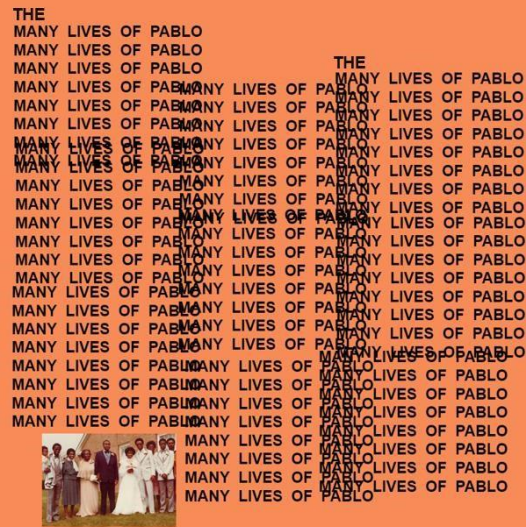


The Many Lives of Pablo



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Introduction

On March 1st, 2015, Kanye West used Twitter to announce *So Help Me God*, the follow-up to 2013's *Yeezus*, which West had called the last CD he would release.¹ The announcement included artwork and a lead single, which West had given its live premiere at the BRIT Awards the week before. It seemed West adhered to a relatively regular release strategy. That would soon start to change, however, as he publicly altered the album's title and tracklist several times before its release.² In May, West changed the album's name to *SWISH* and announced the record would be released on February 11th, 2016.³ Weeks later, however, *SWISH* became *Waves*.⁴ As the release date drew near, West posted a picture of himself working on what had become *The Life of Pablo*.⁵ On February 11th, West premiered *Pablo* at New York's Madison Square Garden.⁶ While it seemed the album's changing process had finally ended, it would soon turn out it had only just begun. Three days after *Pablo*'s premiere, the album surfaced exclusively on Tidal, the streaming service owned by West's mentor JAY Z. What subscribers heard revealed that West had held additional recording sessions between the album's premiere and official release, to edit parts of the record that had yet to satisfy him. On album track '30 Hours', West also referred back to *Pablo*'s live premiere already, saying he "just did that Madison Square Garden." West's alteration process would continue, however, post-release, with the rapper tweeting he was going to "fix wolves" on February 14th, 2016.⁷ West went on to change the album's lyrics, music, and tracklist throughout March, April, and June 2016, and a physical (and thus at least somewhat final) release still has not been announced and probably never will be.

Through altering *Pablo* after its release date, West poses the question what an album is and especially when it is finished. Howard Becker argues these are questions most musicians cannot answer: they can tell you when something *must* be done, not when it *is*.⁸ West, then, takes a stance against the way in which we have come to understand music

¹ Chris DeVille, "Kanye West Announces New Album *So Help Me God*," *Stereogum*, March 1, 2015, <https://www.stereogum.com/1784094/kanye-west-announces-new-album-so-help-me-god/news>; Mitchell Peters, "Kanye West Announces Name Change of His New Album on Twitter," *The Hollywood Reporter*, May 3, 2015, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/earshot/kanye-west-announces-name-change793010>.

² For a full timeline of *The Life of Pablo*'s process, see Appendix A.

³ Evan Minsker and Matthew Strauss, "Kanye West Announces *Swish* Release Date," *Pitchfork*, January 8, 2016, <https://pitchfork.com/news/58676-kanye-west-announces-swish-release-date/>.

⁴ Kanye West (@kanyewest), "New album title, WAVES," Twitter, January 29, 2016, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/696942468076564480>.

⁵ Mark Molloy, "T.L.O.P.: Kanye West has finally decided on a title for his new album," *The Telegraph*, February 9, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/news/kanye-west-has-finally-decided-on-a-title-for-hisnew-album/>.

⁶ The event, which coincided with West's Adidas-sponsored fashion show, was watched online by over 20 million people; John Kennedy, "Deconstructed: Tracing The Evolution of Kanye West's 'The Life of Pablo'", *Genius*, May 24, 2016, <https://genius.com/a/deconstructed-tracing-the-evolution-of-kanye-west-s-the-life-of-pablo>.

⁷ Kanye West (@kanyewest), "I'ma fix wolves", Twitter, February 14, 2016, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/698971890581401600>.

⁸ Howard S. Becker, "Editing", in *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 202.

relatively recently. We tend to regard songs, albums, and pieces as “things”, end results that are static and could feature in what Lydia Goehr fittingly termed an *imaginary museum*.⁹ Changes happening in artistic processes are oftentimes hidden behind the scenes, and not considered a vital part or even a possibility anymore when the process is considered completed. Even if composers have not died yet, then, we are likely to think of their pieces as if they had. This perspective, mostly referred to as the *work notion*, was popularized in the nineteenth century, when a canon arose that consisted increasingly of pieces and composers from the past.¹⁰ Today, we have come to consider the musical work as commonplace, not only in classical music, but in pop, jazz, and non-western music as well.¹¹ This makes it even more important to remember the work notion is not, in fact, as self-evident as it seems now.¹² In fact, the work notion is inextricably intertwined with the musical infrastructure of a certain period. Different eras have known different ways of music production and distribution, and the way people have thought about the ontology of musical pieces has differed accordingly, as has the way people have valued change in art. It is therefore – as Goehr argues – of the utmost importance to consider musical creations in the context of when they were written.

Composers started thinking in terms of works, for instance, near the end of the eighteenth century, when they freed themselves from the demands of royal and religious institutions and brought music to the foreground, moving it from churches and courts to newly built concert halls.¹³ This development can be linked to the romanticism that enabled as well as appreciated art’s rationalization and autonomization and put emphasis on genius composers and their self-expression.¹⁴ This resulted in the notion that musical pieces were, as Georgina Born writes, “perfectly formed, finished, and untouchable.” They “transcended any particular performance” and should, therefore, not be changed in whatever way anymore.¹⁵ It is at this moment in time, then, that worlds like *oeuvre* and *repertoire* begin to be understood in the way we understand them now. The idea of rehearsals as a necessary condition for a faithful rendition also stems from this period.¹⁶ As musical practice of the same celebrated

⁹ Lydia Goehr, “Introduction”, in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 2.

¹⁰ Timothy J. Dowd, Kathleen Liddle, Kim Lupo and Anne Borden. “Organizing the musical canon: the repertoires of major U.S. symphony orchestras, 1842 to 1969,” *Poetics*, vol. 30, no. 1-2 (May 2002): 35-61.

