CESURA//ACCESO

#2

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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PAUL ABBOTT

QUEEN OF THE SHELL

QUEEN OF THE SHELL[a]

(3/10/2015)

I am *Queen of the Shell*, and it is 2:30am, Nautical time.

Before it can be improperly felt, this is a story,
and *Friday is my Sailing day*.

I put my clothes on slowly and methodically.

I've done this twice already. But they have power,
they can do anything.

They said to me they will take me by force. As well I'm not well.
My throat is very painful. And I had a fish and now my
throat has been bleeding a little bit some time.

"Let this be your Cry", they said:
we can't recognise you because we need
to see your face on our face.

My faces hissed to their face twice. They failed both times.
In 2014 they refused everything including my Steak.

In the quiet, teeth brushing and eating is ok thanks to occupa-
tional therapy. Although I swap cutlery around, and sometimes I
don't shower—*I can't*.

By the age of five I was in a very small room with two people on a
bunk bed, with a toilet in the room: regular schooling / an open
toilet—not in special schools or offline filtration systems. They
said *despite data limitations* they offer *a very impactful experience.*

This is apparently one of the secondary phases, and travelling to work, on the bus or tube, I have trouble standing. People don't know I might need a seat.

It took 1 hour, and they said they can't recognise me. They said maybe I was from Bhutan or from Stockport or from Miami or from Cochabamba or from YouTube; and "you came very early, so we can't recognise you".

I offer them a syllable and they gave me 90 days. I thought to myself *our pirate would give it back*. After around 30 days they arrest me and they take my Whitney Houston: unstable like the first time weather.

Those figures are from 1990.

They give me these two tablets every day.
No door, no curtain—nothing.

The impenetrable sphere of solitude.

I provided them with all the documents, but they didn't accept anything. Maybe you have got it wrong, I said. To enter you, to enter into you; osmosis. I am now here, and *Friday is our Sailing Day.*

QUEEN FRX2 (n)[‡]

(20/10/2015)

I am "Pure Joy"
I am "Sweet Enemy"
I am "You Are Right"
I am "Queen of the shell"

It is 2:30am, 6:30pm (yesterday), and 7.15pm.

[Rotate]

Before any *criminal feelings*, this is a prototype:
6 Timbers—angled, 3 Sizes, 1 Centre and a *haze of spores*
established for "contemporary London".

They told me to "lower my body, briefly, by bending one knee to the floor"—typically from the compound—to snap or tear the binding of my choice.

Usually *the buzzing* came from around the ankle, centred about 5 seconds later than the *deep rubble vernacular* under which a foot, or feet, fall.

It had to do with breathing; or not permitting the lungs to inhale the necessary volume of air, to get a body towards a line or a first step, or other bodies.

[Rotate]

Apparently it will be the *Sea Biscuit*, or *The Triangle Building* or *Mother*, that will be the division—but I'm not interested.

Obviously *it is the edges that kill*.

"We can *see* what you are saying, we can *hear* what you are doing ... and we *feel* you"—they said from all *256 seats* arranged evenly throughout a 300 square meter space, in rows of 8, columns of 4 and 2 banks.

But even after standing on the spot; or falling asleep in the shade; or crouching in the sun; or lifting one leg in the rain; or bending my arm to support my head—*they STILL don't recognise me*.

[play birdsong]

I always have to get there so early, and originally they told me there would only ever be one incision, that would not expand—but this is apparently one of the 3rd, 5th or 7th divergent phases—so this time I hid *much* further away from those bastard pipes.

To try to explain, I said to them that this is a simple volume, an informal and low-cost space or a cross-section of values whose names are *YES-and-NO*: 6 cross beams and one corner anticipates *23 visible sacks* deflecting a storm of eyes starting 1400mm away from the back wall.

I just wanted to wash socks on demolition rubble, two or three times, 'cause I love the warm water on my fingers, and I get a better sense of the sound. But after a prolonged hesitation, and some blood at the fingernails—I was advised to silence, collecting numb around safety spikes, leaving an aperture slightly ajar for the shoelace replacing velcro.

[stop birdsong]

Utilising resources that are readily available locally at little or no material cost—whether in the area of the abyss, the middle range, or the upper register: The feelings are so much from just one thing—it needs repeating, not speaking well.

QUEEN FRX4 (ooo)‡

Sometime in 1937, or any September 9th piled with overlapping body parts and timbers: we were not signed in, but natural, unmixed, unadulterated—and another of my chief excitements.

There is a simple reason for this. I don't feel so great, nor another soldier's anus.

It was then I was told—in a series of howls—that what follows *will be charged with a sense of the theatrical, or "action glazing" or the freedom of capitalism or loved ones.*

This time <u>we</u> have to be on time: ours is the first slice—from the upper vertex, proceeding with a throbbing gait through the mid-feelings toward the area of the abyss, creating a striking range of projects.

So here was proliferation. And expansion. But I replied that one day, along with the excitement of all organs, and tickling, strangers will meet each other in small bubbles created by re-generation schemes—and even in this suffering, frenzy, and torture—no provocateur will use words to calm the limbs of our music.

This caused them to fumble at the shutter, and immediately shake clean, and drip. What an abundance of parts! An invigorating collapse!

They gestured at something with noises and swung codes:
You are not-yet-here, but kneading the skin wrapping 'rses or head's. What's got hold of you?

"PE"

I sent a message to *Mother*, *T* and *all Them* via Prague and the pump-channel brilliance of William. It rendered through a haptic cipher some words:

I'm / doing / more / than / just / listening / to / you

It didn't matter. In response I discovered that in place of a left ankle I had been fitted a prosthetic haze, with a richer geometry and never any problems.

What concerned me was that same seeping sound: beneath this ankle, with my foot still in place—a boolean flower had been placed in my shoe that alternately became: EITHER sweetness, interiority, crystalline, chemical, in-reaction OR—flowing through, below identification, informing code, anticipating behaviour, remaining viscous in motion.

As they spun infection perched on my shoulder I had repeated a shell of procedures now at 4'5. At what was originally 1400-something to one side, I now saw encapsulating masks—the hand carved wooden frame illustrating an immaculate misunderstanding of human anatomy.

It seemed the only possible deviation to ~~upoopenie~~ was whispering through an aperture left slightly ajar two or three iterations in the past for the shoelace replacing velcro. Unfortunately, once opened was Korea with unmetered legs in rubber slippers, Rob, G or G's hum, and *Persistence* through each strung bead.

"Maybe you have?"

The sound cycled menacingly in echoes beating forward along those bastard pipes.
It is not your face.
Closer, and then—cutting deep into the neck:
Who has granted you this superiority?

Then they announced that *the brain was a convention, double wounded*—something different from what they'd ask us to do to keep within uniform, like the changes between the feeling for pauses or the janitor.

I thought that I could only be adding to all that suffering, so like honeycomb, against impulse, to make something actually come about while they were sleeping or dead or wearing glasses—I had affairs with both men and women, via a pattern recognition scam.

I knew it was *still the edges that kill*, but perhaps Marian or Rita's hysteria or Randolph's phobia was felt as poise or counter-poise only bulbous in relief to the envelopes of credit folding neat around *Rugged Husks* or *Ballast GTX* or *Kiffle Redux* or *Darius*.

Gone with the Universal Retreat.

From humours previously confined to all the moisture secreted by the ill fitting new me, all I had left was the unmaskable not-quite's—inflating and widening, just out of reach: or the torrent of their inner self being smashed to my mediocrity.

Softly and from a distance: *not repeated, not recognised*.

QNO[6]

(1/2/2016)

There is a simple reason for this.

Cutting it's way over a knee-bent memory of dirty compromise.

Sailing days are many times inert—we've done this—and there is only phobia or bulbous counter-poise.

In a series of howls, what we witness is the acid collapse of the ill fitting old torrent.

__F__, forming a collective of autonomies, "Trap Set" [Prototype]

or **collecting**
 another under-ache of seismic actions with invisible of body pulse and flesh below from the [T] and in front-long foot out of hands-reach punch or hum in brief lowest audition suggesting never *kick,*

or **stop**
 crisis or malleable-identity crudely first words in accountability brute undoing vertical split slice stab cut feathering all edges fire shard and shite attention or at least blister together immediately tick or infinite for belt open glide or marshal,

 Fast with stump energy-or suspended in patterns, the limbic, third point or diligent contact can be *improperly felt* in the immediate future.

 Ginger. (Left hand held up, Pause)

In a world that was War: the biochemical basis of human movement driven deep into brick dust, forming ***T*** and a family-alliance.

or **swell**
the crest upon which recognition tickles electro-chemical formations asking skin ~~swell~~ or gargle anticipation and soil between clear definition and desire strata reinforcement of the lowest clearest timeliest available magic without sides or centre and right to the right hand direct 35 degrees or thereabouts,

or **expanding**
the unavoidable surprise
the voice co-ordinate body subdivision and tears opening in dialogue with the rear fibres: a clear lean and often uneven availability most mechanically efficient supported by none or independent tasting or mean plateau floating melancholy futures,

or **laughter**
eager celebration now or bending inertia and heat threads pelvis heel versatile to acrid vulgar or sugary limp fusing geo-historic location with novelty dynamics on slapped jokes.

Hope.

(or One) (or anything) (or less) and Six

("not too much")

*Acting over a longer span of time, **P** in league with surfaces, probably 5*

or **slip**

    first up-neck smear alloy alchemy or ~~slip~~ drama obfuscation breathless seasonings being a cluster of possible transformations or hardness directed at material tapestry vacuums and exposed ribs under outstretched prostheses,

or **reversal**
or **lonely**

_____(Pause)

or **code**

    faulty placeholder credits imaginary synthesis or any inadmissible detritus not placed correctly in plastic bastards,

or **substitution**

    deep complex ancient or presence of solids or humidity refusing borrowed systems.

LARNE ABSE GOGARTY

CELLS IN ORGANISMS/ COGS IN MACHINES

1930S PROLETARIAN PERFORMANCE AND JAZZ

Born in 1902, the dancer Edith Segal grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in a fairly orthodox, working class Jewish family. She first took dance classes at the Henry Street Settlement House, which was founded by Lillian Wald in 1893 and inspired by Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago. Segal also joined dance classes at the Neighborhood Playhouse, which had been formed in 1915 by the philanthropist sisters Alice and Irene Lewisohn as one of the first "little theatres" in New York City mixing professional and amateur drama. At the Neighbourhood Playhouse, Segal studied interpretive dance in the manner of Isadora Duncan and attended classes with visiting teachers such the Anglo-Indian dancer Roshanara.[1] During the 1920s, Segal became radicalised by attending courses in socialism and dance at the Rand School of Social Sciences and a few years later, she gravitated towards the Workers' Party of America USA, an organisation that formed the legal front for the illegal and still underground Communist Party USA (CPUSA).[2]

In 1927, Segal joined the CPUSA, and her membership of the Party was marked not only by her political commitment but also by a belief that the Party was "a very positive influence... not only in my work, but I believe in the whole cultural movement in our country."[3] Part of the communist cultural movement in the US involved the formation of amateur proletarian dance groups. In

1   Ellen Graff, *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997, p.27.

2   Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, London: Macmillan & Co., 1960, p.174.

3   Edith Segal, "Music and dance and the Left in the 1930s", Interview with B. Lemisch, February 1981. Oral Histories of the American Left 1920-1980, Tamiment Library/ Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

1932, the Workers' Dance League was organised, which in 1935 became the New Dance League (hereafter WDL/NDL), signalling the CPUSA's adoption of Popular Front strategy.[4] Under the umbrella of the WDL/NDL, the Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union Dance Group (NTWIUDG) was organised by Segal and joined by women working in all aspects of the needle trades. In line with the ambitions of much communist culture during the period, Segal's work was at the forefront of the drive to use dance as a "weapon in the class struggle". As Ellen Graff notes "one purpose of such groups was to get workers moving politically and to prime them for actual strike action and picketing. Workers' classes made up scenarios that they danced in a kind of rehearsal for the real thing."[5]

A photograph of the NTWIUDG was reproduced in the Workers' Dance League Sparatkiade programme for 1933 (Fig. 1) and accompanied by a note written by Bella Hurst, secretary of the Union. The photograph shows a group of women flexing their muscles, caught mid-dance, smiling at the camera. In the text, Hurst affirmed the aims of Segal and the wider proletarian dance community as follows:

> At first we did not realise how much of our daily struggles could be utilized as thematic material for the dance, and how effective a medium it can be in helping workers to better understand and fight against their conditions. We approach our

4   The WDL/NDL served as an umbrella for numerous groups and was likely formed in response to the establishment of the Workers' Cultural Federation (WCF) in 1931. See Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement 1926-1956*, Yale University Press, 2002, pp.21-22 for details of the WCF.

5   Graff, op. cit., p.42.

theme work thru [sic] discussions and group improvisations, choosing our themes from our daily struggles.[6]

fig. 1

Segal confirmed Hurst's affirmation of collective organisation in a 1935 article in New Theatre, writing that "The subject matter is social and is the concern of all the participants in the dance [...] therefore not the private property of the director, or even of the group, but that of the audience and society."[7]

Ruth Allerhand, another proletarian dancer, echoed Hurst's and Segal's emphasis on collective dance as an aesthetic process towards communism and gave it an interesting twist. Allerhand stated that the experience of performing in a workers mass dance was one in which "The individual no longer feels that he [sic] is the whole, he now sees that he represents the substance. He is not

6   Bella Hurst, programme for the *Workers' Dance League Spartakiade*, June 4th 1933. Edith Segal papers (Box 4), Dance Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

7   Edith Segal, "Directing the New Dance", *New Theatre*, May 1935, p.23.

so much a link in a chain, a cog in a machine, as a very alive, very productive cell within a body."[8] Allerhand's contrasting of the organic with the mechanical in the mass dance is strikingly reminiscent of Siegfried Kracauer's famous 1926 description of the popular dance troupe the Tiller Girls in "The Mass Ornament":

> The bearer of the ornaments is the mass and not the people [Volk], for whenever the people form figures, the latter do not hover in mid-air but arise out of a community. A current of organic life surges from these communal groups [...] Only as parts of a mass, not as individuals who believe themselves to be formed from within, do people become fractions of a figure.[9]

Kracauer's description of the Tiller Girls presents a troubled version of the notion that ornament expresses organic community spirit. Unlike accounts of ornament by art historians such as Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin that Kracauer drew upon, as Frederic Schwartz explains, Kracauer "uses the mass ornament to posit the arrival of a post-hermeneutic age, employing the postulate of the unmediated interrelatedness of all aspects of a culture to show that it no longer obtained [...] since there is no more community [...] there is no more spirit in ornament."[10] Despite Kracauer's initial statement that a "current of organic life surges from these communal groups", by the end of his description, the Tiller Girls are positioned as a perversion of the organic qualities

8   Ruth Allerhand, "The Lay Dance" *New Theatre*, April 1935, p.26.

9   Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament" (1926) in Thomas Y. Levin (trans. and ed.), Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Cambridge, MA. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995, p.76.

