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Turn and Face the Strange: Science-Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror in the Work of David Bowie

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EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Turn and Face the Strange:
Science-Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror in the Work of David Bowie

Honors Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
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By
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Abstract

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Victoria Dershem

Dr. Greg Engstrom, Elizabeth K. Baker Music Library

David Bowie, one of the most recognizable names in the history of modern music, is primarily famous due to his constantly reinvented public image and often flamboyant alter-egos. However, throughout all his distinct stylistic eras, the presence of science-fiction, fantasy, and horror themes has remained a constant characteristic of his work. It is found on stage and in the studio as a singer and musician, as well as on-screen in his theatrical and television career. This thesis explores how his personal fascination with these genres has influenced his career, through the inclusion of specific references to works of fiction in his writing, as well as more generalized imagery and themes.

Interestingly, as Bowie's career has progressed, he has admitted to not only drawing from outside sources, but recycling and revisiting his previous work as well. Overall, due to the unique themes present throughout his career, Bowie can be used as a case study of sorts to illustrate how, rather than creating completely original work, modern writers and performers create from the synthesis of works they are fans of.

Keywords and phrases: David Bowie, science-fiction, fantasy, horror, songwriting, rock music.

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Preface

David Bowie describes himself as “an actor, not an intellectual” (qtd. in Watts 97), and has stated that “I dearly want to be recognized as a writer, but I would ask [fans] not to go too deeply into my songs. As likely as not, there’s nothing there but the words and music you hear at one listening” (qtd. in Coxhill 11). In the seventies, he described his young female fans by saying “they’re the salt of the earth, those girls. They don’t sit each night and compare notes on groups, criticizing lyrics, asking if it’s valid. They just play the record...yeah, and maybe they dance. I love them. I love them dearly” (qtd. in Hollingworth 43).

As a self-admitted “nerd,” I found a hero in Bowie, who embraced intelligence and being well-read when the rest of pop culture was ridiculing such attributes. As a scientist appreciating his work, his penchant for experimentation continues to resonate with me. As a researcher, I can most easily express my gratitude for the lessons his music has taught me through analysis of it. And so, with all these factors in mind, I ask Mr. Bowie for his forgiveness for my gross overanalysis, but must admit that I am not at all sorry.

Chapter One: The Birth of Bowie

“I’m going to be huge, and it’s quite frightening in a way...”

When asked about his writing process in an interview, David Bowie once stated that “[a]ll I try to do is assemble points that interest me and puzzle through it and that becomes a song” (qtd. in Welch, *Stories* 119), and from even a brief glance at his musical career, that much is obvious. Bowie’s interest in science-fiction, fantasy, and horror is a running theme throughout much of his career, both musical and cinematic. Due to the number of later artists who have sought to emulate him in various ways, his mere interest in these genres has become an influence upon modern pop culture which is undeniable.

David Robert Jones was born on January 8th, 1947, sharing a birthday (rather amusingly) with both rock star Elvis Presley and cosmologist Stephen Hawking. Growing up in war-torn Britain had an almost immediate effect on his understanding of the world, darkening his view of his surroundings. As an adult, he would eventually look back and admit that “[t]he very first memory I have is of being left in my pram in the hallway of 40 Stansfield Road, facing the stairs. It seemed to be a very, very long time and I was very scared of the stairs. They were dark and shadowy” (qtd. in Cann 14). As soon as David was old enough, his father broadened his imagination and introduced him to what would become perhaps his favorite lifelong hobby. “My father opened up my world because he taught me the habit of reading...I got so much information; so many of the things I wanted to do came from books” (22), Bowie admitted. “I was a kid that loved being in my room reading books and entertaining ideas. I lived a lot in my imagination. It was a real effort to become a social animal” (22). This preoccupation with being well-read

would shape a great deal of his personality in his youth. He once stated that he was only rebellious in school “because I felt sorry for the teachers who didn’t know what they were doing” (qtd. in Coxhill 11), and that “I like to think myself a pretty stable person, and I’ve never had a bad relationship with an intelligent girl. And if a girl isn’t intelligent, I don’t want to know” (11). Years later, he would demonstrate that he hadn’t changed, bragging that “[o]n a good week I’ll get through three or four books” (qtd. in “David Bowie Wonderworld: Press Archives”), and ranting that “[p]eople are so [expletive] dumb. Nobody reads anymore, nobody goes out and looks and searches and explores the society and culture that they were brought up in. People have attention spans of five seconds and as much depth as a glass of water” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 6”).

“Waiting for the gift of sound and vision...”

Biographer Paul Trynka, in his book *Starman*, describes the young Bowie as “a simple fan boy” with a “fanlike compulsion” (87) and a penchant for “constant flights of fantasy and obsessions” (74). The first of these obsessions was a BBC science-fiction series entitled *The Quatermass Experiment*. Bowie once recalled sneakily watching each episode “from behind the sofa when my parents had thought I had gone to bed. After each episode I would tip-toe back to my bedroom rigid with fear, so powerful did the action seem” (qtd. in Trynka 10). Another aspect of the show which appealed to the young Bowie, according to Marc Spitz, was that “a somewhat emotionally repressed young boy...could certainly imagine space exploration, and by extension the hard facts of science itself, as a clean antidote to messy human emotion he could not fully understand or protect himself from” (21-22). This aspect of his personality would be a driving force in his musical career. When he was questioned years later in an interview about his rapid

reinvention of his persona, he stated that “The subject matter that I write about, I feel, is fairly consistent and has been over the years. It’s always about the same thing. There’s a kind of separateness, isolation, a sense of anguish, there’s some fear in there, a little bit of misery...and really, isolation, I guess, sums it up, and that’s been really consistent” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 1”). In the documentary *An Earthling at 50*, he confirmed this connection to science-fiction specifically, saying that his songs in that theme “kinda suggest that I felt alienated, that I felt distance from society, and that I was really in search of some kind of connection...they were symbolic, they were allegorical” (“David Bowie An Earthling at 50 part 4”). Interestingly, another BBC science-fiction series would make reference to Bowie years later, when the writers of *Doctor Who*, in the episode “The Waters of Mars,” named the first human colony on the planet “Bowie Base One” (Davies and Ford).

After a series of short-lived bands which enjoyed varied levels of success, by 1967 David had adopted the surname of “Bowie,” under which he released his self-titled debut album. Artistically, this was a nod to the Bowie knife “cutting through the lies”; practically, it was an attempt to avoid confusion with Davy Jones, the young Broadway actor and future singer of The Monkees (Sandford 36). Although Bowie would later lament “I wrote a song about a spaceship and everyone expected me to be some kind of expert” (qtd. in Welch, “I wrote a song” 18), he had not yet found his niche as rock’s favorite alien. However, a taste of what was to come was offered in the form of the track “Uncle Arthur,” which described the titular character as well into adulthood but still residing with his mother—a man who “still reads comics” and “follows Batman.” Unlike Arthur, however, Bowie’s geekiness played an overwhelming role in bringing him

success he could have never imagined. “I seemed to do an awful lot of the wrong gigs for the wrong crowd at that time. It took me a few years to get that right. It got right when I made my own crowd” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 1”), he once admitted of his career prior to embracing the freaks and geeks of the rock world who had no one else to look up to.

