lesbian brides rather than male bridegrooms. Marital – that is, genital – love, in order to succeed, presupposes the experience of all its polymorphic predecessors. This Pan-Hellenic freedom only died with Latin letters and literature, that is, after golden Aphrodite had sunk to the level of Caesar's bloody Venus. Horace and other Romans called the poetess a public whore. Byzantine monks destroyed her work and turned the goddess she had begged to appear into the obscene and satanic figure known as Lady Venus.

Under these disastrous conditions, what can be done in order to prepare what Nietzsche called the eternal return of the gods? Surprisingly, it is enough to listen. A simple piece of music points the way.

'Grantchester Meadows', written and composed by Roger Waters, came out in 1969. It was meant to bring Pink Floyd back to the Cambridge whence they came. It was meant to bring the sounds of yesterday into the London cityscape. And because its sounds are not just a human voice interwoven with an acoustic guitar, but the meadow's very river, lark and noise, Sappho's poetic landscape is suddenly back again. Under the conditions of high technology, many different sound tracks can be recorded, amplified and mixed together in order to combine the signifiers with their meaning, the music with its ambient noise. For the first time in history, the fundamental gap between nature and culture begins to disappear. Pop music can tell that we are body and soul, humans and singing birds at the same time. As in Helmholtz's phantastic theory of 'sound sensations', a kingfisher flashing to the water produces concentric little waves that always already resemble those of radio, television and vinyl long-playing records. Frequencies of whatever kind can be transformed, modulated and stored into each other. It is as if sound had become immortal.

Although Pink Floyd couldn't possibly know, 'Grantchester Meadows' has precisely this secret meaning. As the story goes, Alan Mathison Turing, when he laid down on its grass, conceived in 1935 the famous machine which later, on the other side of the river Cam, became his mathematical PhD thesis. And every desktop, laptop and mobile/cell phone that we use, in the final analysis, comes down to such a Turing machine, simply

because the English mathematician proved the machine's capacity to imitate every other machine.

However, imitation, *μίμῆσις* in Greek, is the principle of love. When Jimi Hendrix cries out that the gods made love, the very secret of Electric Ladyland has been revealed. Because the gods are not lonely and unique, that is without wives, mortals may imitate them by mating. The Aristotelian formulation 'that the creator is such as the created [. . .] for man begets man' (14) is simply mistaken. As Frederick II, emperor of Germany as well as of Italy, wisely remarked, every being in nature needs two to beget. From the gods to our parents, from our parents to us and our children runs the great chain of life. The fury of Pope Gregory IX, when he read this statement, one can easily imagine.

For the early Greek poets, all this was evident, but it was to fall into monotheistic oblivion. Already in Plato's philosophy, there exists only one single god, who, moreover, is formally forbidden to change his shape and appearance. Thus, he can no longer approach young brides in the animal forms of a swan, an eagle or a bull. With Platonic idealism and Christian monotheism, the game of endless imitations has seemingly come to an end.

What, then, have been the necessary conditions to recreate, as for instance in Pink Floyd's lyrical meadows, the spirit of Greek music and poetry? In my ears, the answer is Wagner. In theory as well as in musical practice, Richard Wagner went back to tragedy as performed in classical Athens. Learning from Aeschylus and Sophocles, he rediscovered that tragedy, to quote Heraclitus, has to accomplish on its stage the big divide between masters and slaves, immortals and mortals, and, not to be forgotten, between the two genders. It is, in its essence, a harmony of war and love, daughter of Ares and Aphrodite.

Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* recalls exactly this story. It is the first serious music ever written in Europe that transgresses the limits of monotheism. The poet in Wagner has forgotten all his earlier Celtic or medieval plots. The musician in Wagner starts by composing father Rhine himself as that immemorial beginning when music and noise, art and nature are deeply interwoven. The river sings louder and louder, the strings play higher and higher until the instrumental foreplay materializes itself in the form of



human voices. The Rhine's three daughters start with meaningless syllables that imperceptibly glide to words such as wave and cradle:

*Weia! Waga!*  
*Woge, du Welle,*  
*walle zur Wiege!*  
*Wagalaweia!*  
*Wallala weiala weia!*

(Wagner, *Das Rheingold* 6)

Thus, language emerges out of music, music out of noise. The big wave of oscillations encompasses in its flow both the singers and the instruments, the visible brides and the invisible orchestra pit beneath Bayreuth's stage. To reformulate it with Nietzsche's elegant formula: the birth of tragedy out of the spirit of music accomplishes itself.