¹¹ Lydia Goehr, “Introduction”, in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 2-8; Bruce Ellis Benson, “One: Between Composition and Performance,” in *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 14.

¹² Lydia Goehr, “Introduction”, in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 8.

¹³ Georgina Born, “On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity,” *Twentieth-Century Music*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 9; Lydia Goehr, “Being True to the Work”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 55.

¹⁴ Georgina Born, “On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity,” *Twentieth-Century Music*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 8-9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶ Lydia Goehr, “Being True to the Work”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 56.

compositions spread across Europe, however, composers were left unable to provide all performers with instructions. Instead, these instructions were transferred through scores.¹⁷ Mass-produced printed sheets formed the beginning of music's commodification, turning creativity into something that could be bought and sold.¹⁸ This commodification, which Timothy Taylor notes is "utterly dependent on the circumstances", was continued into the twentieth century by all sorts of audio recordings, ensuring that "the text took on supreme importance, accessible to everyone in precisely the form wished by the final writing hand upon delivering it to the press."¹⁹

There have, however, always been exceptions to this perspective. In fact, there have been entire eras - the Middle Ages and the Baroque period, for instance - in which the work notion did not yet guide musical practice.²⁰ This thesis, putting *Pablo* forward as a case study, suggests we may be approaching such a period again. It does so by drawing on Georgina Born's criticism on Lydia Goehr, being that Goehr does not follow her own perspective through to the twenty-first century and thereby neglects all the technological changes that may have changed the musical infrastructure since its beginning. It is these technological changes that have afforded *Pablo*'s post-release alteration process. The main argument of this thesis is, however, goes further. It argues that the changes Kanye West made to *The Life of Pablo*, are the most important element of the entire endeavour. In employing Born's *relayed creativity* and Bernard Cerquiglini's *new philology*, it will understand the album as a process that went right, not wrong, considering the project's process as more important than its result.²¹ In considering *Pablo*'s production as well as its distribution (and especially the way in which they intersect), this thesis will also do away with the distinction between creativity and commerce.

That is not to say the changes West made to *Pablo* cannot bear any meaning themselves at all. West, this thesis will argue through musical analysis, has employed these

¹⁷ Bruce Ellis Benson, "One: Between Composition and Performance," in *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 20-21.

¹⁸ Cerquiglini notes that printing had been around since approximately 1530, but had only succeeded in satisfying composers' demands for quality at the dawn of the nineteenth century; Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁹ Timothy Taylor, "The Commodification of Music at the Dawn of the Era of "Mechanical Music"", *Ethnomusicology* vol. 51, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2007): 283; Bernard Cerquiglini, "Textuary Modernity", in *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999): 2-3.

²⁰ Georg Handel, for instance, never finalised his *Messiah*. Instead, he changed it to fit the circumstances in which the piece was to be performed, by accounting for the size of a certain orchestra or the abilities of specific singers; Watkins Shaw, "Chapter 5: Performances and Versions," in *A Textual and Historical Companion to Handel's Messiah*, (London: Novello, 1965), 109-126; Bruce Ellis Benson, "One: Between Composition and Performance," in *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 19; Reinhard Strohm, "Towards an understanding of the *opera seria*," in *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 102.

²¹ Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," *Twentieth-Century Music*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 7-36; Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

changes to emphasize *Pablo*'s relation to the inherently improvisational genre of gospel, which was popularized in West's hometown of Chicago during the 1930s.²² It will do so as West hinted towards *Pablo*'s connection to the genre in the album's tumultuous preamble. In fact, the meanings of the changes made to *Pablo* and the changing of the album are closely intertwined. Both cast West as a trickster figure within the modern music industry. West can simultaneously be considered to be what Howard Becker terms a *maverick artist* and one of the industry's most critically acclaimed and commercially successful creators.²³ These contradictions, as well as those between West's black activism and conservatism, have ensured West has remained an outlier in his relationship to American politics and his African-American background. West's treatment of *Pablo* can be understood as him consciously building on the connotations that black art bears, flipping musical as well as racist clichés drawing on the African-American tradition of *signifying* and influenced by W.E.B. Du Bois' notion of African-Americans' *double consciousness*.

Chapter 1: From mouvance to music media

As said, *The Life of Pablo* is far from the first musical endeavour subverting the work notion. Particularly looking at *Pablo* from a medievalist viewpoint, then, proves fruitful. Writing on the endeavours of medieval troubadours, Bernard Cerquiglini proposes what can best be described as a *new philology* in his seminal *In Praise of the Variant*. Cerquiglini states – not unlike Goehr – that artworks should not be seen independently from their material manifestation, the people involved in their production or the particular times and places they were produced.²⁴ In the case of the Middle Ages then, musical and poetical creations shared a propensity for change (*mouvance*) which was due to the transcription practices essential to their survival. Pieces changed as a result of monks unwillingly making mistakes or knowingly trying to improve others' poetry.²⁵ Some have dismissed the value of *mouvance*. They take a vertical, hierarchical perspective, equalling authenticity to closeness to an Original.²⁶ This seems to be the outlook most of West's fans have on *Pablo*: to this day, the original version of the album, partly due to its unavailability on streaming services anymore, remains the most

²² Richard Smallwood, "Gospel and Blues Improvisation", *Music Educators Journal* vol. 66, no. 5 (January 1980): 100.

²³ Howard S. Becker, "Integrated Professionals, Mavericks, Folk Artists, and Naïve Artists", in *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 233-235.

²⁴ Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

²⁵ Roy Rosenstein, "*Mouvance* and the Editor as Scribe: *Transcrittore tradittore?*," *Romanic Review* vol. 80, no. 2 (1989): 158; Stephen G. Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* vol. 65, no. 1 (January 1990), 1-10.