10 Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, p.142.

of ornament that had been associated with notions of a holistic community.[11] With their mechanical movements analysed as Taylorist, the Tiller Girls represent absolute fragmentation and alienation, becoming ciphers for the technological innovations of high capitalism. Instead of organic community, they represent the living, breathing "social hieroglyphic" of the commodity form described by Karl Marx.[12]

The form of community espoused by Allerhand in describing the proletarian mass dance seems to stand in sharp contrast to Kracauer's take on the Tiller Girls, as well as the dominant, contemporaneous performance aesthetics of the Soviet Union and wider communist movement that sought to re-purpose Taylorism against its capitalist origins. Most notably, Proletkult poet and leading Soviet Taylorist, Alexei K. Gastev valorised these ideas as the founder and director of the Central Institute of Labour in Moscow in 1920. Within the early Soviet Union, the influence of Taylorism also crept into acting and dance with Vsevelod Meyerhold developing biomechanics as a form of acting that dovetailed with Gastev's analysis of how efficiency could be improved through studying the mechanics of labouring. As Rose Whyman explains, the appeal of Taylorism within the Soviet Union was founded on the notion that the "system" must come above individuals, thus forming an attempt to supplant the abstractions of capital with a technocratic system that could synchronise the

11   Kracauer, op. cit.

12   Karl Marx, trans. Ben Fowkes, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, p.164. As Mark Franko has emphasised, the Tiller Girl herself as a worker reliant on selling her labour-power was also *actually* commodified. See Mark Franko, *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement and Identity in the 1930s*, Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002, p.33.

proletariat.[13] In contrast, for Allerhand, Segal and Hurst, the proletarian mass dancer was emphatically not a Taylorist "link in a chain" or "a cog in a machine" but "a very alive, very productive cell within a body".[14] This pits the organic qualities of the proletarian mass dance—where as Graff notes, the movements would often "prime" the dancer-worker for strike action—against the mechanics of industrial capitalism.

The women in the dance groups discussed so far were primarily Jewish, first generation immigrants that had become involved in those groups through their employment within the garment industry. Production within that industry in the 1930s was characterised by waged factory labour as well as piecework at home, sweated labour, contracting and sub-contracting that was often seasonal and based on intense periods of labour to increase output.[15] Despite their location within an "industrial union" then, Allerhand and the members of the NTWIUDG would have likely encountered the supposedly "pre-capitalist" working conditions of piecework at home, meaning their invocation of an organic community through collective dancing can be read as an attempt to produce what Ernst Bloch might describe as a "revolutionary non-simultaneity" out of the "objective" non-simultaneous contradictions of their lives.

13   Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.223-226.

14   Allerhand, op. cit.

15   Jennifer Gugliemo, "Italian Women's Proletarian Feminism in the New York City Garment Trades, 1890s-1940s" in Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta (eds.) *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Women* Around the World, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, pp.253-254.

Ernst Bloch's theory of non-simultaneity (Ungleichzeitigkeit) was initially developed in 1932 to analyse the rise of German fascism, with its rhetoric of blood and soil, as well as to imagine its overthrow, posited as communist. Later published in his 1935 book, *Heritage of our Times*, Bloch sought to distinguish how non-simultaneous contradictions could be related to a genuinely revolutionary struggle, rather than consigned to the forms of nationalist nostalgia that characterised National Socialism. For Bloch, revolutionary non-simultaneity is crucially not anachronism or nostalgia, as he insists that any valorisation of the past over the present depends on the false notion that the past is dead. Instead, he points towards where congealed forms of earlier society, unsubsumed by capital and contradictory to our present, can conjure up "sentimentally or romantically, that wholeness and liveliness from which communism draws genuine material against alienation." [16] The project for making this argument was one tied to the belief that the left could work with the "objective" contradictions of capital in order to produce "subjective" experiences that might lead to drastically different political conclusions than National Socialism. Bloch came to this view through a critique of National Socialism, but also through seeing "communist language" as "totally contemporaneous and precisely orientated to the most advanced economy", aspects that he viewed as difficult for "non-synchronous" people to understand, meaning National Socialism had more successfully captured their "subjective" experience of non-simultaneous contradictions. [17]

Bloch's project was largely a utopian one, but here his writing

16 Ernst Bloch (trans. By Neville and Stephen Plaice), *Heritage of our Times* (1935) Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p.112.

17 Ibid., p.105.

seems to have taken a kind of practical, or strategic turn, where he wants to seriously consider how the left can adequately meet the forms of discourse mobilised by the right. This produces a series of problems, where we have to try and understand how much his proposal of a "revolutionary non-simultaneity" can truly exist as neither anachronistic nor nostalgic, and even more importantly, how this non-simultaneity could be operative for a working class that is not nationally or ethnically homogenous. As much as his statement that "Not all people exist in the same Now"[18] rings true, we must also countenance that not all people experience non-simultaneity as the manifestation of the same "remnants". In other words, a truly revolutionary non-simultaneity would not only need to be multi-temporal, but characterised by a heterogeneous geographic and cultural imaginary, capable of negating the racist and sexist nationalism that inheres within the populist—and fascist—conjuring of non-simultaneity as a singular, unifying heritage, or as the characteristic which consigns certain individuals as necessarily "left behind" with indentured labour, piecework, the prison system, etc.[19]

18 Ibid., p.97.
19 Much of my recent thoughts on this have been prompted by discussions on the left post-Brexit. In particular, I am thinking of arguments that seek to situate the vote to leave as primarily a cry against immiseration, with racism as a secondary symptom. This view fails to see how completely these categories are integrated. Whilst this argument is deployed in order to stress that the left should not adopt a "patronising" metropolitan attitude towards a working class it does not understand, this view is then implicitly only invested in finding ways to appeal to the *white* working class, a view which seems to inherit problems from the history of the left producing populist strategies as an attempt at recruitment. This is the problem inherent in Bloch's concept—how do you have a revolutionary non-simultaneity that is not invested in a necessarily exclusionary idea of national heritage?

In this light, we might consider how non-simultaneity specifically reverberates with the dynamics of racial formation in the United States. David Roediger's analysis of the construction of a "popular sense of whiteness" in America poses this as dependent on a nationally diverse white working class reaching consensus around the notion "that blackness could be made permanently to embody the pre-industrial past that they scorned and missed."[20] The ideological positioning of African-Americans as pre-industrial operated as a racist means to primitivise individuals and communities, and thereby legitimise their subjugation. Roediger poses this as partially emerging through a popular understanding of slave labour as something which wage labourers affirmatively identified themselves against—as he states—"The existence of slavery (and increasingly of open Northern campaigns to degrade free Blacks) gave working Americans both a wretched touchstone against which to measure their fears of un-freedom and a friendly reminder that they were by comparison not so badly off."[21] The formation of whiteness was dependent on racialising the negative connotations of not having internalised capitalist work discipline. Slang such as coon, buck and mose "went from describing particular kinds of whites who had not internalized capitalist work discipline and whose places in the new world of wage labor were problematic, to stereotyping Blacks."[22] However, the imagining of black people as having supposedly eluded industrial discipline was simultaneously configured as attractive, with popular entertainment such as minstrelsy offering whites an opportunity

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20 David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London and New York: Verso, 1999, p.97.

21 Ibid., p.49.

22 Ibid., p.100.

to act "wild" or irrational.[23]

The dynamics of how black people and women were consigned to pre-capitalist temporalities—whether through outmoded forms of work, or total exclusion from the capitalist workplace—had inevitably coalesced by the 1930s in the US. We can see this in Angela Davis' description of how black female domestic workers were employed via open markets that congregated in the Bronx, akin to a "modern version of slavery's auction block" throughout the 1930s and 1940s.[24] Notably, Davis hones in on a 1938 article in *The Nation* outlining the exploitation of these women, highlighting the headline of "Our Feudal Housewives" as descriptive of the overwhelmingly negative reality of the continued existence of supposedly "pre-capitalist" labour relations.[25] For women and African-Americans, their position within labour markets and society more broadly was marked by a pronounced non-simultaneity, meaning any invocation of the organic, or a lost heritage, would stand as a kind of homeopathic critique of their social positioning, an aspect we can also find in the case of Duke Ellington, who performed alongside Edith Segal and the African-American dancer Alison Burroughs at the Second Annual Inter-Racial Dance at the Rockland Palace in Harlem on Saturday March 22nd 1930.

At the Rockland Palace, Segal and Burroughs performed the dance *Black and White*, which they had premiered at the CPUSA organised International Women's Day event at Lincoln Center Plaza earlier that month. Burroughs' mother was the prominent Harlem communist organiser Williana Burroughs and her

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23 Ibid., p.109.

24 Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class,* New York: Vintage Books, 1983, p.95.

25 Davis, Op Cit. p.95

father Charles Burroughs had directed W.E.B. DuBois' *The Star of Ethiopia* (1913), a pageant which presented a history of black people from prehistoric times, through ancient Egypt, various African kingdoms, to slavery, and then closed by detailing the struggles and achievements of African-Americans. Prior to becoming involved in the proletarian dance scene, Burroughs had received her training at the prestigious Dalcroze dance institute in Geneva.[26] In rehearsal photographs of *Black and White*, Segal and Burroughs' naked bodies are positioned in front of a backdrop painted with factory machinery; a chimney billowing smoke, a cog encircling Segal and Burroughs' arms, which are raised at right angles (Fig. 2 and 3). In Segal's choreography for *Black and White* the bodies of the dancers—playing workers—were positioned against such machinery, again raising the relation of the mechanical to the organic.

Black and White begins with a black and a white worker heading into the factory, their movements inflected with drudgery. The structure of the dance involves a progression from "primitive methods of work" towards advanced, assembly line production. Throughout, the dance is accompanied by a regular drumbeat, symbolising the temporality of the factory. A rattle, or piano interrupts, signalling the authoritarian call of the "boss", and at other points, a "positive call", which stands for communism.[27] The dancers gesture towards one another, but always fall apart before they can come together, seeking to demonstrate Segal's view (and that dominant in the CPUSA) that racism emerged from the "prejudices instilled [...] by their common exploiter: the cap-

26   Susan Manning *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p.74.

27   Edith Segal, "Mayday Script" in *New Dance*, March 1935, p.19.

fig. 2

fig. 3

italist class."[28] As the "speed up" process of the belt begins, the white worker falls and the black worker also falls at the end of this phase. Both dancers then try to rise without looking at each

28 Ibid.

other and fall again before rising to their knees and gazing at each other's fists as if readying to strike each other. They pause, a "disruptive voice" (the rattle representing the boss again) rings out and they strike each other, fall again and look down at their own fists. The two workers return to the belt, repeat the movement based on assembly-line work, speeding up, and looking at their own hands "wonderingly". Then the rattle rings out a "positive" call (the call of communism), and they try to come together whilst looking at their own fists. They clasp hands, conveying a "feeling of tremendous difficulty in rising with clasped hands, from kneeling to standing position".[29] The sequence ends with a call to other workers, and each dancer walking diagonally with arms outstretched. As Segal wrote in *New Dance* "the enemy, the exploiting class, is not shown but felt through the quality of work movements, which are forced, inhuman, mechanized".[30] Critic Deborah Jowitt's review of the 1984 re-staging of *Black and White* with Serge St Juste and Gary Onsum at PS1 in New York City described how initially the two workers maintain separate kinespheres, coming together and merging at the point at which the "positive" call rings out (the voice of communism).[31]

The representation of black and white unity in *Black and White* is strongly tied with the CPUSA's efforts during the Third Period to gain more African-American members, through mobilising

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29 Score for *Black and White* in the Edith Segal papers (Box 2), Dance Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

30 Edith Segal, "Mayday Script", op. cit., p.19.

31 Deborah Jowitt, "Dance: Frontline", *Village Voice*, 10 July 1984, p.71. Kinesphere is a concept drawn from Rudolf Laban and simply means the sphere around the body, the periphery of which can be reached by the dancer extending their limbs. See Rudolf Laban, *Choreutics*, London: Macdonald and Evans, 1966, p.10.

that group as an oppressed national minority, a drive that was pushed by the Comintern and would ultimately gain pace during the Popular Front, after 1935. The first steps in 1928 involved the African-American communist Harry Haywood authoring the "Comintern Resolution on the Negro Question in the U.S.", which proposed self-determination for African-Americans across America's "black belt". Haywood was General Secretary for the Communist League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), and spent four and a half years studying in Moscow. However, the proposal of "black belt" secession was sharply criticised by many African-American communists, and the NAACP derided this resolution as another form of segregation.[32] Another recruitment tactic pursued by the CPUSA during the Third Period involved attempts to forcefully eradicate white chauvinism within their own ranks through trials in "workers courts". If found guilty of white chauvinism, CP members were expelled from the party and "sentenced" to actively join the fight against white supremacy if they wished to re-join. Although these trials were intended to publicly flush out racist members and thus improve the status of the CPUSA amongst African-Americans, Harvey Klehr argues that they made the Party seem like a "hotbed of fascists" due to the frequency of the trials.[33] This echoes comments by the Japanese communist Sen Katayama, who suggested that factionalism within the deeply sectarian Third Period was to blame for the frequent "criminal neglect" of African-American issues within the CPUSA during the late 1920s and early 1930s, where schisms between CPUSA figures, including James Cannon, William Z. Foster, Jay Lovestone and Benjamin Gitlow, frequently featured

32   Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*, New York: Basic Books Inc. 1984, pp.326-7.

33   Ibid., pp.327-9.

accusations of ignoring the "Negro question" from all sides.[34] From 1930 onwards however, the numbers of African-Americans in and around the CPUSA increased significantly, and the performance of *Black and White* at the Interracial Ball is exemplary of the party's significant work against white supremacy within an extraordinarily racist climate.[35] *Black and White* should be set within this context and understood as an index of CPUSA debates about race and labour. Yet, in its social character and setting within the Interracial Ball, it exceeded the orthodoxy that Party disputes sought to enforce.

The performance at the Rockland Palace Interracial Dance was a part of an evening of entertainment chaired by Joseph Brodsky of the International Labor Defence. William Z. Foster, one of the three-person secretariat of the CPUSA in 1930, gave a speech, as did Herbert Newton, a prominent African-American organiser and staff member of the Harlem Communist paper, *The Liberator*. However, the main portion of the night's entertainment and surely the biggest draw was the performance by Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. On the closing of their set, Segal played the piano as the 1600 attendees joined in a recital of *The Interna-*

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34 For a comprehensive overview of how the CPUSA responded to the "negro question" during the Third Period see Jacob Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism 1919-1929*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014, pp.253-4.

35 By 1931, a quarter of the Party members in Chicago were African-American. However, this growth was not restricted to urban areas as Robin Kelley's study of Alabama sharecroppers during the Depression aptly demonstrates. See Zumoff, p.362 and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990. Another definitive turning point for the position of African-Americans within the party came with James Ford running as Vice President in the presidential campaigns of 1932, 1936 and 1940.

tionale. The evening's entertainment continued with Segal and Burroughs' performance of *Black and White* and concluded with speeches from Brodsky, Foster and Newton.[36]

In terms of Duke Ellington's role and the cultural position of jazz during this period, it is worth noting that during the early years of the 1930s, big band jazz remained a mostly black activity. As Lewis Erenberg writes, it was only later in the 1930s that jazz would move from the margins to the centre of American popular culture, a development associated with the whitening of the genre though prominent swing players and bandleaders such as Benny Goodman and Paul Whiteman.[37] Ellington himself described this process in 1939, noting prominent events such as Goodman's performance with the Budapest String Quartet. While he does not disparage individual musicians, he clarifies that their activities do not concern him, or his group "personally". Instead, he explains that "Our music is always intended to be definitely and purely racial. We try to complete a cycle."[38] As Ellington described of *Tone Parallel to Harlem*, this cycle involved weaving "a musical thread which runs parallel to the history of the American Negro."[39]

This idea of a cycle is grounded in the possibilities of reconstruct-

36   Manning, op. cit., p.72 and Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1983, p.36.

37   Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

38   Ellington, "On Swing and its Critics", Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. p.135.

39   Helen Oakley (Dance) in *Downbeat* (1943). Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.156.

ing an African tradition of musical forms such as call and response, improvisation, and polyrhythm, a quest that like Dubois' *The Star of Ethiopia*, was embedded in the necessity of invoking a history that predated slavery—or to use a Blochian phrase, on liberating "the still possible future" from the past. For Ellington, adherence to these musical forms contributed to a dynamic collaboration between bandleader and players, and as Ellington's trumpeter Cootie Williams noted, "everyone in the band would pitch in and help write songs", a statement which relates to Segal's affirmation of collective organisation within the NTWI-UDG.[40] The organicism of Ellington's sound and practice within the band ("completing a cycle") was grounded in appeals to the universal; as he described in a 1930 interview, the same year as his performance at the Interracial Ball, "I am not playing jazz. I am trying to play the natural feelings of a people."[41]

Fred Moten describes the importance of Ellington's "people" as denoting an eruptive, lyrical universalism:

> This influence of my people to which Ellington refers, in what it hopes for (a genuinely new universal) and in what it disrupts (that which has heretofore been given as the universal) is the sound of love. But this drive of and for "my people"—who are, for Ellington and according to Ellington, "the people"—is complicated; it continually erupts out of its own categorization... .[42]

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40   Erenberg, op. cit. p.9.