Chapter Two: The Glam Years (1969 – 1974)

“Commencing countdown, and may God’s love be with you...”

According to Nicholas Pegg, author of *The Complete David Bowie*, “[e]ven after all these years, ‘Space Oddity’ [1969] remains Bowie’s best-known, most influential, and perhaps most remarkable song” (229). In the ‘50s and early ‘60s, songs involving science-fiction or fantasy themes were largely comedic, such as “The Eggplant That Ate Chicago,” “Monster Mash” (Otfinkoski 87-93), and even a song from earlier in Bowie’s own career, “The Laughing Gnome” (Spitz 347). However, “Space Oddity” was arguably the first hit song to incorporate science-fiction without such levity. The song follows the last moments of its protagonist, Major Tom, and his ill-fated space flight, and has been explained by Bowie as his reaction to Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Years later, Bowie would state that “Kubrick set up some of the most extraordinary environments in his early movies, that of conditions in outer space and that of conditions in inner city space with *2001* and *Clockwork Orange*, [and] those two films were hugely influential on how I would locate my writings through the 70’s [sic]” (“David Bowie Wonderworld: David Bowie”). According to Ken McLeod:

In 'Space Oddity', Bowie uses a series of atonal and rhythmically irregular tape effects and electronic squelches in combination with an ethereal string section to

represent the defamiliarising experience of space. The combination of avant-garde electronic sounds and instruments juxtaposed with familiar rock timbres (most notably a strummed acoustic guitar and military drum beat that sonically evoke the stability of home and tradition) provides a musical analogue for the lyrical content of the song that warns of the dangers of technological nihilism and alienation in an increasingly dehumanised world (341).

Spitz claims that “[i]t’s most likely the early scene in which an astronaut communicates with his daughter on her birthday that inspired ‘Space Oddity’ more than the film’s iconic opening and paranoid ending. ‘Tell mama that I telephoned,’ he says” (105-106), and this scene is indeed recognizable in Major Tom’s final words to Ground Control – “Tell my wife I love her very much.” Ironically, given the song’s less-than-cheerful ending, it was used during the BBC’s coverage of the Apollo 11 mission (Pegg 231). While this initial exposure only landed the single at number 48 in the UK charts, DJs continued to play it, and after a reissue, it eventually peaked at number 5 and remained there for 13 weeks (Welch, *Stories* 17), propelling Bowie into stardom and truly beginning a career which would frequently revisit the theme responsible for its beginning.

Initially, the title of 1971’s *The Man Who Sold the World* (and the eponymous song, although the narrative does not match) brings to mind, and is likely based off of, the Robert A. Heinlein story *The Man Who Sold the Moon* (Trynka 145), and this is only the beginning of the references present on the album. “All the Madmen,” written in honor of his schizophrenic half-brother, Terry Burns (Pegg 20), is the story of a man who fakes insanity to remain institutionalized because he believes the inmates are more sane than those on the outside. The song is quite possibly influenced by the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, as the narrator continues his charade even as he is medicated, lobotomized, and given shock treatment. “Saviour Machine” is the tale of a highly advanced artificial intelligence created to solve a society’s problems, which eventually

gets bored and decides to kill them all instead. While not explicitly derived from any one particular work, this is a reflection of a common theme in science-fiction (which Bowie would revisit at the end of the millennium with his role in the creation of *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*). Finally, “The Supermen” describes beings who cannot die despite their overwhelming misery and desire to, which borders on psychological horror, and is believed by some to be possibly inspired by Arthur C. Clarke’s novel *Childhood’s End* (King 131).

Hunky Dory (1971) continues the patchwork of scattered references found on Bowie’s previous album. “Oh! You Pretty Things,” which, like “The Supermen,” may be a nod to *Childhood’s End* (King 131), is about a new and advanced society which could be either highly evolved humans or a conquering alien species, depending upon interpretation. Rather amusingly, the song was recorded by ex-Herman’s Hermits singer Peter Noone to establish himself as a solo artist. “I don’t know if Peter Herman knows what it means,” Bowie mused in an interview. “It’s all about Homo Superior. Herman goes heavy” (qtd. in Welch, “I wrote a song” 21). “Life on Mars?” while not explicitly related to science-fiction in anything but name, is nevertheless worth mentioning. It supports the theory that Bowie is obsessed with fiction as escapism—one can easily imagine “the girl with the mousy hair” in the song as a female version of a young Bowie—and that he draws from fiction in general as inspiration. Additionally, it is entirely possible that the tympani solo at the end of the song is yet another of Bowie’s many nods to *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Welch, *Stories* 45).

“Freak out in a Moonage Daydream...”

Despite the fact that Bowie had already become a star in the UK with “Space Oddity,” there is no doubt that he is probably best known musically for *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars* (1972). The story set forth in the album’s narrative, according to Bowie in a 1974 interview, is as follows:

The time is five years to go before the end of the earth. It has been announced that the world will end because of lack of natural resources. Ziggy is in a position where all the kids have access to things that they thought they wanted. The older people have lost all touch with reality and the kids are left on their own to plunder anything. Ziggy was in a rock-and-roll band and the kids no longer want rock-and-roll. There's no electricity to play it. Ziggy's adviser tells him to collect news and sing it, 'cause there is no news. So Ziggy does this and there is terrible news. Ziggy is advised in a dream...to write the coming of a starman, so he writes 'Starman', which is the first news of hope that the people have heard. So they latch on to it immediately...Now Ziggy starts to believe in all this himself and thinks himself a prophet of the future starman. He takes himself up to incredible spiritual heights and is kept alive by his disciples. When the infinities [Ziggy's advisers] arrive, they take bits of Ziggy to make themselves real because in their original state they are anti-matter and cannot exist in our world. And they tear him to pieces on stage during the song 'Rock 'n' roll suicide' (“Rolling Stone, February 1974”).