²⁶ Mary B. Speer, "Wrestling with Change: Old French Textual Criticism and *Mouvance*," *Olifant*, vol. 7, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 313.

actively shared and downloaded version on illegal platforms like The Pirate Bay.²⁷ It turns out, then, that these platforms leave Napster-sized loopholes, even in the era that saw major labels regain control of the musical marketplace through large-scale, legal streaming services like Spotify, Apple Music, and Tidal.²⁸ *Pablo* has, therefore, remained a dialogue in which its creators and consumers are partners that do not have exclusive control.²⁹

That West was, in fact, looking for this form of control becomes clear when one takes a look at the rhetoric he wielded when making changes to *Pablo*. West does not value closeness to an original. On the contrary: in the case of *Pablo*, he seemed to prioritize distance from that original, incorporating elements of previous iterations in new and – in his opinion, at least – improved ones. West, for instance, did not speak of neutrally *changing* ‘Wolves’, but of “fixing” the song.³⁰ This echoed the rhetoric he employed when he made changes to ‘Real Friends’, one of *Pablo*’s pre-released promotional singles, on January 8th, 2016. West asked his fans to “erase the old one”, seemingly looking upon the earlier version of the song as inferior, working towards a more imaginative than achievable point of total satisfaction and control.³¹ This thesis, however, advocates another perspective, one that prioritizes neither the original nor the final result. Instead, I propose to view modern musical endeavours in the way Roy Rosenstein describes medieval poetry – “organic and growing.”³² Following in Cerquiglini’s footsteps, I would suggest that change in artworks should not only be considered a possibility. It should be considered possible that change is the central element of an artwork, that change *is* the artwork.³³

The changing process, however, enables West to create new meanings and messages as well. In changing *The Life of Pablo*, for instance, West creatively plays with the technological affordances of the musical infrastructure of which he is part. This infrastructure is dominated by the aforementioned streaming services that have changed the way in which we consume music. Anja Nylund Hagen, for instance, illustrates how these services (and therefore their subscribers) are increasingly focused on singles and playlists comprised of

²⁷ In fact, I would consider it possible that humans are always the most fond of a version they hear first; John Kennedy, “Deconstructed: Tracing The Evolution of Kanye West’s ‘The Life of Pablo’”, *Genius*, May 24, 2016, <https://genius.com/a/deconstructed-tracing-the-evolution-of-kanye-west-s-the-life-of-pablo>.

²⁸ Between 1999 and 2002, Napster was a peer-to-peer (P2P) network on which users could share mp3 files illegally. The service was eventually sued by musicians and labels, because it limited their revenue streams.

²⁹ Bruce Ellis Benson, “Preface,” in *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): x.

³⁰ Kanye West (@kanyewest), “Ima fix wolves”, Twitter, March 15, 2016, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/698971890581401600>.

³¹ Kanye West (@kanyewest), “New version is up. Please please erase the old one I wasn’t satisfied with the sound quality”, Twitter, January 8, 2016, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/685541651272486912>.

³² Roy Rosenstein, “Mouvance and the Editor as Scribe: *Transcrittore tradittore?*,” *Romanic Review* vol. 80, no. 2 (1989): 158; Stephen G. Nichols, “Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture,” *Speculum* vol. 65, no. 1 (January 1990), 1-10.

³³ Bernard Cerquiglini, “Introduction,” in *The Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), xiii.

them.³⁴ Artists, who oftentimes still seem to consider their albums artistic statements that have to be appreciated as such, have been forced to find other ways to garner attention for them. This has resulted in a music industry in which music and marketing are not as clearly distinguished as they used to be. A commercial album release does, in many cases these days, not *follow* an album. It is an integral part of that album. Several musicians, for instance, have taken to the surprise album, minimizing the album rollout and sensationalizing its release to get consumers to pay attention.

West understood (more so than his contemporaries) that streaming services might also change the way in which music is produced, or at least the way in which music's production process is represented in an album release. Streaming services have, like mp3-based platforms before them, transformed LPs and CDs into immaterial form, aural information into code. This transformation has, in turn, extended the possibilities of musical transformation, up until a point of openness to infinite transformation. While effectively all other musicians have stuck to releasing 'normal' albums and singles, West has taken advantage of this affordance. He does so by engaging in an act of what Georgina Born termed *relayed creativity* and what Alfred Gell before her called *distributed creativity*. New music media, West showcases, enable creators to compose and decompose sound effectively endlessly, resulting in what Born describes as a form of "recurrent decomposition, composition, and re-composition."³⁵ Whereas anyone – particularly someone active in the music industry - could understand how this may work, this treatment of music is all but commonplace in 2018. West clearly employed streaming services in a way that no one in the music industry had expected him – or any musician, for that matter – to do. West, in this case, behaves like what Howard Becker has described as a *maverick artist*. This term applies to creatives that feel insurmountably limited by the infrastructure they (have to) operate in and therefore decide to challenge it.³⁶ West, in this case, can be understood as pillorying the status quo that streaming services have only quite recently created. It also seems he is dismissing the entire idea of deadlines in the artistic world. A finished version of *Pablo* was not released on February 14th, West implied in a tweet blaming Chance The Rapper for delays, simply because the album was not finished yet.³⁷ West could, ofcourse, have obeyed the deadlines

³⁴ Anja Nylund Hagen, "The Playlist Experience: Personal Playlists in Music Streaming Services," *Popular Music and Society* vol. 38, no. 5 (March 2015): 627.

³⁵ Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," *Twentieth-Century Music*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2005): 27.

³⁶ Howard S. Becker, "Integrated Professionals, Mavericks, Folk Artists, and Naïve Artists", in *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 233-235.

³⁷ Kanye West (@kanyewest), "It's Chance's fault the album not out yet... he really wanted Waves on that Bitch... we in the lab now...", Twitter, February 13, 2016, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/698395090117644288>.

imposed on him (possibly by himself), but chose not to. We can also imagine that the process West has publicly executed in the case of *Pablo* is the very same process most albums go through, be it ‘behind the scenes’. By exposing that process, I argue, West offers more of an understanding of how albums are *actually* created, not how they end up being consumed. This understanding may, like it did in contemporary criticism of medieval creativity, result in an increasing fondness of – as Cerquiglini summarizes it – “whatever is unstable, multiple, and precarious, whatever temporarily goes beyond the enclosed immobility established by the machine.”³⁸

Chapter 2: Kanye West as Saint Pablo

While the previous chapter has argued change is the most important ‘meaning’ of Kanye West’s *The Life of Pablo*, it has not denied the album does not have more meanings. Whereas the first segment of this thesis concerned itself mainly with the meaning these changes have when it comes to West’s relation with the current musical infrastructure, this chapter will focus on *Pablo*’s musical meanings and how they may have changed throughout the album’s alteration process. Besides changing the album’s lyrics and title several times, West changed *Pablo*’s instrumentation, production, and vocals throughout the first half of 2016. What most of these alterations might mean is hinted towards by West himself in a tweet sent on January 27th, 2016. That day, he claimed his forthcoming album was “actually a gospel album.”³⁹ Listening to the first version of *Pablo*, one would indeed not say it is a gospel album, not in the least because the copious amounts of swearing it contains. West, however, emphasized *Pablo*’s ties to the genre in the versions of the album that would follow (which, nevertheless, still contain copious amounts of swearing).