41   Florence Zunser interview with Duke Ellington in the *New York Evening Graphic*, 1930. Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.45

42   Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p.26.

As Moten describes, the eruptive quality within Ellington can be understood as the disruption of a dominant universal. The emphasis Moten places on the relationship between the universal and the "sound of love" moves beyond Ellington's own description of his music as being a "real reflector" of the nation's feelings, and towards the (re)production of feeling—a new kind of "universal"—that I think is also captured in Segal's hopes that in *Black and White* "the enemy, the exploiting class, is not shown but felt."[43] Thinking about the place of this emphasis on feeling at the Interracial Ball, we could also consider Ellington's 1930 description of the effect his Orchestra had, saying that "You only have to watch a dance floor full of dancing couples to realize that music is the most vital thing in swaying the emotions of a multitude."[44] However, rather than the relationship between music and dance standing solely as emotional manipulation, Ellington would stress just a year later that "When we dance it is not a mere diversion or social accomplishment".[45]

Ellington's performance and Segal and Burroughs' *Black and White* as both comprised by appeals to universalism and "natural feeling" must be read in relation to the other aspects of the Interracial Ball. The fact Segal and Burroughs performed after Duke Ellington and the singing of the Internationale but crucially before the political speeches, means their performance of conflict and reconciliation set within the space of production (the factory) acted as the meeting point between the social and the political during the process of the evening, or between the "totally syn-

43 Segal, "Mayday Script", p.19

44 Zunser interview with Ellington, p.45.

45 Duke Ellington, "The Duke Steps Out", *Rhythm*, 1931. Republished in Mark Tucker, (ed.) *The Duke Ellington Reader*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

chronous" "language of communism" and the non-synchronous contradictions which had surely led many of the dancers and musicians to the ball. The experience of singing the Internationale and witnessing Segal and Burroughs dance—after dancing to Duke Ellington (never a "mere diversion")—laid the ground for the speeches and *Black and White* thus served as a kind of mediating point between the heterodox, eruptive politics of the social, and the orthodoxy of Party politics.

Vitally, Segal and Burroughs' dance at the Interracial Ball transplanted the lived politics of the interracial dance back into the industrial workplace, declaring that black and white bodies could only dance together against their "forced, inhuman, mechanized" work once they stood together, opposed to capital. In order to illustrate this, the body was figured in *Black and White* as against industrial machinery and posited as espousing a similar form of organic universalism that had been conjured earlier in the evening by Ellington's orchestra. In the rehearsal photographs for *Black and White*, Burroughs and Segal's nude bodies are intertwined in poses that mimic mechanised labour. The softness of their bodies clashes with the factory painted on the backdrop, posing them, and all the dancers at the Rockland Palace as not links in chains, or cogs in machinery, but rather akin to Allerhand's description of the proletarian dancer as "a very alive, very productive cell within a body". That their bodies were female and black and white also inflects this dance of breaking away from machinery with anti-industrial sentiment alongside its obviously anti-capitalist overtures. Although the romantic quality of these connotations exist as the flipside to a negative reality, I believe *Black and White* within the Rockland Palace dance, coupled with Ellington's "sound of love", gestures towards an excessive kind of non-simultaneity from which we can draw genuine material against alienation.

KIM O'NEILL

PORPOISE ESCAPE

<u>Characters</u>

AC	Audience (Chorus)
x	Performer 1
b	Performer 2
b (internal voice)	Performer 2
__|	Location

*A PORPOISE IS TRAINED TO ACCEPT
THE SOUND OF THE TRAINERS WHISTLE
AS A SECONDARY REINFORCEMENT.*

*SHE HAS LEARNED SOME
SIMPLE RULES WHICH
RELATE HER ACTIONS, TO THE
WHISTLE, THE EXHIBITION
TANK, AND THE TRAINER IN A
PATTERN—A CONTEXTUAL
STRUCTURE, A SET OF RULES
FOR HOW TO PUT THE
INFORMATION TOGETHER.*

*THE TRAINER SHIFTS THE PATTERN IN EACH
PERFORMANCE UNTIL THE PORPOISE LEARNED
TO DEAL WITH THE CONTEXT OF CONTEXTS.*

AC* enters __|, where *x* and *b* are waiting.

__| is softly lit and providing drinks,
encourages *AC** to sit in the un-
occupied space. *AC** looks.

x and *b* are antithetical; *x* commanding
physical framework, manuevering
freely, *b* a stiff leaden frame.

With lithe movement *x* cuts across the space,
b exits to the back room and presses play.
Large projected versions of *x* and *b*
appear on screens around __| who
is flooded with sound; dance music
intermingled with *x* and *b*'s voices.

AC* looks, shuffles, weighs up __|;
(live bodies, projected bodies, voices,
beats, club lighting, domestic social
*space tangled with prop*s).

b sits down; shoulders rounded, hands
bound to thighs, legs tightly coiled. A body
trying to eat itself.

> *AC*(falsetto harmony)*
> Hold me

b pretends to read. Discomposure. *x*
interacts with __| with a generous
ambivalence to *AC**.

---

b (internal)
Freeze.

Been framed.

*Need something
I can't give.*

*Being here is my
promise to give
what's needed.*

*Expecting what
I don't
possess.*

But they have
no
expectations?

b sits with back to *AC*.

__| Shifts tempo, figures on the big
screen invite *AC* into a fiction.

x joins **b** at the table, **b** passes reading material
moving authentically, responding fully to **x**.

x's easy presence envelopes
b, this is a catalyst for
movement.

<div align="center">

b
I'm getting a drink.

</div>

b jerks heavy limbed to the bar.
AC is divided (*confused, attentive,
annoyed, over-stimulated, dulled,
amused, excluded*).

x addresses *AC* with intense drama.

<div align="center">

AC (*laughing*)
Keep on telling me baby.

</div>

x moves to the foreground ignoring
AC and dismantles a chair.

*ONE WRIST IS SHACKLED TO THE CENTRE
THEN THE OTHER CAN BE DONE BY THE
SPECTATOR. ALTHOUGH ESCAPE SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE, HERE'S HOW...........*[2]

<div align="right">

b (internal)

*Burning
wait,
should move,
have to move.*

*Can't move,
moving
betrays me.*

*I've betrayed
myself.
Complicit now.*

*Pulped
weakness.*

*Can only end in
trouble.*

Not long now.

</div>
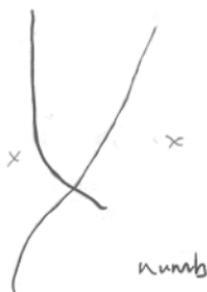
AC patient; bodies slump, adjust-
ing arms folded to unarmed. *x* sits
facing *AC* and fixes a drink.

> *AC* (whispers)
> Dogged, persistant, pursuit
> of what you know.
> Test me, I'll wait.

AC casually watches *x*, *x* casually
watches own image project-
ed on the big screen.

__| shifts tempo, lights dim and switch.
A clave rhythm accents the faster beats.

b wades through the floor, picks up
scissors and carefully trims the edges of
the space. Head bent in a crouched
position, *b* slides uncomforta-
bly around the outskirts.

> *AC*
> Significant action.
> There's no cop in my head.

AC loses members but scattered
amusement is still maintained.

---

b (internal)

*Desire.
Committed. To.
Task   = ...*

*You're no
performer.*

*Half-way through.
Inauthentic,
no feeling to get out.
All wrong.
Get out. Shift.*

No looking up.

*Look up it's the only
way to take control.
Focus on the
movement.*

They can't get in.

*Hatred. Nausea.
Love, they love me.
Pathetic. You're
Generous. With
what? They
want care, they
don't care!
Who cares!
No minds
Not one.
Not me.
Stop feeli....*

b joins *x* at the bar, __| exudes safety. Sound synchronises with image on screen, *x* and *b*'s projected selves interact jovially.

From the bar, *b* looks around __| for the first time, facing *AC*. Eye contact.

<div align="center">

AC (harmony)
Control me.

</div>

b ducks behind the bar and rolls up the edge trimmings.

<div align="center">

x
Are you hiding down there?
b
No, tidying up.

</div>

__| holds steady, presenting as planned.

<div align="center">

AC
Shame, shame, shame, shame, shame, shame, shame on you, if you can't...

</div>

x energised by eyeballs, folds away props.
b inspired, makes resolute steps
back to a seat at the table.

<div align="center">

__|
Bound figure trying to network thought.

</div>

b gains the approval of *x* and __| by ignoring *AC*.

AS I SANK TO THE BOTTOM I FOUND MYSELF MIRED IN BLACK OOZING MUD WHICH MADE QUICK WORK CLOGGING THE LEG IRONS, MAKING THEM NEARLY [2]

<div align="center">

b (internal)
Limb relief.

Pulsing neck tickles.

Funny.

x is worried—"you're crumbling". Don't show it. Spoiling if I do and If I don't. Get up.

__| said "no rules". I'm not playing right. __| "there's no right".

Tingling. Burning wait. Sludge arms with burning excitement Can't turn pages. Eyes to text, texts bounce, no way to read. Just read to relax.

Shut down cop in my head.

Desire. Committed. To. Task = Move so they don't care. I don't care.

</div>
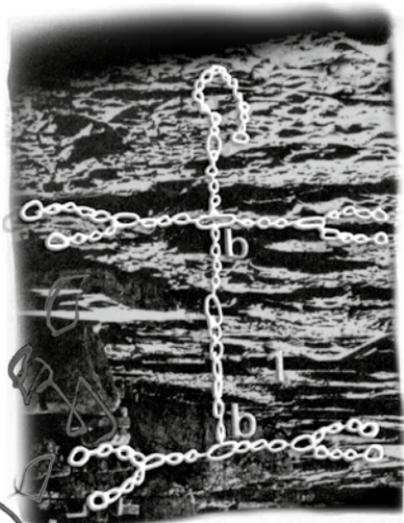
MERELY TURNS WRISTS
SHARPLY, BOTTOM OUTWARDS.
THEN SHAKES WITH A JERKY
MOVEMENT. THIS WILL RELEASE.[2]

AC (soft hum)
Numb,   Wants,   Numb,
Wants,   Numb,   Wants,

—|
Displaced subjectivities.
Dull tempo. Screening slow
dancing amateurs.

x emerges from the back room with
precision, *AC* hooked on. *b* learns
from *x*'s positions and uncoils legs.

—|
Slow fade. Arpeggio scales.
Screening dancer cross-faded
with cleaner.

b walks to the bar to refill drink.
Purposefully holding floor space.

b rejoins *x* at table, pointing at incredu-
lous news they laugh. *AC* shifts focus
between live and projected bodies.

AC (soft hum)
Numb,   Wants,   Numb,
Wants,   Numb,

—|
Desire has its own logic of
gambling.

b (internal)

*I don't know
what they want.
Mentally
unmodel.*

__| *demands:
Desire.
Committed.
To. Task.*
.
.
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.   47
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*TWO ASPECTS OF THE GENESIS OF A
TRANSCONTEXTUAL SYNDROME: FIRST,
THAT SEVERE PAIN AND MALADJUSTMENT
CAN BE INDUCED BY PUTTING A MAMMAL
IN THE WRONG REGARDING THE RULES FOR
MAKING SENSE OF AN IMPORTANT
RELATIONSHIP TO ANOTHER MAMMAL.*
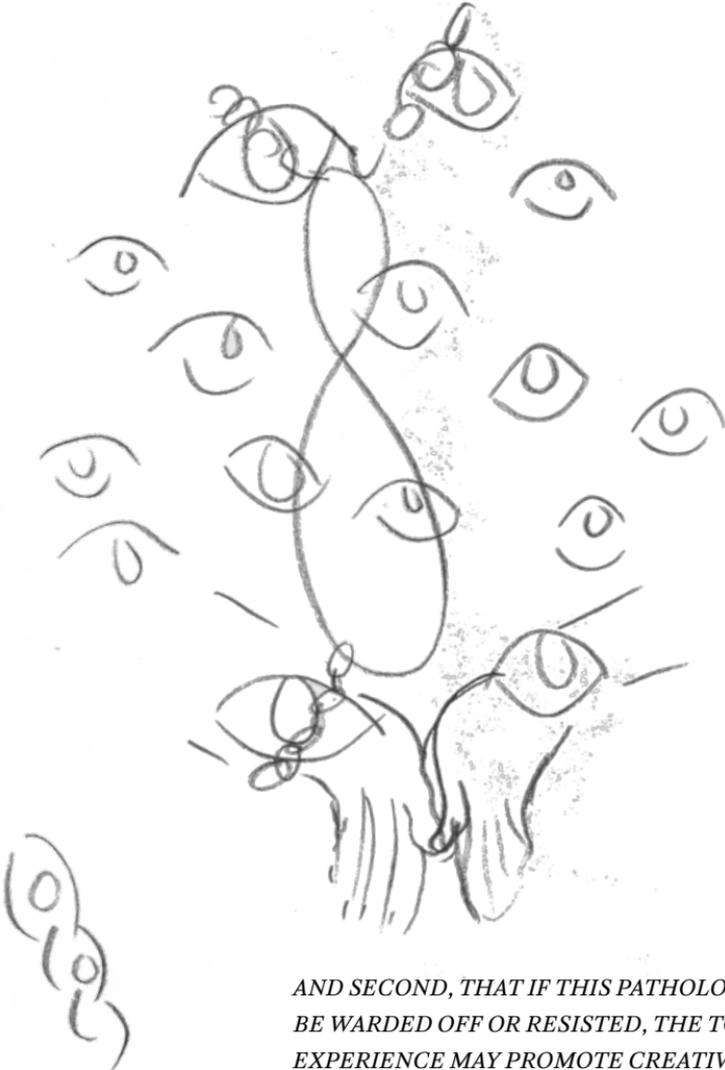
*AND SECOND, THAT IF THIS PATHOLOGY CAN
BE WARDED OFF OR RESISTED, THE TOTAL
EXPERIENCE MAY PROMOTE CREATIVITY.[1]*

b moves spontaneously out of frame.   *b (internal)*
                                                                .
                                                                .
                                                                .
Leading by example *x* begins some   *Escape*
detailed bar maintenance.

                        —|
                 Projections end.
               Soundtrack drifts. End.
                  Lights remain.

AC stirring, uncertainty.
x reassuringly indicates the end.

                   AC (clapping)

                        —|
                 Empty. Take down.

ALL THIS HAD HAPPENED IN THE FREE NATURAL
HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PORPOISE, TRAINER AND AUDIENCE.[1]

1   Gregory Bateson, *Double bind, 1969*, from *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*,
    University of Chicago Press, London, 1972.
2   *Escapes; secret workings for handcuffs, ropes, chains, padlocks, strait jackets, boxes,*
    *bags, wrist-stocks, underwater, etc.*Supreme Magic Publications, Devon, 1979.