Several of Bowie’s inspirations are noticeable in this album, the most obvious of which is his borrowing of the protagonist’s surname from The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, an avant-garde singer who Bowie discovered by virtue of being on the same record label early in his career (Cann 278). Slightly more subtle, however, are references to *A Clockwork Orange*: his use of the word “droogie” (the protagonist’s slang for “friend”) in “Suffragette City” (Burgess 52), and his use of the film’s soundtrack as the intro music during the supporting tour (Welch, *Stories* 58). Alongside extraterrestrial influences, David added a healthy amount of “all the pieces and all the things that fascinated me culturally; everything from kabuki theater to Jacques Brel, to Little Richard, to drag acts” (“David Bowie interview – 2003”). His aim, he would explain

years later, was “just playing around with the idea of rock ‘n’ roll...[and asking] ‘How far can you talk about rock ‘n’ roll, using rock ‘n’ roll?’” (“David Bowie interview – 2003”). Despite the futuristic and bizarre imagery for which it is known, *Ziggy Stardust* is often not considered among other classic science-fiction, due to its genre-atypical medium, but author Larry McCafferey cited the album when asked to contribute a list for an article entitled *Unjustly Neglected Works of Science Fiction* (427).

The spectacle surrounding the character of Ziggy is a large part of the reason why Bowie has such a strong reputation for incorporating science-fiction into his work, even among casual listeners who may not be familiar with his more obscure albums. Many artists and bands of the ‘70s embraced the art of spectacle in their stage shows, some even incorporating fantastical themes such as Alice Cooper’s horror (Christe 18), and KISS’ and Parliament-Funkadelic’s science-fiction (McLeod 343). As Bowie’s conception of Ziggy predated successful attempts by such acts, by only a few years, the degree to which he influenced them is debatable; however, his presence undeniably paved the way for, and eased the struggles of, similar performers. What really set Ziggy apart from these other acts, however, was that he was not simply a character within the confines of the album and the stage—when Bowie embarked on the tour for the album, he *became* Ziggy, to the point where even he began struggling to identify the line between creator and creation (Hollingworth 44). With a bright red mullet and a large wardrobe of flamboyant, sci-fi inspired stage costumes, Ziggy not only brought the topic of aliens into the music mainstream, but that of fashion as well, with even modern artists such as Lady Gaga admitting to basing their styles after the alien (Carroll). According to an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine, David (and Ziggy) “had provided a model of

courage to millions who had never been embraced by a popular-culture hero before. He helped set others free in unexpected ways, even if he couldn't do the same for himself" (Gilmore 38).

Ziggy Stardust can be seen as the first of a trilogy, continued with *Aladdin Sane* (1973). Written as David went on a concert tour of America, each song from the album represents a different city (as denoted on the back of the album cover) and the "dystopian" elements he found in each. For example, "Cracked Actor" is about the meaningless, deviant sex he witnessed in Los Angeles, "Panic in Detroit" is about the violence he encountered in the eponymous city, and "Time" is about the excess and hedonism found in New Orleans. According to Bowie:

Suddenly my songs didn't seem so out of place. All the situations that we were going through were duly noted down, and all the remarks I had heard, real Americanisms that caught my ear. Just the look of certain places like Detroit really caught my imagination because it was such a rough city and it almost looked like the kind of place that I was writing about...I thought, I wonder if Kubrick has seen this town? It makes his kind of world in *Clockwork Orange* look kind of pansy! (qtd. in Pegg 325).

While each song is not in and of itself fantastical, when viewed as a whole, they paint a picture of an extremely dystopian society on the brink of self-destruction. That said, however, there is one future-fiction song on the album, "Drive-In Saturday," which describes a society in which sex is a lost art and people must watch old pornographic movies in order to relearn how to procreate. If *Ziggy Stardust* was Part I, then *Aladdin Sane* can be seen as Part II, detailing society's decline in the last five years that *Ziggy* described.

The *Ziggy* trilogy is rounded out with *Diamond Dogs* (1974), which may very well document the fictional apocalypse that *Ziggy* warned of. The album emerged from

an attempt to write a musical version of George Orwell's *1984*, which ultimately was scrapped when he failed to obtain permission from Orwell's estate ("David Bowie Sound & Vision pt. 3"), and this influence is made most explicit on the B-side of the album through the songs "We Are the Dead," "1984," and "Big Brother." Other similar works found their way into the album and its resulting tour – the title song is suggestive of Harlan Ellison's novella *A Boy and His Dog* (Welch, *Stories* 96), and the set pieces for his appearances were based off of the visuals from Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (King 134). Each album in this continuous narrative is an embodiment of a different source of inspiration. *Ziggy Stardust* was borne of Bowie's own imagination, *Aladdin Sane* was the product of his real-world surroundings, and *Diamond Dogs* was a nod to the dystopian fiction he held (and continues to hold) so dear. Together, they blur the line between fiction and reality, and leave the listener with the uneasy thought that perhaps Orwell's totalitarian nightmare wasn't so implausible after all.

Chapter Three: The Rise and Fall of the Thin White Duke (1975 – 1987)

"Well, I'm not a scientist. But I know all things begin and end in eternity."

Bowie's first cinematic starring role came in 1976 (the year after his album *Young Americans*), when he landed the part of Thomas Jerome Newton in the film adaptation of Walter Tevis' novel *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. Newton is an alien sent to Earth to utilize its resources and eventually ferry the rest of the inhabitants of his drought-stricken planet to safety. Eventually, however, after assimilating into Earth culture and becoming affluent enough to fulfill this goal, he falls prey to alcohol, lust, and other human flaws, and is discovered by the American government, which ultimately foils his plan and leaves

him stranded on Earth and forced to shoulder the burden of having let an entire planet (including his family) die. Bowie clearly felt some kind of kinship with the loneliness and alienation of the character he portrayed, as his next two albums, *Station to Station* (1976) and *Low* (1977), both featured stills from the movie as album art, and it is believed that the stage persona associated with the former and its accompanying tour, the Thin White Duke (King 135), was partially based on Newton (Welch, *Stories* 113). Ava Cherry, Bowie's ex-girlfriend and backing singer from the time, stated that "I was very impressed. I didn't know he could act. He was the alien, as he was in real life. I remember him saying to me, 'See how we can influence the masses?' And that was true. When he did that movie, his fans were like 'Maybe he really is an alien...' I felt sympathy for that spaceman. It was like a very strange parody of David" (qtd. in Robinson 56).

Throughout *Station to Station* and his "Berlin triptych" of *Low*, "*Heroes*" (both 1977), and *Lodger* (1979), Bowie, heavily influenced by his newfound love of the Krautrock genre—such as Neu! and Kraftwerk (Welch, *Stories* 115, 118)—entered an experimental phase which used synthesizers and other electronic instruments to create ambient music and was meant to be a sonic representation of futurism and the space/nuclear age. "There was a whole bunch of bands specifically coming out of Dusseldorf that were just so exciting," he said, explaining that he was "completely taken with what was happening. And it became my next phase of interest...that kind of approach to music" (*David Bowie: Rare and Unseen*). Guitarist Carlos Alomar, who played on *Station to Station*, remembered "[h]e knew he liked the direction of Kraftwerk. Him having the tolerance to allow us to do that...allowing me to do an introduction to a

song that's four minutes long...it wasn't because I wanted to do it. Kraftwerk had shown him it was possible. It was Bowie whose tolerance to all music and technology allowed us to do this" (qtd. in Robinson 56).