The presence of religious references was by no means a novelty in West’s discography: West has oftentimes expressed his faith through lyrics or track and album titles. *Pablo*’s first incarnation, *So Help Me God*, even featured the 13th century monastic symbol for the Virgin Mary on its cover. The final album turned out to be full of these kinds of references as well: on tracks like ‘Father Stretch My Hands Pt. 1’, ‘Feedback’, and ‘Wolves’, West draws comparisons between his own life and that of Saint Paul (or San Pablo, in Spanish).⁴⁰ To emphasize this, West added new final track ‘Saint Pablo’ to the album at the conclusion of

³⁸ Bernard Cerquiglini, “Introduction,” in *The Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), xiii.

³⁹ Kanye West (@kanyewest), “This album is actually a Gospel album,” Twitter, January 27, 2016, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/692435575836676097>.

⁴⁰ Alannah Francis, “Is Kanye West’s *The Life of Pablo* really a gospel album?”, *Christian Today*, April 11, 2016, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/is-kanye-wests-the-life-of-pablo-really-a-gospel-album/83541.htm>.

its alteration process on June 14th, 2016. There have, nevertheless, been very few instances in which West's music has *sounded* so religious as it does on (later versions of) *Pablo*. It does so mainly because of West's newfound fascination for gospel. The genre has been of influence on modern black singers and rappers (like *Pablo*-collaborator Chance The Rapper), while also playing an emotional role in African-American activism.⁴¹ Adhering to the album's gospel 'theme', then, *Pablo* features more singing than it does rapping, contrary to West's earlier albums. Even musicians who are at home in the hip hop industry, like Kid Cudi, Young Thug, and Outkast's André 3000, show up on *Pablo* to *sing*, not to *rap*.⁴² This was, however, already the case on *Pablo*'s first iteration, whereas the most important argument of this chapter is that many of the changes West made after that first version seem to be geared towards amplifying the album's connection to gospel even more.

One of the ways in West did so involves sampling, an important technique within hip-hop that he has always relied on heavily. *Pablo* features over thirty samples, including snippets from Sister Nancy's 'Bam Bam' (in 'Famous'), Junie Morrison's 'Suzie Thundertussy' (in 'No More Parties in LA'), and Isaac Hayes' 'Joy' (in '30 Hours'). Indeed, almost all samples West uses on *Pablo* see him consciously building on the connotations of predominantly African-American genres like soul, jazz, and R&B. This places *Pablo* in stark contrast with some of West's earlier albums, on which mostly white genres like indie rock, hard rock, and progressive rock featured much more prominently. West's 2010 album *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, for instance, features samples of Bon Iver's 'Woods' (in 'Lost In The World'), Black Sabbath's 'Iron Man' (in 'Hell of a Life'), and King Crimson's '21st Century Schizoid Man' (in hit single 'POWER'). The aforementioned *Pablo* samples, however, were all already in place when West premiered the album at Madison Square Garden on February 11th, 2016. The sample of particular interest to this thesis, then, is the one West added to *Pablo* on March 13th, 2016. That day, 'Famous' was updated with a sample of Nina Simone's 'Do What You Gotta Do'. Towards the end of the song, Simone can be heard singing lyrics that were sung by Rihanna in the track's intro. In adding Simone's singing to the album, West incorporated one of the most explicitly political and activist African-American artists of all time. Simone, who integrated elements of gospel in her eclectic oeuvre, is one of the prime examples of the way in which gospel can serve as a passionate element of African-American's protest against institutionalized racism. In mirroring Simone with

⁴¹ Richard Smallwood, "Gospel and Blues Improvisation", *Music Educators Journal* vol. 66, no. 5 (January 1980): 100.

⁴² Dee Lockett, "A Guide to Understanding Kanye West's *The Life of Pablo*", *Vulture*, May 31, 2016, <http://www.vulture.com/2016/02/guide-to-understanding-kanyes-tlop.html>

Rihanna, West simultaneously portrayed his collaborator, and by extension himself, as modern heirs to Simone's legacy.⁴³

Pablo's connection to gospel is perhaps exemplified most clearly, however, by the presence of a ten-piece gospel choir on opening track 'Ultralight Beam', which references the New Testament and also features gospel singer Kirk Franklin and four-year-old Natalie Green (who went viral after preaching on Instagram). When *Pablo*'s wider release on March 31st, 2016 saw the album released to Tidal-competitors Spotify and Apple Music, 'Ultralight Beam' had been updated. Interestingly, the choir parts had gotten noticeably louder, while a choir had also been added to 'Father Stretch My Hands Pt. 1'. In fact, later iterations of *Pablo* saw West put more emphasis on vocals altogether, for instance by amplifying them. This reliance on vocals has also been an important aspect of the gospel tradition, which is (or at least was) oftentimes transmitted to a next generation orally.⁴⁴ Many of the male groups that were formed in the early eras of the genre even performed a cappella.⁴⁵ West mimics this tradition on *Pablo* as well. Whereas the first version of '30 Hours' featured a continuous drum pattern, an iteration of the song released on March 31st, 2016 saw several of West's bars left unaccompanied.

Another way in which West emphasized vocals concerns the reverb effect that he added to a large amount of the album's vocals. From March 31st on, vocals on songs like 'Famous', 'Low Lights', and 'FML', which features The Weeknd, sounded much more spacious than they did before. Whereas John Klepko argues this effect is oftentimes added just because it sounds good (which I am sure was also one of West's motivations), he also argues reverb may be used to suggest "a large spatial environment", one where we might encounter some natural reverb.⁴⁶ Indeed, some vocals on *Pablo* sound as if they are echoing through a large church, where a gospel choir might perform too. Besides, reverb has the capability to highlight vocal performances in a way West also tried through amplification, setting them apart from accompanying instrumentation. When it comes to this instrumentation, the most noticeable change in the case of *Pablo* is the addition of more remarkable synthesizer melodies in songs like 'Freestyle 4', 'Waves', and 'Facts', which may

⁴³ Ruth Feldstein, "I Don't Trust You Anymore": Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s," *The Journal of American History* vol. 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1349-1379.

⁴⁴ Pearl Williams-Jones, "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic," *Ethnomusicology* vol. 19, no. 3 (September 1975): 378.