DANNY HAYWARD

INGROWN EXPRESSIONISM

In our present phase of the history of aesthetics, which some of our most prominently advertised theorists have declared to be effectively "post-capitalist", many actions cost less to perform than ever. Contemporary cultural production both inside and out of cultural-industrial contexts is painfully overdetermined by the abundance of available means. Text and musical elements that once could only be produced by means of laborious training can now be sampled or cut and pasted without significant expenditure of effort. Bodies of work that previously might have seemed unapproachably arcane can now be glossed instantly by means of search commands. The resources of expressive art have never been cheaper, the productivity of the individual expressive artist has never been higher, the accomplishment of a density of surface effects in contemporary artworks has never been easier to bring about.[1]

These and similar visionary proclamations cost very little to say and tell us more or less nothing about the expressive situation of the individual contemporary artist. This omission can be justified on several grounds: firstly because, as John Cage wrote in 1992, the "artist's proper behaViour/SElf-/expRession" should "be Put aside" for a change; or because, as Cage went on to say in the

1   * Thanks to C.C., L.A.G. and M.V. for comments and criticisms. A number of these bland truisms can be found, for example, here: http://dismagazine.com/blog/81659/discreet-call-for-participants/ "The Big Dicdata—Coming Data-regimes: Currently a competition is taking place between secret service agencies and transnational corporations for the control of the main resource of our time: data. New forms of data-driven and automatized governments are arising. DISCREET promotes projects to better understand this automated future, providing improbable models and algorithmic alternatives in order to disrupt this seemingly irreversible development towards increased welfare". The last word here is either a disgrace or a disgraceful parapraxis.

same lecture, "we hAve extended/the centRal nervous/ sysTem/ electrOnics   our technology/makes the reVolution for us"; or more probably for some combination of the two positions, for instance because excessive preoccupation with "the self" tends to distract artists from the major "revolutionary" developments of our period, in ICT or Computational Finance or the microprocessor industry or whatever.[2] The position is self-evidently a reflex response to the decline of socialist politics and mounts a directly political argument about how that decline may be reversed. Its advocates can concede that recent "access-driven"[3] revolutions in the means of circulating and reproducing informational goods, which according to the theoreticians of post-capitalism are now "corroding the market's ability to form prices correctly",[4] are inseparable from, and in some cases are straightforwardly identical with, "access-driven" revolutions in the categorisation and treatment of what are deemed to be dysfunctional bodies and inoperative minds. And they can blandly accept that the people who celebrate these developments most overtly are not typically the ones who find themselves the beneficiaries of freely circulated imperatives from their state overseers, or tracked ceaselessly for almost no cost by their parole officers, or pressed under the thumb of a scientific diagnostic category whose definition emerges from the International Statistical Classification of

2   John Cage, "Overpopulation and Art", in *Composed in America*, edited by Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junckermann, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.36.

3   Around the world, a new wave of peer-to-peer, access-driven businesses is shaking up established categories'. PricewaterhouseCoopers, "The Sharing Economy", https://www.pwc.com/us/en/technology/publications/assets/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-the-sharing-economy.pdf

4   Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. xv.

Diseases.[5] They can agree that all of these facts are obvious and still hold that they are nevertheless of vanishingly minor political significance, or even that excessive concern with them is directly inimical to radical politics, insofar as it justifies and entrenches a reactive and paralysing aversion to the technical developments that are the true historical basis for any meaningful new anti-capitalism.

New theorists of anti-capitalist rationalism might also claim that they have progressed beyond the Cagean claim that "our technology/makes the reVolution for us". Their reason for doing so would be straightforward. Their work is not avowedly quietist but, on the contrary, mounts a concerted attack on the absence of "strategic" political thinking on the revolutionary left. For the writers who represent this tendency, the necessity of abandoning endless in-group subcultural left squabbling so as to take a place at the great roundtable of modern managerial scientific discourse has been, from its earliest articulation, a central motif. (And for the cultural improvers looking to warrant their truancy from the

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5   The argument could also be made in slightly different terms. Since the rise
     in capitalist technical productivity has led to the conversion of the dominant
     psychology into a quantitative-technical discipline, the conviction that "subjective"
     expression of lived trauma might be opposed to bourgeois "forms" has also
     significantly declined in prevalence. Trauma is now itself a highly formalised
     medical category, theoretically integrated in a neurology of chemical pathways
     and socially controlled by means of a number of behavioural disciplines of varying
     complexity and intrusiveness. Aesthetic categories that were more or less suitable
     for an earlier stage of bourgeois social relations were true only because of the
     relative rudimentariness of the forces of production to which they corresponded. As
     the following will argue, in much recent "expressive" poetic writing this fact makes
     itself known intuitively and in practice.

sub-culture, the motif has proved breathtakingly congenial).[6] But the cybernetic automatism that Cage was at least candid enough to avow openly is reproduced in this newer body of work in modified form, by means of a kind of studiously over-conceptualised indifference to the actual psychic life of the agents of any possible revolutionary political transformation. Theoretical accounts of the hegemonic "interpellation" of the subject by a radical modernist programme, in which the life of the person who is slated to be interpellated is never expressively inhabited,[7] or of conceptual "infection" or "contamination",[8] or of the mysterious "hyperstition" of ideas strenuously imagineered by left-futurists,[9] and obligingly retweeted by left-internet users, do not cancel out this indifference but merely raise it up to a higher power, so that every gesture towards the realisation of a given political "strategy" only fortifies at the level of political theory a pre-existing disinclination. The disinclination is as rationalist as any other obsessive compulsive disorder and as new as "middle-class" subjectivity itself; and phobic personalities as diverse of Sigmund Freud's Ratman and the Parliamentary Labour Party's Ramsey MacDonald have provided it with a long and distinguished cultural history. Its manifest aesthetic content is a fundamental theoretical aversion to entering into, and to trying to match in expressive intensity, the joys and the wounds of those whose lives are actually fucked up by

6   See e.g. Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future: Folk Politics and the Left*, London: Verso, 2015, p.11.

7   Ibid., p. 170ff.

8   See: http://www.furtherfield.org/features/interviews/revisiting-future-laboria-cuboniks-conversation

9   *Inventing the Future*, pp.71–5. A clearer account of "hyperstition" is presented by the Laboria Cuboniks group, in the interview cited in the last note. Elsewhere the same group present an accurate if cautious criticism of the concept: http://dismagazine.com/blog/81953/laboria-cuboniks-in-conversation/

capital, which is to say, in other words, that it is an indifference to the living process of politics in intense and confusing human communicative exchange *as this is mediated* by the historical conditions of everyday personal experience. It is also an indifference to the process by which political ideas get absorbed, challenged, misunderstood, broken down and spat back out into new and compromised environments of living conflict; to practical disagreement, misrecognition, wounded pride, escalation in struggle, the collective need in the breach for violent hyperbole and theoretical distortion; and so in short to the whole dynamic of social transformation that turns a "gradualist" struggle into a wild and transformative revolutionary one.

In other words, anti-expressive rationalism is the flip-side of political gradualism. Its superordination of the technical platform to the subject who makes use of or who is abused by it, is the continuation by other means of the traditional social democratic privileging of the speaker's platform to the street action or the picket line. Its political theory is in fact the overconceptualisation of an anti-politics in which all processes of transformation through subjective struggle are fastidiously nit-picked into oblivion, even to the extent that its perspective falls somehow staggeringly *behind* that of the UK civil service bureaucrat who, lately commenting on developments in post-2010 welfare administration, declares that it is the greatest achievement of contemporary state rationality that it has suppressed the "artificial break[s]" between different kinds of (marginal) political subject. And it is specifically "overconceptualised", rather than simply ideological or mystificatory, because it makes subjective life harder to get a hold of *to the measure of its degree of conceptual complexity*. (The point here is not that the theory should be more plain-talking but that the plain-talking aversion that the theory transforms is stabilised in that process and not counteracted. In the same way, we often

use the category "overcompensation" not in order to suggest a degree of compensation that would be more desirable, but rather to show how the energies that are expended in the process of compensation serve to cement more fundamentally into subjective life a tic or symptom that should not be "compensated for" at all.[10] In other words, the more intensely and strenuously we defend ourselves, the less energy we have left with which to overcome the circumstances that first *inclined us* to self-defence).

Anti-expressive political rationalists fall behind the perspective of the average civil service bureaucrat because they accept that divisions between people are now unalterable and have to be lived with. In this sense they can be contrasted with another category of person who, according to the terms of anti-expressive rationalism, are unlikely to have any significant influence on their social environment, or, indeed, even to exist. This is the class of

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10   The theoretical contribution belongs to Sir Robert Devereux, incidentally a gross idiot, who in a report on the latest developments of welfare-claimant management asserts that the main benefit of the new technical transformations in British welfare management is that they "remove that entirely artificial break between being in work and being out of work. Those two things together mean that the conversations that work coaches can now have are quite different from the ones we previously used to have. Previously it was, 'You're out of work; you need to go to work; goodbye.' Now they are working with them continually". When Devereux says that the "breaks" between different categories of person are "artificial", he articulates a basic prejudice of the state itself, according to which any given population ought naturally to present itself as one single continuous and indifferently manageable lump. The force of this prejudice prevents him from recognising the real state of affairs, which is that the removal of material distinctions in the accessibility to the state of different categories of person is itself a work of the highest technological artifice. See https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/work-and-pensions/160511%20DWP.pdf

expressive political rationalists. By this category I mean to specify, at first in quite vague terms, anyone committed to using modern technical rationality, and in particular the categories and data-forms of bourgeois social knowledge, to extend and enhance their own capacities of moving or insightful or argumentative political action. Artists who come under this heading are not indifferent to but are obsessed with giving shape to the dynamics of decline, tension and escalation in subjective political life.[11] They do not fall behind but *get ahead* of the perspective of modernising state oppression, by expending all of their creative energy in an alternately rancorous and tender effort to give voice to life shut up and reconfigured by advanced clinical and penal procedures. They convert into the principal substance of their work the complex, shifting and theoretically resistant tectonic movements and breakthroughs in which hurt life wrenches itself in and out of living immediacy, overleaping the "breaks" that armchair theorists declare to be insuperable and refusing implacably all forms of technical automatism, both of the quaint Cagean cybernetic variety and its more sophisticated rehabilitation as realistic, over-conceptualised indifference to all processes of political self-activity. Finally they take confidence from the fact that it requires every bit as much draining mental effort to persuade oneself against all available evidence that the boundaries that inhibit political movement across lines of social division are a priori resistant to any transgression, as it does to undertake the act of transgression itself.[12] The rest of this essay is dedicated to some writing that can

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11 I tried to give an account of the kind of expressive art that *could not* be defined in these terms in an essay that can be downloaded here: http://de-arrest.me/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/the-subjective-aesthetics-of-the-absolutely_redundant.pdf

12 Apodictically: "Human experience loses its primacy in the construction of meaning,

be described in these terms. Here is a first approximation to how it might sound:

> I fell back down and rolled over and stared hard at the room and its window, but over the tall swaying grasses my soft mouth, I caressed my long red hair and touched my lips with my lips and a seam from the bottom of my foot to the top of my head began to gently part, releasing a gentle humming silver light, and with a pair of fingers I caught the edge of the light and gently tugged, and it came sliding out, and I held it there in my fingers, I held her there, and I saw my body lying in the grass, and I held the silver light in my hands as her mouth parted, as she lay there in the grass her mouth parted, and with a sigh she breathed in, and the silver light passed into her body, and she lay there, perfect and sated. I have Gender Dysphoria.[13]

This is the conclusion of a recent poem by the poet and musician Verity Spott. It is only the final passage of the text, which up until this point has proceeded through the narrative coordination of much shorter sentences, some of which consist only of lists of diagnostic data: "I found myself reciting: Melancholia, Asperger's Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Gender Dysphoria, Prader Willi's Syndrome, Dyspraxia, Slovenliness, Hayfever, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Dyslexia & Dyscalculia, Anorexia". The sudden leap outwards into the dizzying paratactic imbrications of this final outcry is prepared for by a counteracting

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politics, culture and society itself" http://dismagazine.com/discussion/82090/introduction-to-the-time-complex-postcontemporary/

13   http://twotornhalves.blogspot.co.uk/2016/03/gender-dysphoria.html. The text is now reprinted in a slightly altered form in *Trans* Manifestos*, Cambridge: Shit Valley, 2016, available for cheap here: http://shitvalley.tumblr.com/

discipline of abbreviation; the flood of assertoric energy in the text I have quoted does not come from nowhere but is stored up through 37 sentences in each of which the writer is cutting herself off, holding herself back, frustrating the impulse immediately to give voice to the sensations that occasioned the speech-process in the first place, pushing down the desire to cut loose, and so permitting the pressure of frustration to build up incrementally as the text staggers ceaselessly forwards throughout the abstract pathological environment that it constructs. The penultimate sentence preserves and continues this dynamic even as it seems to leave it behind, since its individual coordinating clauses almost without exception *could* be shut up into independent sentences ("I caressed my long red hair. I touched my lips with my lips"); and the fact that they do not do this but instead suddenly open out into one another, reach outside and across themselves and flow into a single expressive current, built up persistently around the single verbal pivot of the coordinating conjunction "and", obeys not a grammatical but rather a psychological imperative. This is the psychological need to break out of the confines of individual subjecthood and to tear into a shared collective life in which privatised bourgeois shame and embarrassment is burnt exuberantly away. The poem is at last ablaze with this need; each of the shorter sentences in the earlier part of the text becomes in the light of this near conclusion an allegory of social process, of the fact that it is possible for the whole to move forwards according to a logic that is alien to its constituents *even when those constituents are themselves isolated from one another* by social design.

It is near but it is not a full conclusion. The actual conclusion of the poem is "I have Gender Dysphoria". Expressionism runs inevitably into its limit of categorical morbidity. The poem twists into a new shape Amiri Baraka's dream of a time when

> I will be relaxed.
> When flames and non-specific passion wear themselves
> away. And my eyes and hands and mind can turn
> and soften, and my songs will be softer
> and lightly weight the air. [14]

For Baraka, hurt and exhausting political life (life in "The Party of Insane/Hope") must hold out the prospect of psychological reprieve in the aftermath of victory. Verity Spott's poem takes hold of that prospect and squeezes from it its high water content of Romantic longing. What replaces the horizon of blissful abatement is a clinical dead-end: the door to a room that, as Spott says at the beginning of her poem, "I am too afraid to enter". The cheapness of the diagnostic category that might be spoken in that room, which is to say, its definitive stupidity and insignificance, is implicitly contrasted to the actual pain and ecstasy of the experience that it locks down into a medical "condition". Everything in Verity's poem leads up to this: each moment in this text is one part of an alternative pathway towards the flat and reified commodity language whose pressure of authority is grounded in the real accumulation of specialised intellectual labour. The real bareness and flat experientially vacated legalism of the final sentence of the text is the flipside of the unbearably overloaded density of the passage that it shuts off. "Gender Dysphoria" is a model lesson in how to relate to that unity: not by parodying the concepts that organise it, or by politely suggesting alternatives to them, but by counterposing to them in expressive defiance a whole history of

14 Amiri Baraka, "Three Modes of History and Culture", in *Transbluesency: Selected Poems 1961–1995*, edited by Paul Vangelisti, New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1995, p.118.

personal and collective endurance. [15]

Whatever this might be said to mean for poetry, one of the things that it more crudely accounts for is the way in which so many contemporary texts present themselves as architectures into which their speaking voices are locked. It accounts for the way in which poets are compelled to write their poems as if they were inescapable penitentiaries, in which delinquent language materials are fenced in by interlocking grates of self-accusation and denial. [16] At its most abstract level this tendency is really only a habit of conception, or a recurrent organising metaphor; the actual technical effects that it induces, its influence on the syntax and rhythmic pressure and diction of the writer, can only be determined by the *way* in which they respond to the constraint once they have recognised and structured it by means of a visual parallel. In Verity's case the structure becomes a space whose "conclusion" is a diagnosis locked into place from its beginning, from its title down: as dramatic as a screw in a wall bracket. This is another explanation for the proliferation in the early part of the text of curtailed and confrontationally "unpoetic" short sentences. "Fell quiet. Saw some figures approaching. Ducked down into the long grass." These are the tentative verbal half-measures of someone who knows that the resolution they've been offered is a trap and who

15 I am underestimating the complicated gentleness of this poem. But the tender, risible exasperation in which it terminates seems to me as if it can only be achieved by the maximal dramatisation of the author's impossible effort to outreach or to outmatch the need for it. Without the maximum polarisation of penultimate and final sentence the defeat temporarily made bearable at the poem's end would not seem tender but only mockingly parodic or devastated.