What is notable about this phase of his career is the fact that rather than focusing on making explicit reference to science-fiction through his lyrics, which had previously been his primary way of expressing such motifs, he began consistently using the music itself to evoke these themes, something he had not embraced so thoroughly since he experimented with the concept on "Space Oddity." Of the tone poems from *Low* and "*Heroes*", which, despite modern critics' praise were at the time criticized by the press for being inaccessible (Pegg 354), Bowie explained that "lyrics taken on their own are nothing without the secondary subtext of what the musical arrangement has to say, which is so important in a piece of popular music. It makes me so angry that people concentrate only on the lyrics because that's to imply there is no message stated in the music itself, which wipes out hundreds of years of classical music" (qtd. in Mackinnon 114).

Bowie's main collaborator during this period was Brian Eno (formerly of fellow glam rock band Roxy Music), who heavily influenced Bowie's rather unconventional sound during this time. "Of all the people that I've heard who write textures, Brian Eno's textures always appealed to me the most," he would say. "Brian isn't interested in context. He's a man with peculiar notions, some of which I can come to terms with very easily and are most accessible and some of it is way above my head in terms of his analytical studies of cybernetics and his application of those things to music" (qtd. in Welch, *Stories* 132).

In addition to his experimentation with instrumental techniques, it was around this time that Bowie began to once again embrace conceptual music videos over performance clips. Aside from the music video collection *Love You 'Til Tuesday* of his pre-*Space Oddity* career (Spitz 102), up until this point the majority of Bowie's promotional videos had been films of live or staged performances (*Best of Bowie*). However, in the late 70s, he returned to concept videos, such as those for the songs "DJ" and "Look Back in Anger" (*Lodger*), the latter of which is heavily influenced by the plot of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. (Welch, *Stories* 165).

Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps) (1980) invokes the horror genre just by virtue of its name, and yet the album is known primarily for the song "Ashes to Ashes," a continuation of the sci-fi saga of Major Tom. When "Space Oddity" was released, many thought the song was a metaphor for the highs and lows of drug abuse, and Bowie, either acknowledging the validity of, or poking fun at the theory, responded with the chorus "Ashes to ashes, funk to funky / We know Major Tom's a junkie." Bowie explained:

When I originally wrote about Major Tom I was a very pragmatic and self-opinionated lad that thought I knew all about the great American dream and where it started and where it should stop. Here we had the great blast of American technological know-how shoving this guy up into space and once he gets there he's not quite sure why he's there. And that's where I left him. Now we've found out that he's under some kind of realization that the whole process that got him up there had decayed, was born out of decay; it has decayed him and he's in the process of decaying. But he wishes to return to the nice, round womb, the earth, from whence he started (qtd. in Mackinnon 115).

No one except Bowie knows whether the revelation about Major Tom was an admission that the theories were correct, or a laugh at their expense. Bowie would reiterate often through his career that "[w]hat it comes down to is that my interpretation of my work is really immaterial...it's the interpretation of the listener or the viewer which is all-

important” (“Inside Outside”). However, what remains inarguable is that Major Tom’s return is one of the main reasons why Bowie once joked that every following album was lauded as “the best since *Scary Monsters*” (“Bowie + Ross Special”).

Like the famous ill-fated astronaut who had just made his celebrated return, however, Bowie’s career began to hit an “all-time low.” *Q* magazine, looking back, stated that “*Scary Monsters* was a brutal, beautiful piece of work and remains the best three-quarters-of-an-hour you can spend in the arms of art rock. Then Bowie blew it. Big time” (Deevoy 74). Bowie admitted to giving into blatant commercialism in the decade that followed, conceding “I felt dissatisfied with everything I was doing and eventually it started showing. My lack of interest in my own work was really becoming transparent...I didn’t really apply myself. I wasn’t quite sure what I was supposed to be doing” (77). This period included the albums *Let’s Dance* (1983), *Tonight* (1984), and *Never Let Me Down* (1987), and his lack of inspiration is obvious in the mainstream feel of the albums and the lack of themes he had a reputation for drawing inspiration from. While *Tonight* included the song “Loving the Alien,” the “aliens” in the song about religious unrest in the Middle East referred to a Western view of Arab culture, rather than extraterrestrials. *Never Let Me Down*’s “Glass Spider” was a singular attempt to recreate the narrative form of “Future Legend” (from *Diamond Dogs*), that was considered at the time to be “as close in spirit to his glories of old as David is ever likely to come again” (Thompson, *Moonage Daydream* 158). In an interview years later, he would say, “I think it’s terribly dangerous for an artist to fulfill other people’s expectations. I think they generally produce their worst work when they do that” (“David Bowie ‘Inspirations’”), and despite

his usual method of “tend[ing] to take the road to commercial suicide” (qtd. in Hudson 127), his art indeed suffered during this period.

“You’re him, aren’t you? You’re the Goblin King!”

Despite his admitted musical failings during this period, Bowie was involved in several movies during the ‘80s, some of which belonged to explicitly fantastical genres. The first of these, *The Hunger* (1983), starred Bowie as John Blaylock, a man turned into a vampire in the 18th century by his wife Miriam, who suddenly begins aging rapidly some two centuries later. Beginning to resemble his chronological age, he realizes, to his horror, that while his eternal youth is gone, he is still immortal, and as he becomes decrepit, Miriam seals him in a coffin, still alive, a fate shared by the rest of her former lovers (reminiscent of “The Supermen” from *The Man Who Sold the World*).

Bowie’s second major fantastical movie of the decade, *Labyrinth* (1986), is to fantasy what Ziggy Stardust was to science-fiction, and is generally regarded as one of his best cinematic roles. Even people who have not seen the movie are aware of it, and it is widely considered to be a classic children’s movie. Written by Monty Python’s Terry Jones, directed by Jim Henson, and produced by George Lucas, the movie follows a young girl named Sarah who imagines a character from one of her favorite books, Jareth the Goblin King (played by Bowie), kidnapping her baby brother to turn him into a goblin. To her horror, her wish comes true and, along the way in her quest to save him before her thirteen hours are up, she is faced with Jareth’s unrequited love and his attempts to seduce her from her task; the movie ultimately ends with Sarah defeating him, a figment of her imagination, with the line “You have no power over me.”

Although a cinematic venture, *Labyrinth* overlapped with Bowie's music career as he wrote and performed the majority of the soundtrack (all but one of the non-incidentals compositions in the movie are sung by Jareth). While Bowie has never performed any of the songs from the soundtrack in concert, both of the music videos produced for the album ("Underground" and "As the World Falls Down") appeared on the music video compilation *Best of Bowie*.

Chapter Four: The Turn of the Millennium (1988 – 2012)

"Putting on the black tie, cranking out the white noise..."