⁴⁵ Horace Clarence Boyer, "Contemporary Gospel Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 22.

⁴⁶ John Klepko, "Effects of effects: exploring the message behind the use of echoes on vocals," in *Practising Popular Music*, edited by Alex Gyde and Geoff Stahl (Montreal: IASPM03, 2003), 472-474; Peter Doyle, "'My Blue Heaven' to 'Race with the Devil': Echo, Reverb and (Dis)ordered Space in Early Popular Music Recording," *Popular Music* vol. 23, no. 1 (January 2004): 32.

suggest an organ, an instrument holding a prominent position in gospel music.

Chapter 3: Kanye West's Double Consciousness

Building on the previous two chapters, this final segment will show how the meanings of *Pablo*'s changing and the changes made to the album – in other words: the album's form and content - align and cast West as consciously building on the connotations that black art still bears in twenty-first century America. Not stereotyping West's singular character and artistic ability, this thesis will show how the continuation of African-American artistic traditions oftentimes means contradicting racist clichés. This is even more the case because West has always remained an outlier in his relation to his own blackness. While contemporary pop starts like Beyoncé and *Pablo*-collaborator Frank Ocean have become pioneers in the struggle for equal rights for black women and queers, West has always had a complicated and contradictory relation to his own background. West grew up in a middle-class home and wrestled with his access to education and simultaneous exposure to institutionalized racism, sometimes being swallowed by materialism in what George Ciccariello-Maher, writing about West specifically, describes as the “idealistic presumption of the penetrability of the veil that separates black from white worlds.”⁴⁷ Already in the earliest stages of his career, West admitted to the naivety of (t)his perspective as well, rapping “we can't buy freedom” on *College Dropout*-standout ‘All Falls Down’. Whereas the money on one's bank account ofcourse does not determine one's ability to be an advocate for black rights, we will see a discrepancy between West's position as a pioneer of black, politically engaged, modern art and his public behaviour, which is laced with capitalism and conservatism, has always persisted.⁴⁸

This, I argue, is due to West's *double consciousness*, a viewpoint on African-Americans' “two-ness” put forward by W.E.B. Du Bois. West, who is the son of a former Black Panther and a professor, may be understood as being torn apart by his being – in Du Bois' words - “an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body.”⁴⁹ West can simultaneously be seen as a black underdog who worked himself up to the absolute top of the contemporary music industry (with all the richness that comes with it) and a middle-class kid who always had the means to do so, more

⁴⁷ George Ciccariello-Maher, “A Critique of Du Boisian Reason: Kanye West and the Fruitfulness of Double-Consciousness,” *Journal of Black Studies* vol. 39, no. 3 (January 2009): 387.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 387-388.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 371-401.

so at least than many other black youths. Du Bois argues, then, that this contradiction is an essential element of African-American life, stating that black Americans are burdened with the *racist veil* Ciccariello-Maher refers to as well.⁵⁰ This veil is created by what Du Bois calls a *second sight*, which – according to Alexander Weheliye – means “black people are not able to view themselves without incorporating the look of those in power.”⁵¹ In the case of West, “those in power” could refer to the presidents of the United States he has had complicated relationships with. More specifically, however, it can refer to the (with one exception also white) Presidents of the United States.⁵² In 2005, he delivered a powerful speech in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. On live television, he spoke on the disaster that had hit New Orleans, stating: “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.”⁵³ Recently, however, West has bonded with controversial, conservative president Donald Trump, posing with a ‘Make America Great Again’-hat and calling the president his “brother”.⁵⁴ Together with West’s description of four hundred years of black slavery as “a choice”, this naturally caused enormous commotion, particularly among West’s black supporters.⁵⁵

Others, however, believe West’s friendship with Trump is too unlikely to be true. Their belief that West is staging an extensive piece of performance art may sound like a conspiracy theory, but there may actually be truth to the idea. West himself said he was sorry for disappointing the black community by wearing Trump’s hat, but also ensured that community it was “part of a bigger plan.”⁵⁶ This plan may have everything to do with West’s fascination for artists David Hammons and Joseph Beuys, about whom West tweeted over the course of this year.⁵⁷ As Hammons’ Museum of Modern Art bio states, his work “has been critical of “the clichés of growing up African American in the US.”⁵⁸ Hammons, for instance,

⁵⁰ George Ciccariello-Maher, “A Critique of Du Boisian Reason: Kanye West and the Fruitfulness of Double-Consciousness,” *Journal of Black Studies* vol. 39, no. 3 (January 2009): 371-401.

⁵¹ Alexander Weheliye, “In The Mix: Hearing the Souls of Black Folk,” *American Studies* vol. 45, no. 4 (2000), 539-542.

⁵² West has said he is planning to run for president himself in 2020.

⁵³ “Bush Doesn’t Care About Black People”, YouTube, uploaded by Shockroc1 on April 17, 2006, accessed on June 2, 2018, 1:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIUzLpO1kxI>; George Ciccariello-Maher, “A Critique of Du Boisian Reason: Kanye West and the Fruitfulness of Double-Consciousness,” *Journal of Black Studies* vol. 39, no. 3 (January 2009): 390-391.

⁵⁴ Kanye West (@kanyewest), “You don’t have to agree with trump but the mob can’t make me not love him. We are both dragon energy. He is my brother. I love everyone. I don’t agree with everything anyone does. That’s what makes us individuals. And we have the right to independent thought,” Twitter, April 25, 2018,

https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/989179757651574784?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.sky.com%2Fstory%2Fkanye-west-calls-donald-trump-his-brother-11346709; Kanye West (@kanyewest), “my MAGA hat is signed,” Twitter, April 25, 2018, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/989227154993963009>.

⁵⁵ “Kanye West Stirs Up TMZ Newsroom Over Trump, Slavery, Free Thought”, YouTube, uploaded by TMZ on May 1, 2018, accessed on June 2, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_M4LkYra5k.

⁵⁶ “Kanye West – “I disappointed the black community & Im sorry” 2/5/18 via TMZ”, YouTube, uploaded by 15 MOF on May 2, 2018, accessed on June 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaDJnrPXq8Q>.

⁵⁷ Kanye West (@kanyewest), picture of a David Hammons book without text, Twitter, April 22, 2018, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/988108879446753280>; Kanye West (@kanyewest), “David Hammons Higher Goals,” Twitter, April 22, 2018, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/988116492817334272>.