At the same time, when the curtain rises and the light falls, Wagner enacts a new arrival of the gods. Twilight means both morning and evening, birth and death. Wotan, formerly a wholly nomadic god, gives orders to erect for himself and his feudal wife Fricka a fortified castle. Clearly, by doing so he imitates Napoleon at the very moment when the great French emperor marries into the old European nobility. Later, however, by abandoning all this family, the god returns to his revolutionary beginnings. Together with Erda/Earth herself, he engenders a clan of heroes and heroines all of whom imitate their father's or grandfather's necessarily incestuous love. On the other side, the dark side, of the gods, exactly the opposite happens: by engendering Hagen, his mortal revenger, Alberich perverts love itself to sex, power and money. Thus, in an endless play of rising and falling that lasts fourteen hours on Wagner's stage, the *Ring of the Nibelung* comes full circle. Immortals such as Wotan turn into mortals, heroes such as Siegfried into gods. When the castle and its divine owners are consumed by fire, when this fire is consumed by water, the physical elements of Greek thought come back into being and fighting. Under the mask of Rhine's daughters, the Sirens dear to Odysseus are shown to sing and flow again. As Thomas Pynchon will state in *Gravity's Rainbow*: 'How can flesh tumble and flow so, and never be any less

beautiful?' (854). Or, as Jimi Hendrix has it in *Electric Ladyland*, when in 'Moon, Turn the Tides . . . Gently, Gently Away' the lovers sink down into Neptune's domain, to 'hear Atlantis, full of cheer' (The Jimi Hendrix Experience).

It is the same music, from Wagner to Hendrix, from Hendrix to Waters. At the same time, it is the same stage, be it musical drama or pop music's light show. Syd Barrett's 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' resumes from the beginning what Wagner called the final 'Twilight of the Gods'. Here is Brünnhilde when she addresses her divine father in a monumental lullaby:

*Weiss ich nun was dir frommt?  
 Alles! Alles! Alles Weiss ich:  
 Alles ward mir nun frei!  
 Auch deine Raben hör' ich rauschen:  
 mit bang ersehnter Botschaft  
 send' ich die beiden nun heim.  
 Ruhe! Ruhe, du Gott!*

Know I now all thy need?  
 All things, all things, all now know I.  
 All to me is revealed.  
 Wings of thy ravens wave around me;  
 with tidings long desired,  
 I send now thy messengers home.  
 Rest thou, rest thou, o god!

(Wagner, *Götterdämmerung* 83)

The German original makes it much clearer that noise and message fall as completely together as they do in Claude Shannon's mathematical theory of information. By waving their wings, Wotan's dark ravens find their way home to the sphere of eternal return. Death becomes sleep, and sleep rebirth. One of the most brilliant questions invented by Nietzsche tells us precisely this.

What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and

there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself [. . .].’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ (194)

Nietzsche’s question is clearly a riddle which answers itself: whoever guesses the demon’s own name has solved it. By definition, Dionysus is the god who never ceases to return. In this coming and coming again consists his immortality. As long as we continue to invoke Homer, Sappho and Aphrodite, their fame, as Sappho prophesied, will endure.

‘Speech has become, as it were, immortal.’<sup>3</sup> These were Edison’s precise words when he presented, in 1877, his latest invention, the phonograph. From that year on, however, not only words have become immortal, but all kinds of music, sound and noise. The inventor himself made reproducible whatever can be recorded. On the banks of the Swanee River, for instance, Edison’s phonograph immortalized not only the blues going under this name and the black people performing it, but also the steamboat’s roaring machine, and the Swanee River’s song. The Thames, as Kate Bush tells us, is ‘a poet that never, ever ends’.

However, it was only when black music crossed the Atlantic Ocean, when hundreds of thousands of GIs landed in southern England and dozens of captured German tape recorders came to London’s Abbey Road, that the Second World War turned into pop music. Invention and innovation are always a case of cross-overs, be they cultural or technical. Neither jazz nor rock ‘n’ roll alone could have triggered Swinging London or street-fighting stars. It was only the feedback loop between European technology, classical harmonics and America’s musical illiteracy that, in the Sixties, exploded between Marshall amps, lead guitars and microphone whispermans. In order to write pop songs, no one is doomed to learn old Europe’s five-line system in his boyhood, just as no

one is forbidden to know it. Roger Waters may whisper as gently as he wishes, but the sounds of Grantchester's meadows will fill huge concert halls as well as microscopic sound tracks. This and only this distinguishes pop music from Wagner's musical drama. Whereas in serious music, composers, conductors and librettists usually remain hidden as persons and bodies, pop stars perform as a rule what in Wagner's case was a great exception: they write both the words and the music which they themselves play, record and execute. In other words, when the difference between Wagner and Wotan, mortal and god, disappears by implosion, the figure of a star is born. It was not in vain that Roger Waters addressed Syd Barrett, Pink Floyd's mad founder, with the invocation 'Shine on, you crazy diamond!'