As the '80s drew to a close, Bowie put his solo career on hold in favor of forming the band Tin Machine (1988-1992), and even as his lyrical subject matter shifted more towards political matters, such as racism and third-world sex trafficking, he could not resist a few references to the genre which brought him to the level of fame required for the self-indulgence of his latest experiment. In "Heaven's In Here," he sings of being "[a]mong the twilight and stars / Like a rocket to Mars," and in the song for which the band (and its first album) was named, he sets forth an imperative to "[m]ake some new computer thing that puts me on the moon / Not this psycho-time-bomb planet / Poised to meet its maker." However, in a more subtle bit of wordplay, in the song "Sacrifice Yourself," he describes a man who "feels so empty, just a talking head / Married to a Klingon who could cream him in the press" (the spelling invoking the *Star Trek* warriors, as opposed to a derogatory reference to a groupie, is confirmed in the album's liner notes).

After the disbanding of the Tin Machine project, Bowie married Somalian-born model Iman (who, in an amusing coincidence, had tried her own hand at portraying an alien merely a year before when she landed the role of the shape-shifting Martia in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*). The album immediately following the start of his new life, *Black Tie White Noise* (1993), drew heavily from both the thinly veiled political messages he put forth with the rest of his band, and his newfound joy. However, one rather somber personal moment occurs on the album in the form of “Jump They Say,” Bowie’s attempt to come to terms with his brother’s 1985 suicide. “It’s the first time I’ve felt capable of addressing it” (qtd. in Pegg 129) he explained to *Rolling Stone*. The music video, in which Bowie is portrayed as a tormented businessman-cum-experimental subject, draws heavily from the visuals of French science fiction movies *Alphaville* and *La Jetée*, and includes homages to Orson Wells’ *The Trial*, as well as two works which history has shown him repeatedly turning to when in need of inspiration: *Metropolis* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Pegg 130).

“The Voyeur of Utter Destruction”

The backbone of Bowie’s 1995 album *I. Outside* is his short story (which appears in the liner notes), *The Diary of Nathan Adler: The Ritual Art-Murder of Baby Grace Blue—A Non-Linear Gothic Drama Hyper-Cycle*. Written as another collaboration with Brian Eno (“[He] is the professor, and hasn’t changed a bit in 20 years...Me, I’m the old limey queen” (qtd. in “David Bowie Wonderworld: Press Archives”), Bowie would joke), the story is, as the name suggests, written from the point of view of Nathan Adler, a private detective. *The Diary* portrays Adler as he investigates the latest in a string of murders disguised and justified as performance art, and Bowie namedrops several real-

life macabre performance artists such as Chris Burden and Ron Athey in his writing. Adler's gruesome description of the aftermath of the murder straddles the line between cyberpunk and body horror (with lines such as "The arms of the victim were pin-cushioned with 16 hypodermic needles, pumping in four major preservatives, colouring agents, memory information transport fluids and some kind of green stuff"), and its status as science fiction can further be justified by the fact that it is in essence a crime drama, a prototype *CSI* in musical form.

As a concept album, most of the songs simply follow the narrative of the story, but one song in particular is of special note. The music video for "Hallo Spaceboy" is primarily cut together from B-movie and educational film clips from the 1950s, and additionally, the Pet Shop Boys' remix of the song even mentions Major Tom, thereby making reference to Bowie's own earlier sci-fi work (*Best of Bowie*). In the making-of documentary "Inside Outside," Bowie elaborated upon this habit of his:

By virtue of the fact that I'm getting older, it's given me quite a scope on what I can draw from within my own catalogue of albums. I can take things from albums that I did fifteen, twenty years ago and take something from, say, the seventies, and putting it into the nineties...I don't have to go much to the outside at all for influence or a new inventive way of doing something. I just kinda look at my own stuff and utilize what I've done already.

He went on to make this connection more explicit, stating that:

There's a similarity in the sense of... a kind of angst that was in these late seventies albums. The dysfunctional city from *Diamond Dogs* makes a kind of an appearance. There's the mythical beast, the character of the Diamond Dog, but which is now reformed as the Minotaur. These set, almost signature things that I've written about over the years, they're recontextualized, now they're put into this current piece that I've done with Brian.

Furthermore, there is an eerie similarity between an *Outside* character and one that Bowie would portray half a decade later. In *The Diary* and the album, Nathan

describes antagonist Ramona A. Stone as a drug-dealer, “owner of a string of body-parts jewelry stores,” and cult leader, who “set herself up as the no-future priestess of the Caucasian Suicide Temple, vomiting out her doctrine of death-as-eternal-party into the empty vessels of Berlin youth.” In 1999 (interestingly, the year in which *Outside* takes place, technically making the album “futuristic”), Bowie would portray sociopathic performance artist Julian Priest in the second season of *The Hunger* (a horror anthology series inspired by the 1983 movie), who is known for performance pieces such as the crucifixion of one of his models and the video-recorded surgical removal of a large portion of the flesh of his own arm. While there is no definitive proof that Julian was based on Ramona, their characterizations are similar enough that some fanfiction (non-canonical stories written by members of a fan community) authors have penned “crossover” pieces combining the universes of the two works and exploring the common backgrounds of the characters (“All Your Regrets”), and it is entirely likely that Julian’s creator had *Outside* in mind either when developing the character or casting him.

As Bowie reached his fiftieth birthday, he changed his image yet again—this time sporting spiky, bright orange hair, dark eyeliner, and a new wardrobe which heavily favored rubber and leather—and released *Earthling* (1997), a dance-rock album which might as well have been a love letter to his past, even though he described it as “kind of a corny manifesto that in fact I’m quite happy being an Earthling, I suppose” (*David Bowie: Rare and Unseen*). Ken McLeod even gives the genre to which the album belongs—“drum ‘n’ bass”—a nod in his article discussing the rise of space age imagery in popular music, making it not impossible to believe that this new incarnation of Bowie was a new Ziggy Stardust, reborn with a new image, just in time for the end of the

millennium. Besides the references to the seven dwarves from Snow White's fairy tale in "Little Wonder" (twenty years after he sang "Beauty and the Beast" on "*Heroes*"), the music video includes the older Bowie alternately transforming into, and interacting with, a twenty-something Ziggy as he wanders through a rather surreal, Dali-esque interpretation of London (*Best of Bowie*). As with his previous album, David would say that "I don't have any hesitancy about adapting to or borrowing styles, these days, more from myself than anybody else" ("David Bowie An Earthling At 50 part 4"). While there are not a remarkable number of references to specific works in the songs of the album—somewhat ironically, considering the running theme of the album has been described as "information overload and the commodification of culture" (Richards 155)—Bowie nevertheless displays his penchant for futuristic imagery: "Dead Man Walking" describes "an alien nation in therapy," and in "Telling Lies" he sings that "[g]orgeous girls are bound to meet / To talk of stars and kings and feet / Through the chromosomes of space and time." While the album was not well-received by some critics ("For all its relative spontaneity and half-decent ideas, there is...pretension and awful ideas...He's still trying far, far too hard" (qtd. in 155), said John Mulvey in *NME*), he clearly enjoyed himself. He referenced his lack of interest in critics' opinions in one interview, shrugging off the criticisms for following his latest obsession by admitting, "I'm still...fan-like enough that when I hear something really new, I go 'I don't wanna be here. I wanna be THERE'" (qtd. in Dalton 159).