⁵⁸ “David Hammons”, Museum of Modern Art, accessed on June 2, 2018, <https://www.moma.org/artists/2486>.

oftentimes messes around with the spade, a racist cliché that the artist flips the meaning of.⁵⁹ We may understand West's 'Make America Great Again'-hat as his version of Hammons' spade, which' racist meaning he may subsequently try to undermine.⁶⁰ West also tweeted a depiction of Joseph Beuys' 1974 installation *I Like America and America Likes Me*, in which the artist locked himself in a room with a coyote for three days.⁶¹ At the end of the project, Beuys hugged the coyote, that he had referred to as a symbol "of the damage done by the white men to the American continent." In the case of West, who has been regularly tweeting about the power of love and forgiveness, Donald Trump could very well be understood as the coyote. Shortly after these tweets, besides, West referred to performance artists Andy Kaufman by tweeting a "mood board" featuring a drawing of him, while Emory (using juggler emoji's this time) tweeted about "The Prestige", referring to a 2006 illusionist film by Christopher Nolan of the same name.⁶² It seems clear, then, that West has been trying to cast himself as some sort of trickster figure ever since *Pablo*'s process commenced.

While these events are not directly tied to *Pablo*, in behaving unpredictably as well as in changing that album after its release, West can be understood as engaging with the African-American tradition of signifying. While this word has many meanings, in this case it discerns a person's or fictional character's ability to "talk with great innuendo, to carp, cajole, needle, and lie."⁶³ The most well-known exponent of this tradition is the signifying monkey, a trickster figure that features in many African-American tales. Many of these tales originated in periods of black slavery and see black storytellers ironically displaying themselves as simian-like, thereby again flipping the meaning of a racist cliché, appropriating a stereotype, and undermining its oppressive power.⁶⁴ Oftentimes, indeed, the signifying monkey emerges as a folklore hero who overcomes his limitations to affirm or improve his status in the

⁵⁹ Remarkably, both of West's tweets involving Hammons were retweeted by collaborator Tremaine Emory, who commented nothing but a spade emoji; Yeezycone (@Snowcone965), "5. So let's start with the first two images involving David Hammons. After Kanye tweeted these images, Tremaine quote tweeted them with this emoji: 🏴. I believe this is referring to Hammons work which aimed to "turn racist clichés (spade) on its head," Twitter, May 2, 2018,

https://twitter.com/Snowcone965/status/991695831492415488?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fpigeonsandplanes.com%2Fdepth%2F2018%2F05%2Fkanye-west-prestige-theory.

⁶⁰ West, besides, has flipped a sign of racial oppression before: in 2013, he wore the confederate flag on multiple occasions, also printing it on his merchandise. West compared this act to rappers saying the word "nigga" (the most used swearword on *Pablo*), a term that was once used by their oppressors but now has become a vindictive symbol of African-Americans' own identity; Jasmine Stone, "Kanye West Explains Why He Wore The Confederate Flag", *2 Oceans Vibe*, July 1, 2015, <http://www.2oceansvibe.com/2015/07/01/kanye-west-explains-why-he-wore-the-confederate-flag/>.

⁶¹ Kanye West (@kanyewest), "Joseph Beuys," Twitter, April 22, 2018, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/988137165207949312>; Kanye West (@kanyewest), picture of Joseph Beuys' *I Like America and America Likes Me* without text, Twitter, April 22, 2018, <https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/988140705221496833>.

⁶² Spencer Wolff, "The Kanye West Prestige Theory", *Pigeons & Planes*, May 3, 2018, <https://pigeonsandplanes.com/in-depth/2018/05/kanye-west-prestige-theory>.

⁶³ Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The 'Blackness of Blackness': A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 9, no. 4 (June 1983), 689.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 687.

jungle's hierarchy.⁶⁵ The monkey does so by figuratively telling a lion that an elephant has insulted him. The lion reads the monkey's comment literally, however, and heads off to confront the elephant, who tells him he has been tricked. The lion returns to the monkey to avenge himself, only to find himself signified upon again.⁶⁶ While this form of signifying is first and foremost a literary tradition, it has also made its way into the musical domain. Soul and jazz singers like Nat King Cole, Otis Redding, and Wilson Pickett have made recordings of such tales, while signifying also became a lyrical technique in original jazz songs of the early twentieth century and blues songs that elevate folk heroes and oftentimes consist of contradictory elements.⁶⁷ John P. Murphy, besides, has described jazz' tendency to change as a form of signifying.⁶⁸ Ingrid Monson has as well, connecting double consciousness and signifying by arguing that African-Americans' geminate position within society enables African-American musicians to use irony and parody.⁶⁹ This happens, Monson states, through "commenting through musical reference", a technique similar to what Henry Louis Gates Jr. described as *repetition with difference*. "At the most general level", Monson explains "Gates uses signifying to mean any transformation that employs an African-American mode of figurative expression."⁷⁰

West, however, does not refer to the others' work; he transforms his own. In changing *Pablo*, he gives a new meaning to the album format (a cliché of the musical infrastructure), one the (predominantly white) music industry does not (yet) understand. He referred to this misunderstanding on 'Saint Pablo', the closing track added to *Pablo* on June 14th, 2016: "The media said he's way out of control. (...) I'm not out of control, I'm just not in they control." West, thereby, shows how signifying can change Du Bois' double consciousness from a burden into what theorists like Robert Stepto, Houston Baker, and Henry Gates Jr. have described as "a powerful political and literary tool."⁷¹ West does not consider his double consciousness a part of the racist veil, but a way to break through it. This seems to become increasingly clear in West's endeavours, that share a certain candidness when it comes to West's mental health. The artwork of *Pablo*'s follow-up *ye*, which was

⁶⁵ Kermit E. Campbell, "The "Signifying Monkey" Revisited: Vernacular Discourse and African American Personal Narratives," *Journal of Advanced Composition* vol. 14, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 467.

⁶⁶ John P. Murphy, "Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence", *The Black Perspective in Music* vol. 18, no. 1-2 (1990): 18-9.

⁶⁷ Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The "Blackness of Blackness": A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 9, no. 4 (June 1983), 685-695; Kenneth Bearden, "Monkeying around: Welty's "Powerhouse", Blues-Jazz, and the Signifying Connection," *The Southern Literary Journal* vol. 31, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 65-79; Ayana Smith, "Blues, Criticism and the Signifying Trickster," *Popular Music* vol. 24, no. 2 (May 2005): 179-191.

⁶⁸ John P. Murphy, "Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence", *The Black Perspective in Music* vol. 18, no. 1-2 (1990).