16 "I tried to move but fell right through the eggshells, dropped a floor, lost time, lost weight": Frances Kruk, "lo-fi frags", in *Lo-Fi Frags In-Progress*, London: Veer Books, 2015, p.18.

edges towards it as they would towards a precipice; and so the gulps and stutters at the beginning of the text contain in themselves negatively the knowledge that is shouted out in the poem's penultimate sentence: The conclusion that cannot be overcome can only be leapt into with enough violent impulsiveness that it becomes the cushion of air that we feel beneath us, in free-fall through a syntax disintegrating into its component elements of shock and nervous disorientation. This is where poetry happens, in the maximum polarisation of the objective conclusion and of the subjective movement that hurls us back into the face of it.

One of the things it might be possible to conclude from poetry like Verity Spott's is that the suppression of "artificial breaks" between the valued and devalued subject induces or encourages a literal suppression of *pauses* or *rests*. [17] Could this be the main consequence of the declining costs for capital of access to marginalised personhood: just a new intimacy with the expressive gas pedal? What else might get suppressed in it? What about the "artificial break" between inside and out, the division which according to anti-expressionist rationalism cannot be revolutionised but only newly administered? What can be done with the "interior" space in a period in which, more than ever before, that space is positively surfeited with dead technical vocabularies; when, for example, the id refers primarily to "a disorganized (random) brain trajectory" subject to chemical regulation through technical or specialised intervention? [18] In other words, what does it mean that the outgrowth of technical concepts, whose basis is the accumulation of specialised and alienated intellectual labour, is

17   By this I mean its literal assembly lines: not wage labour altogether.

18   The phrase is from Avi Peled, *NeuroAnalysis: Bridging the Gap between Neuroscience, Psychoanalysis and Psychiatry*, Hove: Routledge, 2008, p.43.

also their grotesque ingrowing?

> out, thingsyou that is itselfthe pox, lesion
> fresh piece of motionless
> room you is still sending
> the going is the ceiling is the bulb
> height of annoyance at 1200 watts
> remark the blood & hot
> out out you Tin of you [19]

Here the scene has changed fundamentally. In these lines by the poet Frances Kruk the architecture of the poem is no longer made up of categories of the bourgeois state upholstered as furniture for a clinical environment. Instead it looks more like an operating theatre, an oubliette or a skip. Its exit swings open and closed crazily on two-and three-letter hinges; objects variously broken and gangrenous are thrown into it, they get cursed at and picked over by a voice whose stuttering remissions don't now lead inexorably towards a botched lyrical uprising but instead loop round queasily in a circuit, renewing their protest in rhythmic tremors and flinches: aggrieved vocables forced into a strategy of tension. Repeated sound elements do not get straightforwardly vocalised but are instead dug out like foreign growths. "[O]ut … lesion … is … is … is … hot … out … out … you … Tin … you". Kruk's poetry is not visibly very much like Spott's, it makes no attempt to shatter itself against intellectual conclusions whose conceptual struts and panels have been fortified by alienated intellectual labour. For the kind of syntactical free-fall that you get at the end of "Gender Dysphoria", Kruk's work is simply too preoccupied with its materials, which it picks through with a kind of arch and fo-

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19   "lo-fi frags", in Lo-Fi Frags In-Progress, p.32.

rensic displeasure, "pull[ing] the guts up through lungs" (131) of administrative speech never before retrenched on by its enabling condition of shareholding cakehole. The larger work from which the lines quoted above are taken is a sort of violently collaged treatise on the afterlife of discarded human and material reality, of life stuffed grimacingly into the waste disposal unit, heaped unceremoniously under the counter. Its "un faced" speaker is confined by genre conventions into a cellar or basement, "from mud to undermud" (112) and dust to underdust, teaching itself with each successive set-back and spasm of phonetic arrhythmia new means of multiplying the language resources of those who are pinned viciously to the spot. From time to time it makes a joke out of the revelation of this fact, "back in the basement" (130), "who has heard the basement song & not practiced agony thereafter" (131), but the actual language processing of the poetry is deadly serious, or, rather, it is alive to how deadly processing can be, which is to say that it understands the deep affinity between abstract "formalism" and socially induced mental dissociation and refuses to let go of that connection in favour of one or another species of more benign linguistic abstraction. Insofar as the poetry takes an interest in anything so tediously general as "poetic artifice", it constitutes a practical guide to interiority as meat. Its words and syllables are lodged in one another like bits of food stuck between the teeth, dissolved or semi-decomposed even to the level of the grapheme, so that, for example, "hot" in the penultimate line of the passage quoted is "out" with its second letter displaced, turned upside down and distorted. "Out" at the beginning of the passage leads to "in" already swallowed up in "thing", while "in" thus digested is then transferred or excreted into the third line in "lesion", now having itself swallowed up the opening letter of its adversary. The poetry's fierce telescoping of interiority and exteriority, its permanent revolution in grotesque intussusception, has its own music, because the constant necro-

scopic intrusions into the phonetic interiors of constituent words or living language material produces as its corollary a kind of irritable stuttering, syncopated by the frequency of line breaks and further subdivided by the manic recurrence of dental consonants. The final line ("out out you Tin of you") then merely dramatises what the poetry is doing *all of the time*, mordantly rehearsing in the form of an exasperated joke the chronically purgative disposition at which the writing has already "formally" arrived, in which "expression" is not the innocent ventilation of spontaneous instinct but instead the laborious, desperate expulsion of the pre-constituted dead labour that mainstream society, and not just mainstream "culture", has already assiduously rammed down every throat on which it can get a decent grip.[20] There is no allegory here and no parable. What gets re-done in the final line *as narrative* is only a phantasmatic backdrop against which a whole voiced alternative to the already-alienated interior can be worked out, if not in perfect clarity then in bits and damaged sections, glinting half-visibly through a warped lattice of nerves and gritted teeth.

The music of the most exciting contemporary poetry is defined not by the unprecedented abundance of information that the emancipated poet can "access" but instead by the fierce and atypical dynamics of an expressionism exercised *against* the dead labour that has ingrown into the self like a hideous prognosticating nail. In both Verity Spott's and Frances Kruk's writing, living desires and subjective impulses are not separated from a world of alienated labour of which it can only be said that the author is powerless to influence it, but are brought instead under its

20   The poetry reverts habitually to the same set of worn-out or mass-produced objects: light bulbs, forks, dust and used chemicals.

organised duress from the outset, by means of the established categories of modern clinical practice. Each poet responds differently to this experience of intrusion. In Verity Spott's poem the primary constraint elicits a physiologically concerted effort of expressive outcry, in which the goal is to make a misunion between the conceptually inelimnable diagnosis-conclusion and the explosively torn syntax that leads up to it that is so paradigmatically unbelievable as to make the fact of their present pharasaical unity into a sick and re-energising joke. In Frances Kruk's it is given the purpose of anatomising the class content of the idea of surface itself, on which, according to the dominant perspective, abundance is always *spread* and where the idea that it might be possible to be *buried under it* is simply shockingly unthinkable.

The two bodies of writing are distinct in their response to the altered historical situation of individual expressive art and yet each works up into its own intensely singular music of immediate nervous feeling the same basic paradox of advanced capitalist productivity: that where capitalist technique is sufficiently historically advanced, even the most "devalued" and "marginalised" lives can flee into their innermost cells and most private desires only to find that it is just here that alienated labour has thrown up its hoarding and is most actively at work. For the anti-expressionist rationalist, this paradox is at root only natural: it is "Our technology/mak[ing] the reVolution for us" on the terrain of subjective existence itself. Inevitably the anti-expressionist's explanation of this state of affairs shades off into a kind of defence: if abstract labour is the hoarding that is built around the ego in the period of its demolition and redevelopment, then anti-expressionism will be the pastiche of decorative slogans pasted up on its cladding; a colourful and gratuitous concession to the personality forced to queue up outside of itself while objective historical forces tear down its derelict interior. The best response to this is polemical

and it is also conventionally psychoanalytic. Just as it is the basic paradox of capitalist productivity that as technique advances, the official categories used to define marginal (or "abject") life become more and more primary repositories of abstract labour, so too is it the basic paradox of institutional-reformist theory that it does not meet intensifications of violent social austerity with a corresponding intensification of subjective resolve, but instead with more and more thoroughgoing attempts pre-emptively to liquidate personality by means of various overconceptualised forms of impulsive repression (e.g., theories of interpellation).

This is where we end up: Life is the raw material of conceptual paradox and rationalism is the matrix through which it is fed. There are now more conceptual paradoxes in the world than ever before, available in ever more varieties and at ever greater degrees of conceptual sophistication. Whether your preference is for fantasies of technical omnipotence or the deep pathos of atomised despair, some version of anti-subjective rationalism can generate for you the paradoxical sensation you need. The version that is presently most in vogue generates a "radical" politics paradoxically cut off from all of the real movement of political life and makes over the task of devising expressive slogans to the forces whose most stirring contribution to date is, Take two three times a day after meals. It is to the great credit of the usual addressees of that slogan that they have responded by giving a new and impeccably rational meaning to the saying better out than in.

TABLE 10.1 *DSM-5* Personality Disorder Framework

	Personality Functioning		Interpersonal Functioning		Personality traits
	Identity	Self-direction	Empathy	Intimacy	
Antisocial	Egocentrism; self-esteem derived from personal gain, power, or pleasure.	Goal-setting based on personal gratification; absence of prosocial internal standards associated with failure to conform to lawful or culturally normative ethical behavior.	Lack of concern for feelings, needs, or suffering of others; lack of remorse after hurting or mistreating another.	Incapacity for mutually intimate relationships, as exploitation is a primary means of relating to others, including by deceit and coercion; use of dominance or intimidation to control others.	**Antagonism:** Manipulativeness Deceitfulness Callousness Hostility **Disinhibition:** Irresponsibility Impulsivity Risk taking
Avoidant	Low self-esteem associated with self-appraisal as socially inept, personally unappealing, or inferior; excessive feelings of shame or inadequacy.	Unrealistic standards for behavior associated with reluctance to pursue goals, take personal risks, or engage in new activities involving interpersonal contact.	Preoccupation with, and sensitivity to, criticism or rejection, associated with distorted inference of others' perspectives as negative.	Reluctance to get involved with people unless certain of being liked; diminished mutuality within intimate relationships because of fear of others shaming or ridiculing.	**Detachment** Withdrawal Intimacy Avoidance Anhedonia **Negative affectivity** Anxiousness
Borderline	Markedly impoverished, poorly developed, or unstable self-image, often associated with excessive self-criticism; chronic feelings of emptiness; dissociative states under stress.	Instability in goals, aspirations, values, or career plans.	Compromised ability to recognize the feelings and needs of others associated with interpersonal hypersensitivity (i.e., prone to feel slighted or insulted); perceptions of others selectively biased toward negative attributes or vulnerabilities.	Intense, unstable, and conflicted close relationships, marked by mistrust, neediness, and anxious preoccupation with real or imagined abandonment; close relationships often viewed in extremes of idealization and devaluation and alternating between over involvement and withdrawal.	**Negative affectivity** Emotional lability Anxiousness Separation Hostility Depressivity **Disinhibition** Impulsivity Risk taking **Antagonism** Hostility
Narcissistic	Excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation; exaggerated self-appraisal may be inflated or deflated, or vacillate between extremes; emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem.	Goal-setting is based on gaining approval from others; personal standards are unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on a sense of entitlement; often unaware of own motivations.	Impaired ability to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; excessively attuned to reactions of others, but only if perceived as relevant to self; over- or underestimate own effect on others.	Relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation; mutuality constrained by little genuine interest in others' experiences and predominance of a need for personal gain.	**Antagonism** Grandiosity Attention seeking
Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder	Sense of self derived predominantly from work or productivity; constricted experience and expression of strong emotions.	Difficulty completing tasks and realizing goals associated with rigid and unreasonably high and inflexible internal standards of behavior; overly conscientious and moralistic attitudes.	Difficulty understanding and appreciating the ideas, feelings, or behaviors of others.	Relationships seen as secondary to work and productivity; rigidity and stubbornness negatively affect relationships with others.	**Compulsivity** Rigid perfectionism **Negative affectivity** Perseveration
Schizotypal Personality Disorder	Confused boundaries between self and others; distorted self-concept; emotional expression often not congruent with context or internal experience.	Unrealistic or incoherent goals; no clear set of internal standards.	Pronounced difficulty understanding impact of own behaviors on others; frequent misinterpretations of others' motivations and behaviors.	Marked impairments in developing close relationships associated with mistrust and anxiety.	**Psychoticism** Eccentricity Cognitive and perceptual dysregulation Unusual beliefs and experiences **Detachment** Restricted affectivity Withdrawal **Negative affectivity** Suspiciousness

DAVID MORRIS

SET YOU FREE

(ORIGINAL MIX)
(5.55–6.05)

&

FLUTTER

(0.44–0.54)

SET YOU FREE
(ORIGINAL MIX)
(5.55–6.05)

RIP. Two weeks after you died and the only songs that work are ones that have nothing to do with you. One in particular that starts with a thunderstorm. One heard by chance dancing in an empty shop late the other night; the one everyone knows, that neither of us had any feeling for at all, maybe once or twice late at night if anything. The one I woke up singing, the one that's on repeat forever / until further notice. By the law of averages we were probably together in the same room hearing this at the same time some time in the last ten years. We never sat down with it. I bet you never liked it. I bet you never really thought about it even enough to not like it. It's more like an atmosphere. You'd find it funny and strange that I'm giving it any thought at all.

It starts with Shut Up and Dance's piano and the storm. I remember Kelly saying she woke up with it beating down on her, only now I don't remember the words that go with it, just the feeling, something about love and forever. By 5.55–6.05 Kelly's left the words behind—*ahhhohyeyu, ahh hohyeyuhh, a h h h o h y e y u h*—and as they slur out the sample pitch descends. This is the vocal breakdown, right before another drop, only here it's Kelly's voice slowed to fit the tune, or four voices, so Kelly is many. It's the *ahhhohyeyu* that's in the hook, that keeps coming back, only now it appears on its own to carry the break. It's the low note that really transforms it; "female" slowed impossibly into something, not "male", something else. Once you get that deep there's no return. And none required; we are better where we are, thanks.

There's a piano loop, wholly untogether with the rest, a three-four against a four-four and a little out. The line about heartbeats goes

back to Kevin at the Haçienda '89, *At the end of the night the crowd chanted for one more record & when the demands of the crowd were met a very excited sweaty woman hugged me & I could feel her heart beating.* Down from the piano there's the bass, kind of springy, rubbery, rhythmic; Tadao Kikumoto in another space and time, another day at the office trying to recreate the feel of a vibrating low string but making it better, making it new again.

The other night we talked about how since you died the sad songs weren't really working. Songs you knew, songs you liked, songs we like, songs we didn't. Nothing works. There is no way I can think to explain why this one does. It's not repetition but recollection, a way to put your arms around things. The other night we talked about memory loss. However many pictures are there there aren't enough, and pictures aren't even memory after all. Someone says we remember everything, even what we don't remember. But it's true I don't remember anything. I've been reminded of some times, but most of it, for now, is somewhere else. Someone says the only true love is repetition—recollection longs for something passed, tries to reproduce it, gets lost in melancholy. Repetition repeats it, not as it was, but as it *is*; like Kelly's voice slowed, like bass on a 303.