In 1999, Bowie was approached by video game developers Quantic Dream, who expressed an interest in licensing songs from his catalogue for their upcoming video game, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul* (Pegg 396). However, while Bowie turned down their

request, he offered an alternate proposal: to compose an entirely new soundtrack for the game. In his own words, “[v]ery rarely is music actually produced for the game, but they’ve sort of taken an album track here and an album track there and it sort of works some of the time” (“Itw David Bowie”). The game itself takes place in the titular dystopian city, which is under the control of a supercomputer named Ix (bringing to mind the “Saviour Machine” from his earlier career), and the premise of the game is that the player’s soul enters the body of the character he or she controls. The soul can be reincarnated into several characters over the course of the game, hence the protagonist being referred to as the “Nomad Soul.” In addition to providing music for the game, Bowie was offered the role of two characters in the game. The first, Boz, is the leader of “The Awakened” (the resistance group which the Nomad Soul works with throughout the game), and exists solely as a digital being within the Omikronian computer networks. The second is the lead singer of The Dreamers (alongside real life touring band members Reeves Gabrels and Gail Ann Dorsey), a subversive band performing in secret shows throughout the game, which the player has the option of seeking out as side quests. *Rolling Stone* initially reported that “[t]here will be two new David Bowie albums this fall, but one of them won't be available in record stores. Instead it will be a virtual album that you — as a player in the Thin White Duke's new project, Omikron: The Nomad Soul — will buy with virtual money and listen to within the confines of the virtual world” (Morgenstern 34); however, the soundtrack eventually formed the majority of what would become *hours...*, his last album of the millennium.

During the last decade of the millennium, video games were not the only technology which fascinated Bowie. In 1998, his website BowieNet was launched: a

domain which was tied in with “the world’s first artist-created Internet service provider” (“About David Bowie”). There, Bowie interacted with fans, maintained what would now be considered a blog, and provided a streaming radio station providing a glimpse into his musical tastes of the era. Of note was the promotion of his single “Telling Lies,” which was initially available solely as an mp3 file which could be downloaded from the site, making Bowie the first major artist to release a track in such a way (Pegg 248).

Additionally, an area of the 3D avatar chat program “Worlds” was designed for Bowie, with different areas of his world providing a glimpse into his avant-garde sense of humor, his past career, and even a virtual gallery of his visual art undertakings (“BowieWorld”).

As early as *Black Tie White Noise*, Bowie had experimented with novel offline technologies as well, offering singles on CD-ROMs, which included programs with which fans could remix his music videos (“David Bowie Wonderworld: Press Archives”). Even his songwriting methods were given a cyber-facelift, as his “cut-up” technique of piecing together phrases literally cut out of written documents such as newspaper articles and personal journals became the basis for a program known as the “Verbasizer,” which he used heavily in the writing of *Outside* (“David Bowie ‘Inspirations’”), and mentioned by name in *The Diary of Nathan Adler*. Clearly, Bowie’s love of technology was (and is) not limited to passively-read descriptions in science-fiction novels.

“Everything has changed...nothing has changed.”

Released while the United States was still trying to come to terms with the events of September 11, 2001, the mood of *Heathen* (2002) reflected Bowie’s blurring of the lines between dystopian fiction and reality, although he has since insisted that the entirety of the album was written before the attacks (Thompson, *Hallo Spaceboy* 256). Two songs

of note breaking from this general formula of uneasiness, however, are “I Took a Trip on a Gemini Spaceship” and “I Would Be Your Slave.” The former, Space Age imagery aside, was borrowed from the catalogue of The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, who inspired the name of Bowie’s most famous persona. In contrast, given Bowie’s penchant for borrowing from his own past, “I Would Be Your Slave” may very well have been inspired by a line from Jareth’s final attempt in *Labyrinth* to win Sarah over: “Just fear me, love me, do as I say, and I will be your slave.” Amusingly, the sharp-dressed aesthetic of the supporting tour (itself reminiscent of the Thin White Duke) was used as the basis for the appearance of “The Sovereign,” a villain from the animated series *The Venture Bros.*—a “handsome and ageless rockstar” who is blatantly meant to be Bowie, based upon explicit references to such things as his being the husband of Iman and the voice of both ‘*hours...*’ and Tin Machine.

Following almost immediately in the wake of its predecessor’s success, *Reality* (2003) was described in contrast to the solemnity of *Heathen* as “a bit thrusty” (qtd. in Thompson, *Hallo Spaceboy* 256) by its creator. Bowie, perhaps in a nod to his earlier career as a professional alien, chose to recognize the aptly-named band Sigue Sigue Sputnik via a cover of their song “Love Missile F1-11” (273), and while the song did not make it to the final album, it was released as the B-side of “New Killer Star.” While the album itself contained an unusually large amount of cover versions compared to Bowie’s previous albums, the accompanying tour looked back upon his many successes, including songs from almost all of his albums (277).

Unfortunately, despite the ambition and enthusiasm with which Bowie approached the tour, it encountered several hurdles. Five shows were cancelled due to

Bowie suffering from the flu and another after a lighting technician was tragically killed in a pre-show accident. During a concert in Oslo, a fan inadvertently struck Bowie in the eye with a lollipop. Ultimately, the tour came to an abrupt end when what Bowie believed to be pain from a pinched nerve in his shoulder turned out to be a heart attack and he underwent an emergency angioplasty (Thompson, *Hallo Spaceboy* 287-288). For the next decade, he largely disappeared from the public eye, except for small movie roles—such as his portrayal of famed physicist Nikola Tesla in *The Prestige*, and Lord Royal Highness in the *Spongebob Squarepants* special *Atlantis Squarepants* (Pegg 634)—and occasional appearances at charity events. According to *Uncut* magazine, “After the operation came the shutdown, the withdrawal. No album, no tours, merely rumours of ill health and retirement. Five years became six, and eight became nine, and the world accepted that Bowie’s remarkable career in music was over” (Cavanagh 34).

Chapter Five: The Next Day (2013 - ?)

“Here I am, Not Quite Dying...”