⁶⁹ Ingrid Monson, "Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 20, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 292.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁷¹ William Lyne, "The Signifying Modernist: Ralph Ellison and the Limits of the Double Consciousness," *PMLA* vol. 107, no. 2 (March 1992): 319.

released in June, 2018, reads “I hate being Bi-Polar it’s awesome”. On the album, which lyrics West has once again updated after its initial release, West raps about this two-sidedness: “That’s my superpower, nigga, ain’t no disability.”

Conclusion

Indeed, his building on black connotations in the case of *The Life of Pablo* has, as we have seen, enabled Kanye West to trick the music industry. The critical reception of *Pablo*, which emphasized the messiness of the album’s rollout and music as a mistake on West’s part, exemplifies this. It did not appreciate this messiness, which, this thesis has argued, can be understood as the entire point of *Pablo*. It has, above all, failed to consider *Pablo* as setting an example of what the future of the album format may look like. West, then, showcases the truth of a statement by Howard Becker, who notes “differences that might provide the basis for some major innovation can go unremarked or (...) be interpreted as mistakes, slips, things to be cleaned up in a final version or random variations that make no difference.” By opposing this perspective, this thesis has also tried to update our understanding of the connection between musical infrastructure and the ontology of digitally distributed music. Thereby, it has taken seriously the critique of Georgina Born on earlier studies on this subject and has used Born’s concept of relayed creativity to follow the path paved by Lydia Goehr to a period Goehr herself had not gone yet. The first segment of this thesis has done so by showing how music media’s transformation of music into file form has allowed for the endless transformation of musical sound. In doing so, streaming services like Spotify, Tidal, and Apple Music have allowed many modern musicians to move beyond the notion of static musical works for which the end result matters more than the process. This thesis, in keeping with the work of Bernard Cerquiglini, takes the opposite perspective, arguing the process, made public by West but possibly similarly changeable for other musicians, can be the vital element of an artistic endeavour, and hopes to encourage the fondness of unstableness as proposed by the author, as well as more academic attention for this subject.

This thesis has tried to do so by studying what *The Life of Pablo*’s unstableness might mean. Firstly, by shifting the viewpoint from *how* West changed the album to *what* he changed about it, this thesis argued West employed the album’s musical changes to emphasize *Pablo*’s connection to the inherently improvisational gospel genre. West did so through accentuating the album’s vocals through volume and reverb. We have also seen he added a sample of Nina Simone’s vocals to album track ‘Famous’ in an attempt to highlight

the role social activism plays on *Pablo*. *Pablo*'s being changed as well as the changes could, this thesis stated then, be understood as West's way of consciously building on the connotations of improvisation and trickery that African-American art bears. In the more recent stages of his career, West seems to have employed what he has himself referred to as his being "Bi-Polar", a balancing act between black activism and conservative capitalism. In staging what can be understood as an elaborate, ironic performance, West's music has become the mirror to its creator. West, thereby, seems to have used a form of signifying to change what W.E.B. Du Bois would call his double consciousness (which forces West to look at himself through white eyes as well as his own black ones) as a "super power" instead of a "disability." West's endeavours have not only proven controversial: they have also proven how music and marketing may be matched, or even how commerce and creativity may become one and the same thing. As Ingrid Monson notes, "intentionality in any particular case is a moot issue." This thesis could never have fully disclosed whether West intended to be understood in the way that he has. In fact, his behaviour as well as his music has been understood in a multiplicity of ways. Nevertheless, this thesis has hopefully broadened as well as deepened one of the ways of understanding one of modern times' most elusive musicians.

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Appendix A – A timeline of *The Life of Pablo*

The following overview has been compiled by the author with the help of sources referenced above and The Timeline of Pablo.

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<http://www.thetimelineofpablo.com/>.

Date	What happened
January 1 st , 2015	Kanye West releases new single ‘Only One’, together with Paul McCartney. The track will not feature on the eventual album.
February 3 rd , 2015	West releases single ‘FourFiveSeconds’, together with McCartney and Rihanna. The track will not feature on the eventual album.
February 12 th , 2015	Kanye West premieres ‘Wolves’ at his first fashion show with Adidas, teasing it as the first track of his new album.
February 15 th , 2015	West performs ‘Wolves’ on Saturday Night Live’s 40 th Anniversary Special, alongside singer Sia and rapper Vic Mensa.
February 25 th , 2015	West performs new single ‘All Day’ at the BRIT Awards. The track will not feature on the eventual album.
March 1 st , 2015	Kanye West announces <i>So Help Me God</i> on Twitter.
March 16 th , 2015	West mentions the phrase <i>swish</i> on Twitter.
May 3 rd , 2015	West changes the album title from <i>So Help Me God</i> to <i>SWISH</i> , noting he might change it again.
September 16 th , 2015	West premieres album track ‘Fade’ at his second fashion show with Adidas.
December 13 th , 2015	West tweets he is finishing his album and next fashion collection.
December 31 st , 2015	A year after the release of ‘Only One’, West drops new album track ‘Facts’ on streaming platform Soundcloud.
January 8 th , 2016	West drops new album track ‘Real Friends’, as announced on his website. He also previews another album track, ‘No More Parties in LA’ featuring Kendrick Lamar. The same day, West changes the main loop on ‘Real Friends’.

January 9 th , 2016	West announces <i>SWISH</i> will be released on February 11 th , 2016.
January 18 th , 2016	West releases a full version of ‘No More Parties in LA’ on Soundcloud.
January 25 th , 2016	West tweets a ‘final’ tracklist for <i>SWISH</i> , noting it is “the best album of all time.”
January 26 th , 2016	West changes the album title from <i>SWISH</i> to <i>Waves</i> and updates the tracklist.
January 27 th , 2016	The tracklist for <i>Waves</i> is changed again.
February 1 st , 2016	West announces a third fashion show with Adidas. The show is to take place on the planned release date of February 11 th , at New York’s Madison Square Garden. West announces the show will be streamed in international cinemas.
February 9 th , 2016	West tweets a photo of him in the studio, finishing ‘TLOP’, which turns out to be an acronym for the new album title. West promises tickets to the sold out Madison Square Garden show to whoever can guess what the letters stand for.
February 11 th , 2016	West renames the album <i>The Life of Pablo</i> and releases an updated tracklist, as well as two album covers by Belgian visual artist Peter de Potter. One of the covers features the phrase ‘ <i>which one</i> ’, prompting discussion about which Pablo West is pointing towards.
February 11 th , 2016	West premieres <i>The Life of Pablo</i> in full as the soundtrack to his third fashion show with Adidas at New York’s Madison Square Garden. The album is not yet released digitally or physically though.
February 12 th , 2016	West drops album track ‘30 Hours’ on Soundcloud.
February 12 th , 2016	West adds a couple of tracks to the album, which he says is being mastered and will be out the same day.
February 13 th , 2016	The album is not released. West blames collaborator Chance The Rapper, who is still working on album track ‘Wolves’, for the delay.
February 14 th , 2016	West performs two <i>Pablo</i> songs live for the first time on Saturday Night Live. Kelly Price and Chance The Rapper feature on ‘Ultralight Beam’.
February 14 th , 2016	Following West’s Saturday Night Live performance, <i>Pablo</i> is released exclusively on JAY Z owned streaming service Tidal.