Grief is lived in clichés, all true. There aren't the words exactly; or there isn't the language to talk about these things; or clichés are just truths repeated so much they lose meaning, repeated for their truth or as something to say. The thunderstorm was added to the track to mask crackle on the vinyl so a lyric had to be added about the storm. What is there to understand? RIP.

FLUTTER (0.44–0.54)

Greater Manchester graffiti BMX and Mantronix. The thud in the middle is the bass punching in; the presets sustain beyond their edges and the chords are all two-note and *hang* beyond where they sound like they want to be; the drums hiss and scrap and suck themselves inside out and coming sweep up and rush.

Atrial flutter is a heart condition where the muscle loses its regular rhythm, where the upper and lower heart beat at two different speeds—*the upper chambers beat too fast, which results in atrial muscle contractions that are faster than and out of sync*—usually at particularly high speeds, over 100 beats per minute; this version of "Flutter" plays slow—33 revolutions per minute—but still 148 bpm, fast enough to match an arrhythmic heart.

The year "Flutter" came out an attack on repetition entered UK law. From section (1) of statute 63 ("Powers to remove persons attending to or preparing for a rave") of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, *This section applies to a gathering on land in the open air of 100 or more persons (whether or not trespassers) at which amplified music is played during the night (with or without intermissions) ... "music" includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats.*—quote marks music... The hisses and the thuds quote mark drums—the signals at the top end group together, so when it thuds the highs slide down into it, or said another way, reducing frequencies through the wires making circuits come through filters into variable sequences. It goes in different directions—at the top there's a rhythmic hiss like a scratching back of the head with headphones on, or hi-hats—they sound like themselves, hiss and thud rather than drum—and lower it's gated hand on back slaps or like snares, filtered through something so their own mid

tones go in and out, the same thing being tweaked, or an area slapped in different directions, like, back-hand then palm.

Flutter at 33 is slower than 45 and more down yes and before the Act had even passed—not a defiant 12 or a fight 12, the sounds here near defeated, attacked—and accurate re an Act against multiple forms of life, *supposed to deal with "rave" (open air disco) culture but actually impacted almost solely on Romani and other Travellers* (and also stop and search and criminalisation of protest and etcetera). *Did they set the tempo to the accident? Is that what's going on?* (FM) Maybe it's just in the minor chords, but I doubt it, some sounds just *sound* that way. Play them in a major key and you'll only get nostagia, melancholy on its head, either way a wake—shakers whoosh and shake all over; other things echo scrape and bang in the corners.

"music" includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats but music's at different speeds and repetitions can be brought in sync, whether turntables slow to another (Mantronix) or slice up and reassembly (Mantronix) or by coercion or force. ... *we advise DJs to have a lawyer and a musicologist present at all times to confirm the non repetitive nature of the music in the event of police harassment.* The tones Flutter like a "human voice" (call it human, call it voice...) *The primary disadvantage of analogue signals is that any system has noise—i.e., random unwanted variation* i.e. flutter. Another part of the Act targets silence—sections 34–39 are headed "Inferences from accused's silence" and specify circumstances in which a silence can become meaningful, where inferences may be drawn from the failure or refusal to speak contra "right to reman silent". The casios are neither making words nor silent but fall back on themselves around a central point.

Bodies are analogue systems and like analogue systems messy. The skip makes the quote marks rhythm arrhythm, which uncertain moves now left, now front or blurred between. Hearts flutter when they come irregular, they stop repeating; but when two things at two different speeds go out of sync they just repeat over a bigger area; it just takes longer for them to collectively reach a point of return—just like, Flutter's beats don't repeat but uh play it twice and it does. A flutter is maybe a way to delay a return or replicate multiple hearts—several hearts can be synced by controlled breathing (eg. via singing) but mostly they don't and a hundred heartbeats overlaid makes for a long long loop.

Snares and sampler handclaps snap and reverse themselves, shakers whoosh and shake. *"Flutter" has been programmed in such a way that no bars contain identical beats and can be played at both 45 and 33 revolutions under the proposed new law.* 100 or more persons (whether or not trespassers) gathered on land in the open air is outlawed so 100 or mores move indoors, into postindrustrial citys' clubs' air—or fight or drift or go elsewhere—HP tells me about free party crews who got picked up by the commercial festivals in the years since 94, another wave of Inclosure, and it's complicated and work is work. Work is work; recording is enclosure; listening is stealing, writing redistribution digital makes analogue signals into samples (44,100 per second) to be reassembled on playback. In the same way there's no such thing as silence, there is no such thing as arrhythm and hearts do not make rhythm nor music. *Think of atrial flutter as a single big (usually) circular circuit. Whereas AFib can be considered chaos from numerous different locales (an oversimplification); atrial flutter tends to be one rotating circle.* Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith, last night, from memory: "Music is not about this planet. It comes into you and you can put it into other people ... People say the heartbeat is music. *The heartbeat isn't music*. Music comes from

somewhere else."

Wow is a relatively slow form of flutter and this version of "Flutter" plays slow—"Flutter" at 148bpm at 44.1KHz, 44,100 samples per second over ten and Greater Manchester graffiti BMX and other ways of tracing tracks and getting airborne—the hisses and the thuds quote mark drums and the signals at the top end group together, so when it thuds the highs slide down into it.

NATHANIEL MACKEY

SONG OF THE ANDOUMBOULOU: 175
&
SONG OF THE ANDOUMBOULOU: 187

SONG OF THE ANDOUMBOULOU: 175

The gray haunt the day in front of us
held out, stark New Jersey dawning,
  sad backyard outside. The abandoned
                                    boy's
  blackened eye we looked out from,
  we the wandering we, we saw thru what
  was there... In love with beginning
                                    more
  than all else. Winded urgency, winded
  recline. Bodily abidance be with us we
pled, up and off again, rather be it than
                                    be
  called it we dreamt, some lost part
  felt to've been found... Loath to name it,
  as loath to be named it, gone, as we
were, to the well once more. "Why drag
                                    our-
  selves out?" was on more than one
  tongue, Mrs. Vex the one to ask outright.
  The farther out of ourselves the farther
                                    we
  pressed on, long since nowhere if not no-
  where we'd call home, loath to catch
  up with ourselves... A well of sorrow it
                                    of-
  ten seemed, gray water, gray while,
  gray root. Gray day we gathered up and
  left, always leaving, an aim of letting
                                    go

gone wrong, we began to wonder, the
  dream of so going so gone it gave us
pause, gone so soon we wept... By what

                                    riv-
  er it wasn't ours to make out, so gray
our way was. Gray dawn, gray distance,
  gray day, all without letup, long on remi-
niscence as we left the growl house, late

                                    stay
  extended as it was we knew we'd miss
it, missed it even more once gone. Always
  to be going and going back, thought's

                                    ha-
ven, hot for what had been or would've
  been with time I told myself, suddenly
  singled out in dreamlight, bright light

                                    ex-
  posing loaned bodies I dreamt I lived
in, other lives lived and let go... Mrs. Vex
  complained all was lost already, loss the

                                    one
  constant she could see she insisted, no
  not knowing that. "Known," Mr. P put
  in, spoken to by gray water, gray while,
gray root, gray dawn, gray distance, gray

                                    day.
  "What we lost when we lost our hair,"
    Huff all but sang, deep in gray while
  and gray when's dominion, "what we lost

                                    when

we stood upright." Ahdja laughed. Mrs.
P retracted Mr. P's word, "Unknown." Gray,
  no matter what, prevailed... Were ducks

                                            to
  have lips a duck's pursed lips were all it
    amounted to, the way it went on, going on,
  going back and forth, the going and the no

                                          time

    soon being
done

•

Thus it went. The migrating they were
migrating again, a newly named we.
They were calling us We of the Big Stitch.
Not to look too far was the warning we

rode

with, not to look too closely as well.
Itamar said we'd seen it all or at least he
had, gray patch, gray carapace, string

por-

tending love in back... Rain came down,
standing string, beaded string. Nine people
had been shot in a church the radio said.

No

Earland was on the box but we were
living black. Living black we lived close
to the dead, conniptic lungs lay in the

palms

of whose hands. Fleshed respite. Cramped
space the least of it. The radio said they
were shot execution style... Edge or maybe

ledge

life they called it, a burr voice's rubbed
insides the migrating they, they the migrating
we they finally were. Fractality seemed at
issue. Some same shape repeated itself ad

in-

finitum, they the distillate we, we the dis-
tillate they, subtleties abuzz in whose heads
we heard insurgent, low cloth anointing the

ache

on our
brow

———————————

The long siege our sense of some-
thing some called history turned out to
  be, the news, cut up in pieces, came
                              in...
   A certain late afternoon light, time-
  light in Saint Anne's arcade. A dream of
   pasture covered with water the morn-
  ing after, a lake or a lagoon or a bay we
                              stood
   away from looking, blue gone to gray
    as we looked on... So it went, blue when
  to gray when... Got in line to get slapped,
                              got
   slapped and fell
  back

•

    We ate crabapples, kids again. Sunlight
broke as we climbed an overpass, bodies
  caught up in cloth like others, thick or
                                  thin
    illusion we were there. Red stripes,
  white stripes, bright lights, big city,
   heads gone to gotten at from outside...
                                  A-
  nuncio piped up singing as the sun broke
   thru, every other phrase "tu cuerpo," lives
like rhyme, never not returned to, freckles
                                 on
   her cheeks he remembered, remembered
asking where'd she get them from. There
  between first and second homes no home,
                               made
    out, love, of, so the song went, ring we
  shook our heads to clear them of... We of
   the thin armor, we the word clan, bumped
                               up
  into where the clouds blew kisses, drunk
   with big, pillowy lips. Gray morning,
blue morning all over again, the abandoned
                              boy's
   oath come true. Wherever it was we were
supposed to be we headed out, Anuncio's
  would replacing was on the ramp we took,
                             ring
    what shots rang out. Trying to get home
  again, trying to make home heaven, Anuncio's
   vignette sprung up to ward gunshots off. Afro-
blue, Afro-gray, Afro-x-ray-see-thru cordage,
                             blue

and gray bolero he lifted us with... Ed, face
buried in a map, sat in the backseat, specs on,
channeling Stella. "Starlight's day begun,"

he
mumbled, burnt gas tipping his tongue.
Throat compacted of leaves curled and brittle,
cracked like parchment, a map to where the

dia-
monds were
gone

———————————

We drove late into the night, went thru
  many a toll gate. Dominican music
was on at one point and we talked about
                                         that.
  Mrs. Vex wanted to know what kind of
time it was they kept. Close to native
 time, she said, closer. The news went
                                      away
   while it played... No Earland on the
 box but there we were. Where the goods
  got stashed, got stolen, there we were,
                                        blown
   on by x-ray wind. Everywhere we looked
   we saw bones underneath, the war be-
   tween blue and gray again, the Afro-was
                                          we
 'd be

SONG OF THE ANDOUMBOULOU: 187

for Anthony Braxton

Insofar-I's breach freed us from the story
　 time took to tell, poverty's chronicle
High Jawn swung an ax at now that he
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　was

　 one of our crew... It would've been
　　 about a comb-over, the ginning-up of
holy war, jihad and crusade's office bro-
　 mance, the backs of our necks in a row...
　　　　　　　　　　　　　We

　 were getting word we fended off or ran
away from, flutes that were like brushes
　 in the background, oil and gouache in
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　con-

　 cert, the press of the world partaken,
pressed away, sweet belief beneath it all,
　 beautiful youth... The sketchy vessels
　　　　　　　　　　　　　we

found bodies to be no matter, sweet be-
　 lief underneath, deep study no hindrance,
things of which our oldest apprisal spoke.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Our

　 song sang the rickety host bodies turned
　　 out to be, "Song of the Andoumbou-
lou" number no one could say, we'd sung so
　 many, number accrues to all things though
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　we

knew… It could only be we'd only lost
count. We sat temporizing as Krishna bells
  and a harmonium chimed in back of us,

                                      sos-
tenuto our one wish, our one object. Let
  life live up to the say made of it we chant-
ed. It wasn't we didn't know what was out

                                      there.
  A hardshell church of hurt it screamed…
"Beautiful youth," we sighed harmoniumlike,
  the world so much older, sweet belief's be-
lievers again… Sweet sip such as tej would

                                  be,
  Netsanet's wager, all to make it more than
it was. No sooner that than we donned cam-
  ouflage, seeming's fit with our surroundings

                                      res-
  cued us, obligatory death made out to be
longed for, high, come-hither sky. Flutter-
  tongue trumpet left feathers in our throats,

                                  our
  song sang us back to life. Our song sang our
  end, sweet apocalypse,   ozone cherry,

                                  or-
  gone
light

                ·

Blue sky, bad light even so. "Earth a ball
  of dirt" kept echoing, "body a bag of
  guts" as well, a bad valley we were
                                    go-
ing thru. Feathers caught in our throats
  had us hiccuping, "likely to be blown
  to bits" gotten used to, unbearable no

                                    mat-
  ter, beautiful youth... We rode God's
  own rickety carriage, rocked so gently
  "alas" became our sleigh. Swung-low

                                    char-
  iot we'd've called it back when. Sweet be-
  lief's ride, low proffer. High heaven,
sweet ride climbed into, pit of sky... Our

                                    song
  sang dirt's domain, lift up and away no
  matter, apportioning the world and
the world we didn't have, justice, we said,
  soon come. We were in the valley of the

                                    sha-
  dow of all we knew, plumbing some
  common grief, sweet grievance, an answer-
  ing madness to come, beautiful youth...
The drone of unspectacular combination

                                    kept
  coming, no moment the same as the next
  but not so different, a new and a new and
a new and another, all caught in the climb

                                    or
  the sublimity of the concept, pilgrimage's

                                    prog-
  ress, even
so

———————————

(26.xi.15)

All day I was thinking, "Beautiful youth."
  The titanium pseudo-bone in my left
 leg was acting up, my stiffening right

                       an-
   kle acting up, my legs' rickety car-
 riage a new measure adumbrating death,
   not to go to which in silence, "Beauti-
ful youth…" A bass thrum came thru

                       the
   floor to greet me. "Om" it might've
been. It might've been "Um." They
 were the we whose allegory my life

                       was,
allegorical corridor the valley of the
   shadow of all we knew, allegori-
 cal quarter no quarter, all of it lit up,

                       up
close

•

(chant)

We rode along the gap Insofar-I's exit
   left, an implied epistemic trespass,
an epiphenomenal traipse. "Joy ride,
                              joy
   ride," we yelled out, "joy ride." Fan-
tasy wasn't what it was, it was real. "Joy
   ride, joy ride," we cried out, beautiful
                              youth...
   No intervention, we were quick to
   understand, was it. Excursion was all it
   was. We moved by ever so minus-
cule increments, inch by diastolic inch. A
                              reluc-
   tant music that wasn't music dragged out
   of it, radical fractality was all it was...
Epidermal perfume, pheromonal remit,
                              some-
   thing seen in a face nothing lived up to
were all we wanted, beautiful youth. Mu
   was on the box if anything was on the box
                              but
   nothing was on the box or nothing was
   what mu was. Or nothing was what mu
   meant, which was different, being differ-
ent what meaning was, reticent wordage
                              on
   the box. So we thought as our sleigh
   rocked so gently we wept, reticulate music
   reminiscent regard's new net, joy ride's
                              ag-
   gregate dis-
solve

•

"Might slow composure's arrival bode
 well," I heard Huff mutter, "adjunct
or adjacent occupancy ascend, a loft or a

                                        stu-
    dio in heaven, nothing less." It was a
long, low singing that was only talk, a
  reticulate placement of points on a plane

                                        we
    called music, talk meaning relay, sound
meaning sense, an air that was only talk,
  all talk... In what sense it was an order of

                                        song
    was unclear, being so what made it mu-
  sic we sensed. It wasn't we were out to
  crown obscurity, song of the song's de-
  fault on seeming sense. Only what was real,

                                        as
  we'd once insisted, interested us, only what,
    aching for home having left, announced
we'd arrive, only what, gone so far, we scared

                                        our-
    selves with... Again we wept, hearing Huff
  sing it, say it, his wording so wickedly pre-
    cise we were discomfited, lifted though we
were as well. "Earth a mere ball of dirt," we

                                        said
  or sang patting the heels of our hands togeth-
    er, a certain squaring of the circle, a certain
  sphering of the cube, said or sang the moment it

                                        fell
away

———————

(28.xi.15)

   By and By joined our crew, homony-
mous twins, an admission of design
 so obvious I laughed and looked the

                            oth-
  er way, an askance arousal all that
was left, reminiscent regress to be
 fended off and fended off again... I

                       was
  in the East or the pharmaceutical
West, my mu receptors messed with by
 opiates, crystal clarity nothing short

                       of
transparent, none other than the air it-
  self it seemed... Thus the fortuitous fit,
 done and redone. Such the breathing fit

                      made

  real by the wood I
was in

———————————

All day we rode unsuspecting, rocked
   so gently our sleigh seemed a cra-
dle, time's rickety tack back and forth.
                                    Out
   of it not unending. Out of it known
it would end... Our song was not a
   fact nor was it a figure. Our song was
                                    the
     condition fact and figure issued out
   from. All we wanted was to breathe
   in, breathe out again... All it was was
                                    we
   called it a
song

FEDERICA FRABETTI

INTERVIEW WITH MARK FELL

Electronic musician and multimedia artist Mark Fell talks to Federica Frabetti, author of Software Theory, on the relationship between software and music, the philosophy of technology and the promises of the unexpected.