Back in 1974, when Germany's football team won the title of world champions, the philosopher Martin Heidegger happened to take a train from Heidelberg back to Freiburg, our home town. He, just as I have, had spoken of Hegel, the Greeks and the gods. And since intercity trains at that time had restaurants of a quality unthinkable today, Germany's greatest thinker got a chance to make the acquaintance of Freiburg's theatre director. 'Why didn't we meet before?' was the director's urgent first question. 'Why don't you ever show up at dramatic performances I give?'

Heidegger's answer was simple: 'Because on your stage there are just actors that I'm not interested in seeing.'

'But, dear professor, I beg you: What else could we possibly do?'

'I'd rather see and hear not actors, but heroes and gods.'

'Impossible. Heroes don't exist and gods even less.'

'So, haven't you watched our recent world championship on TV? Although at home my wife and I don't have TV, I used to visit some nearby friends in order to watch. For me, the most obvious thing to remark was the fact that Franz Beckenbauer, and he alone in the German team, was never fouled or wounded. He's proven to be invincible and immortal. Now you can see, even amongst us, there are heroes and gods.'<sup>4</sup>

If Heidegger is right, the same logic applies equally well to pop stars. Otherwise there could never have arrived what, during

the Sixties, the Americans called the British invasion. As mighty as Dionysus, young English voices and guitars broke into the standardized mass production of rock 'n' roll music. They swept away the old-fashioned divisions between singers and composers, between musicians and technicians, pop stars, heroes and gods. The price paid by the new-born stars has been immortalized in Jim Morrison's cry:

Cancel my subscription to the resurrection!  
Send my credentials to the house of detention,  
I've got some friends inside.

(The Doors, quoted in Sugarman 80)

Prophetic words, indeed, something like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Whoever cancels his or her subscription to the Christian faith gets a minor chance to become pop star, demon and god. Morrison's father, a highly decorated vice-admiral in the US navy, threw the sinner and son out of his Miami home. Morrison started to read the pagan poetry written by Nietzsche and Rimbaud, put it into lyrics, obscenities and music, and by doing all this created or, rather, opened The Doors, America's answer to the British invasion. From a girlfriend he learned to go without underwear, from Swinging London his lightshows.

Only two years later, the prophecy almost became true. The Doors and their lead singer toured Florida and, for the first time, performed in Morrison's home town. The seats in Miami's Dinner Key Auditorium had been removed in order to make place for more young people; the air inside was as hot as hell. Suddenly, without his band's foreknowledge, Morrison began to invoke the crowd:

You're all a bunch of fuckin' idiots. You let people tell you what you're gonna do. Let people push you around. You love it, don't ya? Maybe you love gettin' your face shoved in shit . . . you're all a bunch of slaves. What are you going to do about it? What are you gonna do? [. . .] Hey, I'm not talkin' about revolution. I'm not talkin' about no demonstration. I'm talkin' about love your neighbour till it hurts. I'm talkin' about grab your friend. I'm talkin' about some love. Love, love,

love, love, love, love, love. Grab your friend . . . and love him. Come oooooaaaann. Yeaahhh! (Densmore 125)

These literal exhortations come from Morrison's drummer, who had to endure them and witness, immediately afterwards, the singer's jump into the audience. Certainly, the arrival of Dionysus among his followers has been greatly facilitated by cordless microphones and the like. The dancing got more and more frenetic, the dressing less and less correct. One day later, when the cleaning team entered the Miami auditorium, they discovered teenage clothes draped all over the place. After piling them up in one corner, the sum amounted to one and a half metres in height, three in diameter, as if the totally un-Greek habit of festival clothing had finally got its deserved punishment. The heap insofar as it was clothing consisted of sandals, gym shoes and moccasins, also of trousers, jeans and T-shirts, not to mention blouses, sweatshirts and skirts. As far as modern underwear came into play, Miami's cleaning team, as I've been told, discovered more slips and pants than bras. The relapse to transparent – and that means US-compliant – bra straps, which at least we men can bemoan, seems not to have been organized and implemented in 1969. Millions of petrodollars, the only common currency between three lonely gods, had yet to flow.