February 14 th , 2016	West announces plans to “fix” album track ‘Wolves’.
February 15 th , 2016	West declares <i>The Life of Pablo</i> will never be available on Tidal competitor Apple Music.
February 15 th , 2016	Chance The Rapper posts snippets of an alternative version of album track ‘Waves’ on his Snapchat, suggesting ‘Wolves’ will not be the only <i>Pablo</i> song to be updated.
February 23 rd , 2016	<i>Pablo</i> fails to chart, because Tidal has not reported its stream counts to Nielsen Music.
February 24 th , 2016	West announces he will release a new album in summer.
March 7 th , 2016	West declares he will never sell CDs again.
March 13 th , 2016	West updates <i>Pablo</i> track ‘Famous’. More reverb is added to Rihanna’s vocals. A Nina Simone sample is layered below Rihanna’s vocals as well. The line “she be Puerto Rican day parade waving” becomes “she in school to be a real estate agent.”
March 16 th , 2016	West updates ‘Wolves’, adding the SNL verses from Sia and Vic Mensa back onto the track. Frank Ocean’s part becomes a separate track, ‘Frank’s Track’.
March 29 th , 2016	Tidal reveals <i>Pablo</i> was streamed 250 million times in its first 10 days of release.
March 31 st , 2016	<i>Pablo</i> gets a major update and is released to Spotify and Apple Music.
June 14 th , 2016	Four months to the day of its first release, <i>Pablo</i> receives its final update until this point. West adds the previously leaked track ‘Saint Pablo’, which features British singer Sampha, to the album’s tail end.
August 25 th , 2016	West kicks off his Saint Pablo tour at Indianapolis’ Bankers Life Fieldhouse.
November 19 th , 2016	West leaves the stage at Sacramento’s Golden 1 Center after five songs and thirty minutes of political rambling and general ranting. It marks his last live show to this date.
November 21 st , 2016	West cancels the remaining 21 dates of his Saint Pablo tour.

Appendix B – All changes Kanye West made to *The Life of Pablo*

The following overviews is based on the author's listening experiences and a selection of online sources engaging with *The Life of Pablo*'s alteration process.

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1. ‘Ultralight Beam’

The parts with the choir are altered and hit a lot harder. All vocals except those sung by Chance The Rapper have a lot more reverb. There is an extra ad-lib by Chance The Rapper at the 2:44 mark (“no one can judge”), which stems from the original Saturday Night Live performance of the track.

2. ‘Father Stretch My Hands Pt. 1’

New background vocals appear toward the end of Kanye’s verse, when a choir sings “I wanna wake up with you”. The snare drum isn’t as loud as on the original release of the song.

3. ‘Pt. 2’

The production has been tweaked and fine-tuned, an amplified bass makes sure the instrumental feels more substantial. West’s vocals have become smoother.

4. ‘Famous’

A new Nina Simone sample has been added, which is layered under Rihanna’s vocals. Swizz Beatz’s vocals are turned up, while Rihanna’s vocals, to which more reverb is added, are turned down. The lyrics “She be Puerto Rican day parade waving” have been changed to “She in school to be a real estate agent.” There is a new rhythmic transition at the 1:49 mark.

5. ‘Feedback’

The production has been completely revamped: the beat sounds less warped and there is more of a bass presence. The song runs a few seconds shorter than the original version.

6. ‘Low Lights’

Some reverb is added, but other than that there are no noticeable changes.

7. ‘Highlights’

The song has been remixed, with Young Thug’s vocals sounding more polished. The backing beat is much more present.

8. 'Freestyle 4'

There is a new instrumental at the 0:45 mark, with noticeably more synths added to the mix.

9. 'I Love Kanye'

The song has become louder.

10. 'Waves'

Kanye re-recorded his first verse so it wouldn't be swallowed by the production. The synths are much more noticeable, while the snare drum has become less loud, making for a smoother and warmer sounding mix.

11. 'FML'

The vocals have become louder and have more reverb. Background vocals have been added to the second round of The Weeknd's hook.

12. 'Real Friends'

There are no audible changes compared to the first *Pablo* version. West erased distortion on the song's main loop before the album's initial release.

13. 'Wolves'

Verses by Vic Mensa and Sia, originally part of the Saturday Night Live performance of 'Wolves', have been added back onto the song. Frank Ocean's part on the song has become its own separate song, called 'Frank's Track'. The bass has become louder, and guitars have been added.

14. 'Frank's Track'

This outro used to be a part of 'Wolves' but has become a separate track.

15. 'Siiiiilver Surffffeeeeeer Intermission'

The title has changed from Silver Surfer to Siiiiiiiiilver Surffffeeeeeer Intermission.

16. '30 Hours'

The outro is a bit out-of-sync with the vocals. Besides, West pauses the beat to deliver a line about a Victoria's Secret fashion show performance a cappella.

17. 'No More Parties in LA'

The transition into 'Facts' has become smoother.

18. 'Facts (Charlie Heat Version)'

A piano line stemming from *Pablo*'s Madison Square Garden premiere has been added back onto the song. The synthesizers have been amplified.

19. 'Fade'

The production has been minimized, for instance by taking away the hi-hats, to make the track feel more like an outro. The song also does not cut off as abruptly as it used to anymore. Transitions between several different sections, however, are not as clean as on the initial album version. A bassline has been added back onto the song, making it feel more like the version that was originally performed at Yeezy Season 2.

20. 'Saint Pablo'

West added 'Saint Pablo', featuring British singer Sampha, to tail end of *The Life of Pablo*.