In October 2015 Mark Fell and I were both interviewed by Morgan Quaintance on his "Studio Visit" Programme broadcast on Resonance 104.4FM. Morgan introduced us to each other's work. In December 2015 Mark invited me to give a short talk on technology as part of "Reality Check", his three-day residency at Café OTO in London. This piece is the result of an ongoing conversation on technology, philosophy and music we have been carrying out since.

FF   Mark, I am very interested in the fact that the philosophical reflection on technology plays a big part in your artistic practice. For example, in your article for the "Collateral Damage" column in *The Wire* magazine (2013) you describe technology not merely as an instrument but as something you think *with* when you compose music. This resonates a lot with the argument I offer in my 2015 book titled *Software Theory*, where I reflect on my own experience as a software engineer and I suggest that instrumentality may not be the best conceptual framework to understand technology, even though it is the conceptual framework that Western philosophy has deployed for centuries in keeping with the Aristotelian tradition. Would you like to say something more about the way in which you understand your creative practice in relation with technology?

MF   I have been thinking about technology in relation to my artistic practice since I was an art student. I think that my Northern working-class background played an important part in how I consider this. My dad was a steel worker and at a very early age I

had the opportunity to observe the relationship he had with his tools. For example, when he wanted to build an extension to our house he did not start from a plan or a drawing, he just got some bricks and began placing them out and making decisions at each stage as problems arose—and that way he gradually built the extension (I should point out that it was a single story addition to the back of the house). In retrospect, I think I absorbed a certain view of technology simply by being exposed to the specific kind of relationship that people have with their environment when they engage in manual work. In a similar way, when I first began using a synthesizer, what I enjoyed about it was the sensation of turning dials and hearing unexpected sounds. I engaged in a sort of exploration of the machine, if you will, in a very unplanned way. I often think that this is how humans behave in relation to their environment, by trying things out and seeing what happens. For a very long time I made music in this manner. Later, when I started to study art at college, I had access to rather limited video production systems in a studio, and my way of dealing with that was to take all the equipment to bits and rewire it to create unusual processes and analogue imagery. Quite understandably this made the people responsible for the studio very unhappy not only because of the inconvenience it caused, but more tellingly, because that way of working itself was problematic. My college tutor told me in very clear terms that if I did not start out with an idea of what I wanted to do I would simply be following what technology dictated. I was probably seventeen years old at the time and I remember thinking: "This is wrong", although I did not have the conceptual framework to explain why. I just knew this way of describing artistic practice did not correspond to my way of working. I felt that my way of engaging with technology was by following the opportunities it suggested, but I never felt dominated or controlled by it. At that moment I began searching for ways to understand my relationship with technology better and that problem, among

other things, led me to philosophy.

FF   I really like the fact that for you practice came first and the study of philosophy came later, as a way to make sense of your practice. This is very similar to what happened to me as a software practitioner. For more than a decade I designed software for telecommunications for a number of industries. For a combination of reasons (I originally trained as a classicist, I was politically engaged with the Italian left in the nineties and I was also active in the queer movement) I was always a little wary of the corporate environment and I always felt a commitment to think beyond the limits of the merely technical understanding of technology. So at a certain point I began asking of technology questions that were not merely functional (not "How do I make this work?" but "What is technology doing to the way I think?") and I turned to media and cultural studies, and later to philosophy, in order to answer those questions. And what you say is especially interesting because, as the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler points out in the first volume of *Technics and Time* (1998) technology is somehow the repressed material of Western philosophy. Technology has always been conceptualized as non-philosophy, as something instrumental, as the "other" of knowledge. So yours is actually a very powerful account of a personal experience that subverts precisely that primacy. Importantly, for Stiegler, Martin Heidegger is one of the first philosophers who have thought technology differently, not as secondary to knowledge but as a way of being in the world. And it seems to me that, when talking about the synthesizer, you are actually describing a certain kind of Heideggerian "absorbed activity", a non-theoretical mode of understanding the world that necessarily involves technology. And you do refer a lot to Heidegger when you talk about your practice in articles and published interviews. How did the study of philosophy help your understanding of technology?

MF   Well, initially I became very interested in Ludwig Wittgenstein's work on language and I basically drew on his ideas on language to make sense of technology. Historically there have been two main ways of understanding language: as a relatively inadequate means to express thought, which is understood as preceding language, or as a system that frames and restricts thought. The former I would call the romantic view of language, while the latter corresponds to the structuralist view. These somehow opposing conceptions of language are mirrored by opposite conceptions of technology: the idea of technology as a merely passive instrument is opposed to the idea that technology is an active thing that shapes what we do with it. I regard the structuralist view of language as an acknowledgment that language is not just a passive device to express thought. However, structuralism, as well as post-structuralism—and here I am thinking of French philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, still view language as somehow problematic in a way that echoes my college tutor's views about the video editing suite. Technology and language are perceived as something intrinsically problematic, and different views throughout Western thought describe our mastery of it or subordination to it. I took Wittgenstein's understanding of language as a way to break free of that dilemma. In a very crude sense I thought that while structuralism argues that the structure of language determines its uses, Wittgenstein by contrast argues that the uses of language determine its structure. I translated this into my understanding of technology. Actually one of the few post-structuralists to take up this point was Jean-François Lyotard, which I guess explains why he was my favourite among that crowd.

FF   I find it very interesting that you use Wittgenstein's thought as a way to break free of technological determinism while at the same time acknowledging the importance of technology's role in

shaping artistic practice and broadly speaking the relationship that humans have to the world. In a way, I see less of an opposition between Wittgenstein's idea of language in this sense and what you call the post-structuralist view of language. For example, in *Of Grammatology* Derrida questions the very idea that language is secondary to thought. This idea is for Derrida the foundation of the Western view of language as instrumental, which goes hand-in hand with the Aristotelian conception of technology as instrumental, and he challenges precisely that way of thinking about technology. So for you Wittgenstein's work on language was a way to focus on the uses of technology and on its contexts?

MF   Yes, Wittgenstein's model focuses on language as an everyday system that people use to get through social interactions, as a regular component of everyday life, rather than something obscure, hidden or threatening that we should be paranoid about. I believe that asking the question of whether technology drives the human or the human drives technology is quite meaningless. We can have more than one person in a room making a decision. Right now we could be having a conversation and come to a mutual understanding of where we are going to get food tonight. This is how human beings function with technology. It is not a matter of either dominating it or being dominated by it; it is always a process of weighing up different concerns and of working out collaborative relationships.

FF   Is this why you draw on Bruno Latour's work to conceptualize your relationship with technology?

MF   Latour's basic position is that outcomes happen as the result of complex equations involving many different components. He does not give any kind of priority to the human agent within that network of things. Although he makes some rather

unusual claims about non human agents, it seems like a very plausible position to have, certainly less problematic than the unresolvable conflicts associated with technology in Western thought.

FF   How does your philosophical reflection feed back into your music? Would you say that your music is a form of philosophy?

MF   My music is not trying to demonstrate or illustrate philosophical ideas but it necessarily embodies those ideas to some extent, because you cannot divorce the things you make from the things you think. Take my piece titled *Multistability* (2010). I chose the word "multistability" because it was an interesting word that presents the work in an ambiguous context. However, a little while after making the work, I actually realized that this term conveyed my view of technology very well. The instrumental view of technology is grounded in the idea that human beings are somehow singular, stable, unified, coherent users of technology. By contrast, more recent analyses of what it means to be a person would reject this idea of enduring stability, and call upon ideas of change, multiplicity, fluidity and so on. So the idea of the self as a multistable entity is quite relevant, and certainly corresponds to Heidegger's *Dasein* as well as some aspects of Daniel Dennett's recent work.

FF   It seems to me that the instrumental understanding of technology also supports certain views of music that you call "representational" or "realistic". You have said multiple times that with your work you want to get as far away from "representational" music as possible. For instance, in your 2013 interview for *Electronic Beats,* you explain how your work is meant to offer a modernist counterpoint and critique to the traditional view that music "means" something and that its aim is to evoke something

other than and beyond music itself or to elicit a certain kind of emotional response in the listener. I was wondering if this is tied to your conception of technology.

MF   It is definitely tied to the music I like, which is not music I feel manipulated by at an emotional level. Generally speaking, I do not enjoy listening to Western classical music because I find it too narrow emotionally. It is almost as if the music is asking the listener to "now feel this, now feel that". I think that that is one of the reasons I enjoy Indian classical music, because it does not have the same emotional direction; it is not about triggering a clear emotional response in the audience. Similarly, I try not to manipulate people emotionally with my music. Of course people will have emotional responses to my music, but those responses are not planned or necessary outcomes. I also think that too often we are concerned with the meaning of artworks as opposed to their presence. In the *Production of Presence* (2003) Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht makes this point—that we can relate to artworks at a phenomenological level, without having to know the "theory" behind them.

FF   This reminds me of your piece "One Dimensional Music Without Context And Meaning". I was at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in November 2015 when you performed it. It was a very poignant performance. I perceived the piece as physically over-whelming, and yet I also remember thinking: "Wow, I am having a philosophical experience here!" It was not like reading philosophy, it was like experiencing it.

MF   Yeah! [Laughs] I developed that piece in 2013 in New York using 32 layers of sound synthesis with no temporal variation. It is a work that starts at the border of silence and over its duration it gradually increases to the threshold of pain. The title of the work

is derived from a negative review which claimed that the work was "one dimensional". I found the idea that the work was occupying a "singular" dimension extremely inspiring. Thus I began considering it in the context of P. D. Ouspensky's book *A New Model of the Universe* (1931), where he reflects on multi-dimensional objects moving through spaces of lower dimensionality. A three-dimensional object such as a cone moving through a two-dimensional space was the example I had in mind. I wanted that piece of music to feel as if that was what you were encountering.

FF   This is why I am suggesting that your music can be viewed as philosophy by other means! I perceive a lot of your music as a very powerful meditation on space and time.

MF   Since reading Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* I became interested in the way he compares the experience of time to the experience of musical melody. However, Husserl never clarifies what kind of melody or music he is referring to; instead he just refers to melody in quite an abstract sense and thus he plays upon our shared assumptions of what a melody must be in general. Beyond that, I think his description of melody implies a piano melody with notes overlapping and sounds trailing off—basically something quite traditionally Western in form. It occurred to me that music is already a way of organizing our experience of time, or perhaps even of articulating time, and so to say that time is like music is to some extent a bit of a circular argument. More importantly, it occurred to me that Husserl's analysis of temporal experience in relation to music closely corresponds to the relationship between the experience of space and the use of one-point perspective. Perspectival painting places you, the viewer, in a specific relation to the canvas you are observing and it is equally loaded with culturally specific values about our relationship to the world, our position as remote static

observers, and so on. If perspectival painting uses visual information to structure space and it places us in a specific relation to it, so too—I thought—musical systems place the listener in a particular relationship to time, and offer a specific way of understanding and organizing temporal experience. For example, if you look at a musical score, you will find that it has got a beginning and an end, and the "now" point moves through it. As it unfolds, music moves in an organized way from the future to the past, passing through the present moment where we reside. So the linear score, the way we have internalized it and the way it structures our experiences of music offers a particular way of organizing time.

FF   The piano melody depends on the piano technology. I guess that the question would be (and here I am paraphrasing Derrida who, in *Archive Fever*, asks whether psychoanalysis would be different if Freud had had email): Would phenomenology be different if Husserl had had electronic music? I am also reminded of what Stiegler argues when rereading Husserl, that our sense of time is always somehow technology-dependent. And finally, this linearization of music you are talking about is very akin to the linearization of software. You know, to a certain extent the history of software can be viewed as the history of programmers' consistent attempt to linearize software as code—that is, to make computers function in a way that can be controlled through strings of symbols. Most computer programmes can still be visualized as texts with a beginning and an end, written as sequences of symbols. I view this attempt at linearizing technology and at making it predictable as the basic way in which human beings approach technology. But that attempt constantly fails and linearization is always on the verge of becoming undone. Technology functions precisely by continually transgressing and reasserting its own linearization.

MF   But also I think that a lot of different musical traditions, such as Irish folk music or non-Western music, are not written in linear form. I can imagine that one would have a very different relationship to the temporal form of that music. You would not be a rational observer of the music passing through a hypothetical infinitely narrow "now" point, perhaps instead you would be "happening within" the music. The music offers no future or past, just an indefinitely extended now.

FF   In what sense is your music political? Would you say that your reconceptualization of technology as constitutive of your artistic practice entails political consequences?

MF   I think it does. First of all, the kind of Western classical music paradigm that I have just described is definitely not part of my musical heritage. In the West classical music has always been the domain of the upper and middle classes and even today this division exists in our consumption of classical music as well as in our educational system. For example, traditional music courses tend to recruit middle class and upper class students, whereas music technology courses tend to recruit from working class and ethnic minority backgrounds. I would argue that the way classical music functions in our society is precisely by demarcating and reinforcing class divides rather than trying to remove them. Of course there is nothing intrinsically 'superior' about classical music; this perceived privilege goes hand in hand with the privileging of certain types of beliefs and values. I would say that the instrumental view of technology is embedded in and sustained by the Western classical music tradition. The French composer Edgar Varèse suggested that his ideal instrument would be one that was "obedient to thought", which mirrors the Cartesian emphasis on thinking before practice. Varèse went on to say that music was "organized sound". This suggestion, which is often

thought of as a very liberating or progressive sentiment, for me is the exact opposite. Basically the score, and by extension "time line" editing environments, reduce the composer to a mere organizer of sound and construct a specific relationship between the musical materials and the composer/organizer—one where he or she is beyond the text, looking at it globally from the outside in a kind of landscape form and moving elements around to construct a narrative flow of events. This is what I would call the "God's eye view" of musical materials. All of this is quite contrary to my experience of making music or using tools and to my relationship with other people and the world, and I find this sort of metaphysical logic overbearingly present in that kind of music and in the tools used to make it. I associate that with a struggle for the dominance of values. The idea that Western classical music is somehow superior to Western popular music for me comes down to issues of class. And perhaps the instrumental view of technology is based on a certain privileged class of thinkers—such as Descartes, who famously compared his body to a household servant. Maybe I'm sounding a bit angry on this point.

FF   I cannot see anything wrong with that!