John Densmore, the drummer, when he learned of all this, just wondered how those Miami girls and boys had managed to get home from the concert. Without their slips and bras, so many of them had behaved like David Bowie's heroes: they were heroines just for one day, or one night. Only in late 1969 did Densmore arrive at a solution. The happening had received no mention at all in the local papers and television stations. Instead, Florida's bishop organized a teenage movement for moral decency. This anti-fan club supported by US senators and mayors declared with holy Christian oaths that they had witnessed on stage just one incredibly obscene event: Jim Morrison, the singer, had allegedly exhibited his underwear-free member and had even simulated oral sex with Robbie Krieger, the guitarist. The juvenile audience, meanwhile, was said to have withstood this sexual attack in all-American purity. Everybody remained in his or her clothes, not a single naked body was seen on the streets. Jim Morrison, the culprit, finally had to

appear before a Miami jury that recommended six months' prison or detention. The judge, more lenient, sentenced him to pay five hundred dollars. The rest is silence.

Two years later, in 1971, Jim Morrison entered the underworld of his gods, Californian as well as Greek. Dionysus, following Heraclitus, and Hades are one and the same. On his grave in Paris, next to the poets he loved, in the graveyard of Père Lachaise, you'll read an uncanny inscription: 'Jim Morrison, poète, artiste et compositeur'. Precisely this is the trinity that They won't ever forgive us. Jahweh is jealous, Allah despotic, not to mention the father, the son and the (holy?) ghost. Washington, Tehran and Jerusalem. Everyone knows and no one, except our bygone heroes, has ever said it. As long as they reign, World War III, IV and so on will threaten us as doom or fate. Since the Latin word *fatum*, however, simply meant all that is said or sung, you should and could trust our rare poets. 'Nothing is real. Strawberry Fields forever' (The Beatles).

This is as far as I can go now. We have to speak in riddles and allusions. That the gods made love is called just a song. In the absence of Electric Ladyland, everything you love will be perverted. Nobody tells you any more that 'public', our common word for so-called democratic actions, trials, jurisdictions and so on, is derived from *pubes*, the Latin word for pubic hair. Think of gods and kids and pop stars, The Doors and Miami! America, as far as we know, doesn't allow us public Dionysian rites. Instead, after the lightshow, pop stars retire to their hotel rooms. And there, every groupie they fuck turns into a nymph. She has opened her cunt to the music. Every rock star is Dionysus, so that Aphrodite reigns again.

I will finish with Friedrich Hölderlin, Heidegger's long-gone poet, who declared that every cherry tree and every peach, every spring and swallow when they come to us from South or East, recall the ancient Greeks and Homer. Listen, love, to Hölderlin and me!

*O Land des Homer!  
Am purpurnen Kirschbaum oder wenn  
Von dir gesandt im Weinberg mir*

Die jungen Pfirsiche grünen,  
 Und die Schwalbe fernher kommt und vieles erzählend  
 An meinen Wänden ihr Haus baut, in  
 Den Tagen des Mais, auch unter den Sternen,  
 Gedenk' ich, o Ionia, dein!

Land of Homer!  
 By the scarlet cherry tree, or when  
 The young peaches you sent to me  
 Are still green in the vineyard,  
 And the swallow arrives from afar and, bringing endless news,  
 Builds her house in my walls, in  
 Maytime, and under stars,  
 Ionia, I think of you!

(Hölderlin 206–7)

## Notes

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- 1 Editorial note: The Greek text of Sappho's fragments can be found in Eva-Maria Voigt, ed. *Sappho et Alcaeus: Fragmenta*. Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennepe, 1971. We have chosen to remain faithful to Kittler's transcription of the Greek, even though it does not employ the usual English transcription system used elsewhere in *Kittler Now*.
- 2 Editorial note: Kittler is here referring to Sappho's fragment 130 and Anne Carson's discussion of it in *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- 3 Editorial note: The quotation is correctly attributed to a correspondent to the *Scientific American* journal and not to Edison. E. H. Johnson, 'A Wonderful Invention' (Letter to the Editor). *Scientific American* 37 (November 17, 1877): 304.



4 Editorial note: This is Kittler's gloss on the story presented in Petzet (210).

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