On January 8, 2013, Bowie, to quote his own website, “quite without fanfare and out of the blue...did something nobody really expected” (“About David Bowie”). A new album, *The Next Day*, was announced, and it was soon revealed that the album was recorded in total secrecy over a two year period (“The Songs, The Secrets” 7). Bowie refused to give any interviews regarding his latest project, instead leaving the task to Tony Visconti. While the album is not as overtly based on futuristic or supernatural fiction as some of his earlier work, Visconti confirmed in several interviews that Bowie’s basic approach to writing was the same. In *New Musical Express*, he stated that “David

reads a lot and his fascination with a subject does end up in a few songs” (qtd. in Stubbs 7), and explained to *The Times* that “[e]verything he reads makes it into the lyrics of his songs” (qtd. in Teeman 4). As to Bowie’s latest obsessions that influenced the new album, Visconti said that “[w]hen you’re just about to bite into your sandwich at lunch, he’ll talk about Russian history, British history, old battles, kings and queens, Roman emperors...But everything David writes is a metaphor for something else” (qtd. in Stubbs 7).

Bowie’s current love affair with political history, however, by no means prevents his comeback from including his trademark sprinkle of stardust. The music video for “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)” has a direct visual reference to *The Man Who Fell to Earth* through a picture of Bowie’s character on the cover of a tabloid he examines early in the clip, and this cheeky nod accompanies a song which very explicitly compares the stars of the celebrity world to those of astronomy. The song draws lyrical inspiration from mythology, the earliest form of fantasy, with lines such as “Satyrs and their child wives / Waiting for the last move / Soaking up our primitive world,” sung over scenes of a succubus hovering over Bowie’s character in his sleep and two demons possessing his wife at the dinner table, causing her to turn a knife and a Joker-like smile upon him. (Additionally, in the video, the aforementioned tabloid cover bears the rather appropriate title of *Pantheon*). In contrast to the dark tone of “Stars,” “Dancing Out In Space” makes use of a cheerful, retro-futuristic melody, no doubt a cheeky poke at his younger self. In reference to Bowie’s various nods to Stanley Kubrick, a review in *Uncut* noted of the song “Dirty Boys” that “there’s something jagged about the language that smacks of *A Clockwork Orange*...” (Cavanagh 36). Finally, it is entirely possible that “Valentine’s

Day,” a haunting look inside the mind of a school shooter, may have been influenced not only by real life tragedies such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook, but also by horror movies such as *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (featuring his costar from the “Stars” video, Tilda Swinton), or perhaps more appropriately, *Valentine*.

In November, the release of *The Next Day* was followed up with a special edition, *The Next Day Extra*. The album included four previously unreleased tracks from the *Next Day* sessions: “Atomica,” “Born in a UFO,” “Like a Rocket Man,” and “The Informer.” While “Atomica” and “Like a Rocket Man” invoke the Space Age in name alone, the lyrics of “Born in a UFO” (which describes an alien love interest with the lines “Electric skin, plastic and lace / Silver hair, trapezoid flesh / I was so in love with her lavender mesh”), is reminiscent of B-movies, and in fact directly refers to “‘50s movies” in setting the scene. Furthermore, “The Informer” seems to be a holdover from the narrative of *I. Outside*, using lines such as “There’s a pool of blood / On this bathroom floor / The mirror’s broke / There’s a crack in the door” to describe the narrator’s surroundings, and stating to the subject of the song that “You were on the ledger / Your name was double crossed / You were a prime assignment.”

In addition to the new material, *The Next Day Extra* included two remixes of songs from the album proper, “Love is Lost” and “I’d Rather Be High.” The former spawned two music videos: an abbreviated version of the remix (which Bowie shot in his Manhattan office for \$12.99 as a visual to represent himself as a Mercury Prize nominee) and a second visual accompanying the full ten-and-a-half minute version of the song. The shorter version featured Bowie alongside two full-size mannequins of himself as the protagonist of the “Ashes to Ashes” video and the Thin White Duke, and was described

by the associated press release as “a strangely moving gothic inflected storyline perfect for Halloween” (“Watch Bowie’s \$12.99 ‘Love is Lost’ video”). The full-length video, directed by Barnaby Roper, revolves around a computer-generated couple, slowly built up from a crude wireframe. This imagery is reminiscent of Kraftwerk’s 1986 video “Music Non Stop,” in which the band members are portrayed with state-of-the-art (for the time) computer animation. The remix of “I’d Rather Be High” was used in an advertisement for designer Louis Vuitton, entitled “L’Invitation au Voyage.” The advertisement, starring Bowie and model Arizona Muse, takes place in a Venetian masquerade, and was likely inspired by the ball in the “As the World Falls Down” sequence from *Labyrinth*.

The original issue of *The Next Day*, which topped the iTunes rock charts in over 60 countries, provided Bowie with the highest American chart placement (#2) of his career (“The Next Day chart positions”), was nominated for “Best Rock Album” and “Best Rock Performance” (for the “Stars” video) at the 56th Grammy awards (“56th Annual GRAMMY Awards”), and won him the 2014 BRIT Award for “British Male Solo Artist” (“Kate Moss Collects BRIT Award”). It was hailed as “the greatest comeback album ever” (“The Next Day chart positions”), proving that Bowie’s fans, to quote a line from its title track, “can’t get enough of that doomsday song.”

“And I’m never ever gonna get old...”

In the documentary *Inspirations*, Bowie advised artists to “[a]lways remember that the reason you initially started working was that there was something inside that you felt that if you could manifest it in some way, you would understand more about yourself

and how you coexist with the rest of society.” In his case, this coexistence continues to manifest itself as a guiding force upon pop culture. As Nine Inch Nails frontman Trent Reznor said, “[h]e’s someone who’s had an ability to dictate trends, as opposed to follow[ing] them” (“David Bowie Sound & Vision pt. 7”). This ability comes from being “a master of embracing a number of disparate elements and then fusing them into something totally unique” (“David Bowie Sound & Vision pt. 2”), according to celebrity photographer Mick Rock. The man himself agreed with this statement, saying of his glam rock period that “mascara was merely the conveyance by which great globs of non-rock flotsam and jetsam were to be delivered...Japanese kabuki, Dada, Dietrich and Leni Riefenstahl, Piaf and futurism and, above all, ‘elegant gloom’” (qtd. in Paphides 72). Music video director David Mallet (who worked with Bowie on several of his videos, including the groundbreaking “Ashes to Ashes”) said of his collaborator that his “influence on early music videos was probably the greatest...he wasn’t frightened to do something that was surreal. He wasn’t frightened to go back to French silent surrealist movies. He wasn’t frightened to do anything” (“David Bowie Sound & Vision pt. 5”). Bowie’s influence is such that just prior to his sudden return to music, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London announced an exhibition entitled “David Bowie is...” which showcased the history of his career and the impact it had along the way, drawing visitors from around the world to London, before it was announced that the exhibit would tour (“Touring Exhibition: David Bowie is”). Additionally, in 2013, Bowie was inducted into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame, on the grounds that “significant aspects of his work have promoted science fiction and fantasy to the mainstream” (“David Bowie”).

It has been said that “Bowie's successful theatrical use of alien imagery and empowering bi-sexual/asexual symbolism was adopted by numerous artists in the late 1970s and early 1980s” (McLeod 341). Joe Elliot, of the band Def Leppard, said in an interview that “[t]he thing that got me about Bowie—I was twelve when I heard ‘Starman’—it was the fact that he frightened parents, but he wasn’t frightening...it was just this, ‘My God, he’s wearing makeup!’ And I found it fascinating that he was such a threat to people over thirty-five” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 1”). According to Mick Rock, “David was the king, the queen, the prince, whatever you want to call him, of glam. He was its finest hour, its most potent force” (“David Bowie Sound & Vision pt. 3”), and “The Dame,” as he would come to be known by the British press (Trynka 396), even was cited as an inspiration for a West End play called *The Rocky Horror Show*, which would soon be adapted into a film eventually considered to be the definitive cult movie (“David Bowie Sound & Vision pt. 3”). “In the post-*Star Wars* era of the early 1980s,” says Ken McLeod, “many New Wave artists followed the theatrical approach of David Bowie and employed space alien stage personas to symbolise their transgression of both sexual and musical boundaries” (347-348). Even outside the realm of the fantastical, the painfully shy singer’s creation of Ziggy Stardust as a mask to hide himself behind likely inspired the continuing trend of musical alter-egos, such as Eminem’s “Slim Shady” and Beyoncé’s “Sasha Fierce” (Spitz 16). “For me, the characterization of something seemed to give me a way of interpreting the songs, without having to be kind of out there, nakedly myself,” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 1”) Bowie would later admit.

Along with what would eventually become *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Bowie was the inspiration for another movie, *Velvet Goldmine*, a semi-biographical

interpretation of his '70s fame. (Spitz 172). But there are three more movies which Bowie had a rather unique influence over. His son, Duncan Jones, was inspired to become a director after hanging out with Bowie on the set of *Labyrinth* as a child (Hoffman 78), and is now the BAFTA-winning director of *Moon*, *Source Code*, and the upcoming cinematic adaptation of *World of Warcraft* (Trynka 475; Smith). According to a transcript of an online chat session with fans, his daughter Lexi (just shy of her second birthday at the time) is following in her father's footsteps as well: "This evening we were sitting on the terrace, even though it was day, the moon had just come out," he explained. "She just went CRAZY and started jumping up and down saying, 'Moon up in sky!!' And had to bring out all her books that had the moon in it and we had to compare the pictures" ("David Bowie Wonderworld: Live MSN Chat"). In the same conversation, when asked what the "most important lesson" was that he wished to instill in his daughter, he answered, rather unsurprisingly, "a thirst for learning. It's not the subject matter that's important. It's the desire to want to learn and how to collect and take knowledge in. If you have a thirst for life it will take you through so many depressing periods and you'll have a wider panorama" ("David Bowie Wonderworld: Live MSN Chat").

Bowie's influence on music alone stretches far beyond rock and pop, as well. In 2003, a compilation entitled *Club Bowie* was released, featuring various dance remixes of his songs (Spencer 175), and in the summer of 2009, Italian techno artist Benny Benassi remixed "DJ" (*Lodger*) as a club track ("David Bowie: 'DJ'"). Perhaps even more bizarrely, in the '90s, classical composer Phillip Glass reimagined *Low* and "*Heroes*" as full-blown symphonies (Pegg 439). Even comedic artists have paid tribute, such as Flight of the Conchords, a New Zealand duo who recorded a song poking affectionate fun at his

Space Oddity and *Ziggy Stardust* eras, entitled “Bowie’s In Space.” Even astronauts both real and fictional have paid tribute to Bowie. William “Captain Kirk” Shatner performed “Space Oddity,” along with Peter Schilling’s ‘80s sequel, “Major Tom (Coming Home)” on his spoken-word album *Seeking Major Tom*, and in 2013, two months after the release of *The Next Day*, Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield uploaded a video of himself singing a slightly modified and more optimistic version of the song aboard the International Space Station.

“I don’t know where I’m going from here, but I promise it won’t be boring.”

For a self-described “culture vulture” (“David Bowie An Earthling At 50 part 2”) who claims to simply “steal from high art and demean it to street level” (qtd. in Hudson 147), David Bowie has left an undeniable mark on far more than popular music, and if Tony Visconti’s belief that he plans to return to the studio in the wake of *The Next Day* (Graff) is true, we haven’t heard the last of him. The influence that science-fiction, fantasy, and horror have had on Bowie the fan has been appropriated by the countless artists of both his generation and those who came later, and has left its mark on music, cinema, television, fashion, technology, and even gender politics. Amused by the mythology surrounding his career, he once joked that “[w]hat I should probably do is collect together all the apocryphal stories and mount them as an alternative David Bowie show. It could make a most hilarious evenings [sic] entertainment” (“David Bowie Wonderworld: David Bowie”). Author Maureen King wrote in 1997 that “[a]fter 1980’s *Scary Monsters*, Bowie largely abandoned science-fiction elements in his work...his strictly science-fiction works largely came to an end with ‘Ashes to Ashes’” (136), postulating that continuing to write within the genre “would hamper his attempt to enter

the musical mainstream and gain commercial success” (136), or that with his “personal problems behind him, his inner landscapes were simply no longer so devastated” (136). However, time has shown this eulogy to be rather short-sighted and premature, as these influences upon him, however subtle, have continued well into the 21st century, into the years he once wrote about as the distant future.

Bowie has repeatedly maintained throughout his career that he merely “create[s] something out of my enthusiasms at that particular moment” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 3”), and that “[t]hat’s what people should do. They should follow their real gut love of what they do. There’s nothing more, I think, embarrassing than watching somebody who doesn’t love what they do but does it because they believe that’s the way they’re going to be loved” (“Story of David Bowie pt. 3”), and because of the success this attitude has brought him, he is seen as a musical prophet, a visionary, a rock god. However, when asked about his fame, he is remarkably humble, insisting that his recognition among younger generations is “terribly exciting,” and appreciates interest “generated by people like Trent [Reznor], and Billy Corgan, Moby, who have been so generous in citing me as inspiration” (“David Bowie Wonderworld: Live MSN Chat”). Furthermore, he has stated that he is “always amazed at the average ages of the users of both my site [BowieNet] and some of the other sites centered on my work” (“David Bowie Wonderworld: Live MSN Chat”). When pressed by an interviewer to define himself, one of the most famous and influential rock stars of the 20th and 21st centuries, who has irreversibly changed the face of pop culture as we know it, said simply, “I change every day. I’m not outrageous. I’m David Bowie” (qtd. in Hudson 20).

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