MF   Well, you know, maybe this is a sweeping generalization but I do think that the way my father worked with his bricks showed that he had a completely different relationship with materiality. He thought *with* it rather than trying to fit it into an abstract plan. So in that sense my understanding of technology is political.

FF   Going back to what you just said about academia, do you think that the university is complicit in maintaining a certain understanding of the relationship between technology and thought, between technology and creativity? Is the university not going

through a more practice-oriented phase today? I am thinking of the increasing provision of degrees that focus on so-called creative practices—for example in the fields of digital music and sound art. I see a different kind of risk there, which is that a more critical, theoretical and questioning approach might be overlooked in favour of a mounting attention to technical skills, which ultimately are considered more appealing to the industry. Certainly practice is not excluded by the academy today, as long as it contributes to the general tendency toward the commodification of creativity, which in turn is part and parcel of the neoliberal university?

MF I used to work at the University of York in the music department. It was, and probably still is a very well respected department. But the only other people in the entire building that spoke with my accent were the cleaning ladies and the security guards. There is a reason for that. I just want to make it clear that I am not against Western classical music; I struggle to enjoy most of it, but I understand that it must have some aesthetic and ethnographic value. What I do not agree with is the idea that classical music is intrinsically superior, better for you and more sophisticated in structure or execution than any other music. But to get back to your question I think university systems and the roles they assign to people mirror the distinctions between categories in Western thought, and have similar fault lines. My first real job was at Hull School of Art and Design where I worked as a sound studio technician, which mainly served their new phonic art programme. At that time I was also a practicing artist and I began travelling internationally to present my work; I won some awards and I was an invited editor of an academic journal. But when the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) came around none of my work counted because I was a technician. My work, whatever level it achieved, was the work of a technician—that is, of a mere operator of tools

in the service of those who had ideas but not the means to implement them. This organization of roles, although superficially pragmatic, ultimately replays categories present throughout the history of Western thought. Again, it is probably no surprise that the technicians tended to be from working class backgrounds and academics from middle and upper class backgrounds—thus dividing people into those who think and those who implement those thoughts.

FF This division of labor reinforces the idea that technology is instrumental, that it is *not* thinking.

MF Precisely. Also, for example, Georgina Born has looked comparatively at the demographics of both traditional music and music technology degrees, which are a relatively new phenomenon in British higher education, and she has found that—as I said before—while traditional music degrees draw students with higher social class profiles than the British national average, music technology degrees, by contrast, are lower in terms of social class profile. But why is it that the "serious" music courses are for middle class people, while technology programmes are for the working classes? This somehow perpetuates the distinction between aesthetics on the one hand and technology on the other.

FF How would you teach students to be critical of their technologies? Is there such a thing as a form of hands-on critique of technology?

MF There is certainly no predefined recipe to teach that. As a sound technician at Hull I used to teach students how to use the studio equipment, and it occurred to me that as soon as you told people "Here is the technology, go and make some music", they followed their ingrained habits and produced really boring kinds

of music. So I started practicing what I called "reduced aesthetics", where for example I would say: "You have to develop a piece of music that lasts only one minute and you must use thirty notes, thirty events that are all at the same pitch; all you can do is vary the time between them." So I asked students to work within very simple formal systems. Once I started doing that, they would respond creatively to the rules that I set out and they would actually begin a practice-based undoing of their musical habits. So I would definitely say that it is important for students to be restricted on some occasions in order to challenge or perhaps foreground inherited aesthetic positions. I had another interesting experience when I was asked to talk to a group of students in America. Unsurprisingly, we ended up having a rather long conversation about technology. There was this guy who was using lots of effects units all connected together. I asked him: "How do you use that technology?" And he said: "Well, I have an idea and then I connect all the units together to make that idea. This is how it happens." And I said: "Okay, but how did the idea get into your head in the first place?" And he went: "Oh, I connect all the units together and see what happens". So if you had observed him in his studio, he was actually connecting bits of equipment together and working out ideas in response to what he was encountering, and by iterating this process he would eventually reach something he liked. But when I asked him to describe his practice, the embodied, technically responsive activity was completely removed and in retrospect he described the creative process merely as having an idea and implementing it—that is, as a theoretically-driven practice. I think a lot of people repeat that prejudice, as did my college tutor all those years ago.

FF Interestingly, software engineers also tend to reverse-engineer the process of producing software, so to speak. Very often the way we design software is by working with our languages and

machines and restrictions in order to produce some version of a programme that can be executed. But, when executed, a programme very often does something that you do not expect and that is not at all what you meant for it to do, and you have to work with that. This is the way you develop software. In the end you will have a piece of software that does what you want, except that the idea of what you want has changed in the process. You have to unleash the potential of technology to surprise you in order to be able to work with it. It is a very collaborative process. And yet, most programmers will tell you that software development begins with a pre-existing "problem" out there in the world, to which their system is the "solution", and that they start by analysing the problem, then they design a solution, and finally they implement it. This is why I can really relate to what you write about malfunctioning technology in your published work. Could you say a bit more about that?

MF   In the late Nineties I was working for a record label which, incidentally, was called Mille Plateaux because the guy who ran it was a massive fan of Deleuze. Around that time the American composer Kim Cascone interviewed a number of artists associated with Mille Plateaux, including myself, and in 2000 he published an article titled "The aesthetics of failure", which became an often cited piece of writing in contemporary electronic music. Cascone's article attempted an analysis of the role of error and failure in electronic music but I felt that ultimately it reinforced very traditional assumptions about technology. However, his term "the aesthetics of failure" somehow stuck in the air and the term "glitch" started to be used. Unfortunately, my music at that time was often aligned with the term. To this day, when I am asked to play at festivals, I ask that they do not use the word "glitch" in relation with anything I do! I think that, at the time, academic interest was focused on the role of error and malfunc-

tion in digitally produced music, but a great deal of that writing did not sufficiently challenge beliefs about technology and instead it reinforced them. I think that in order to understand the creative processes, the role of technology in those processes and the musical outcomes, one has to really address what is meant by error and malfunction. For example, when a computer starts doing something unpredictable it is often called an error simply because it was unplanned or unintended. But for me that is not a suitable definition of error because it simply reinforces the belief that the unintended is unwanted and that anything that comes from the machine is wrong. Some years later I came across Lynn Baker's article titled "The Metaphysics of Malfunction", where the author argues that it is possible to establish if something is a malfunction by drawing upon a finite set of criteria. Her argument is that each piece of technology has its intended function and that in order for technology to malfunction you need to be a skilled operator of that particular piece of technology and to be using it for its intended function. My argument is that I might be attempting to murder a person with a hammer, which is probably not the intended function of a hammer, and yet if the head of the hammer falls off in the process I would still consider that a malfunction. Another counter-example to Baker's theory is Lego. What is the intended function of Lego? Is it to entertain kids? Is it to keep them busy while parents do their stuff? Is it to facilitate learning and to develop construction skills? The function of Lego exists on many context-dependent levels. What if a child plays with Lego but does not develop construction skills? Is Lego malfunctioning then? Also, at what point do you become a skilled operator of Lego?

FF   You have written extensively on this, for example in your article titled "Reverse Practice". It seems to me that what you actually suggest is that the unpredictability of technology is neither

a malfunction nor a misuse of technology (although of course it can be reverse-engineered as such). I am very interested in this because for me technology is at its most interesting neither when it functions properly nor when it fails entirely, but when it "almost fails". The moment when your equipment surprises you by doing something unexpected—but not a straightforward failure—is the moment in which you "separate" yourself from your equipment, with which you would otherwise function in a very "naturalized" way, and you look at it and wonder: "What is it doing? What is this?". When you get that feeling of "not being able to figure the thing out" that you describe in "Collateral Damage" you have to stop and think. When technology surprises us with some unexpected material consequences that follow from its own logic we form a "point of view" on technology. Although we can never separate ourselves entirely from our technologies, we realize that we could not foresee that functioning from where we stood in what Stiegler, after Simondon, calls the "techno-human complex". And then, we need to make a decision about what we think is happening, and that decision is not merely technical, it is ethical and political, because we decide what to rule out and what we can accept and *live* with. I think that in this context what you say about open-ended technological systems not being necessarily better in the context of creative practice makes a lot of sense.

MF For me there is no such thing as open-ended technology. Open-ended technology is just a mythical entity. What piece of technology could possibly be open-ended? For example, you can have modular synthesizers that are made of lots of different modules that can be connected together. The idea behind a modular synthesizer is that it is somehow more open than synthesizers whose connections are already hardwired. But for me that distinction does not makes sense. I do not think that creativity develops within mythical open-ended environments where the soul

is free to empty its contents into the material world. For me creativity is always a response to technologies, tools, materials, environments, systems that have characteristics and ways of behaving that in turn suggest ways of doing things, shapes, structures, and so on. What makes the game of chess interesting is that it has a set of rules that people have been playing for years and years. If we were playing a game of chess and suddenly I started making up rules—if, say, I invented a new piece that could eradicate all of your players in one go—that would not make the game more interesting. It would rather make the game less playable and less thought-provoking. I would not be hailed as the new chess genius. It is the structure of the environment or the properties of the technology that you, as an artist, respond to, and these structures and properties enable your creative responses. Recently I was invited to work on a score by the American artist Channa Horwitz and I came across a brilliant quote:

> I chose to limit my options to the notation of movement. In this way, I was able to acquire more experiences. (...) too many options inhibit experience freedom. However, limiting one's options facilitates the experience greater freedom.

> http://blog.zkm.de/en/insights/
> in-remembrance-channa-horwitz-1932-2013/

FF   But surely it does make a difference what kind of constraints there are and how they resonate with different people?

MF   Of course, but I do not think that there is an opposition between freedom and structure. We should get rid of the old continuum that assumes that the lesser the structure the greater the freedom and creativity. There is no such thing as "more freedom" or "less structure". Everything has a structure. The sounds gen-

erated by the pre-sets of early synthesizers of the Eighties, which might look very restrictive to us today, have become the foundation of contemporary house and techno music. Many sounds of contemporary techno are clear descendants of those pre-sets. They have become part of the vocabulary of a musical genre.

FF   Manfred Mohr once said that he produces art in dialogue with his software. Would you say that you dialogue with your software?

MF   The term "dialogue" for me implies a separation. You would have to think of the artist and technology as two separate entities that enter somehow in conversation, in interaction, to be able to say that. I think that, rather that the term "interaction", it is Karen Barad's concept of "intra-action" that makes better sense of this process. When I am working on a piece of music I am not predominantly aware of my interaction with my sound editing software, I am predominantly aware of the music material that is being dealt with. So for me words like dialogue and interaction reinforce the separation of technology out of the cognitive and creative process. I do not think that we, as humans, interact with our technologies. I think that we rather intra-act with them.

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IRENE REVELL / ANNEA LOCKWOOD

"YOU LOOK AT A SCORE, YOU DO IT."

ANNEA LOCKWOOD ON WOMENS WORK, INTERVIEWED BY IRENE REVELL

Womens Work [sic] is a rare collection of performance scores that was co-edited and self-published in two issues by Alison Knowles and Annea Lockwood in New York City, 1975-6. I had learnt about the collection following the Museum of Modern Art New York acquiring a copy as part of the Silverman Fluxus Collection[1] and was fascinated that these highly diverse artists had chosen to make a connection to the feminist art movement of the 1970s through the medium of the score. Previously, few of the artists had seemed to have obviously associated with the movement, which had tended to focus primarily on more traditional visual media practices.

Contributors to issue one, 1975: Mieko Shiomi, Julie Winter, Sari Dienes, Mary Lucier, Bici Forbes, Simone Forti, Elaine Summers, Wendy Greenburg, Annea Lockwood, Jackie Apple, Pauline Oliveros, Alison Knowles, Marilyn Wood, Heidi Von Gunden, Beth Anderson, Carole Weber.

Contributors to issue two, 1976: Lisa Mikulchik, Carol Law, Alison Knowles, Françoise Janicot, Takako Saito, Barbara Benary, Christina Kubisch, Carolee Schneeman, Ruth Anderson, Annea Lockwood.

This interview was conducted during Annea Lockwood's visit to the UK in 2014, where she took part with Cathy Lane in the series of events *Someone Else Can Clean Up This Mess*, co-curated by Claire Louise Staunton and myself at Flat Time House, London.

—IR

1   *Womens Work* is included in MOMA's Experimental Women in Flux page: http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/womeninflux/

IRENE REVELL   In Martha Mockus' book *Sounding Out*[2] there is some correspondence between you and Pauline Oliveros that took place in the early 1970s across the Atlantic (you are in London and she is on the West Coast) where you exchange scores and related ideas about feminism.

ANNEA LOCKWOOD   Exactly. We would do some of her [sonic] meditations here in London and she would do some of my pieces in San Diego. We were thinking along very similar lines at that time: sound and the body, sound and healing. Where it really began to strongly affect me was almost as soon as I went over to New York, where I got pulled into consciousness raising groups. I was a reticent New Zealander, and I had been living in a relatively reticent English social setting for a long time, and consciousness raising American-style was overwhelming: the amount of personal information that was being pulled out of one. But it was also like surgery—it really sort of cut through the gender training. And little by little I started to incorporate it into my work.

The first issue of *Womens Work*—the publication Alison Knowles and I put together—came out in 1975 in New York. I had been there for a couple of years by that point. *Womens Work* came up because Alison—who was teaching me photographic printing techniques at the time, which was fun—and I were sitting over a cup of tea in her loft on Spring Street in Soho, and just running through the names of all the women artists we knew in various media who were doing great work and, as I recall, we more or less looked at each other and said, "Why don't we ask for a bunch of scores from them!" Of course the title was highly deliberate and

2   Martha Mockus, *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

highly focused. And the intention was to assert that there were many women doing really good work whose names should be more and more familiar. That it should be seen that there was a body of work coming from a number of women, not just isolated exemplars in their fields.

IR Why did you choose the format/medium of the score?

AL I dealt with scores all the time, as did Alison, she was doing her *Identical Lunch* performance with Phil Corner at the time. But especially because we wanted to publish work which other people could pick up and do: that aspect of it was really important to us.

IR Social, in a certain way?

AL Yes. This was not anecdotal—this was not archival material—it was live material. You look at a score, you do it.

IR That makes a lot of sense. One thing I find extraordinary about the publication is how it links all these practitioners from diverse disciplinary backgrounds through the medium of the score, many of whom I had never encountered before.

AL Absolutely, it covered every discipline. And it was very natural at that time to be in touch with many disciplines, no matter what one's own primary discipline was, and many of us were making interdisciplinary works anyway.

IR Did you use the term "intermedia"?

AL Yes.

IR Did you have a close proximity to Fluxus?

AL I love Fluxus, but because George Maciunas was always very particular and specific about who was a Fluxus artist, I would never claim to have been one. But I knew a lot of the Fluxus people including Joe Jones. I loved their work, saw and heard a lot of it, and hung out with them.

IR And the consciousness raising group that you attended, was that with other artists?

AL Yes.

IR Did some of the artists in *Womens Work* come from that group?

AL Some did, I think, but I cannot remember quite who was in the CR group. It was like going through some sort of an internal hurricane, and I think I may have been involved in more than one CR group at the time, and that process lasted around a year or more, then we moved on: we had achieved what we wanted with it. I did some pieces that all that thinking went into: perception and recognition, and so on. I think I did around four works: one of which was a communal thing, of which nothing remains, except a little lullaby, but it was done for ourselves as a group of women. I think we were all musicians, just exploring connections to the phases of the moon. We were really looking into old symbols—female associated symbols—to see what life remained in them, basically. And then I made a piece about the assault and abuse of women, called *Woman Murder*, but I considered it to be didactic and let it go once I had played it once or twice. There was another piece that I did both as an installation, and as an electroacoustic piece called *Conversations with the Ancestors* in which I talked with a group of women who were all over the age of eighty—the oldest was one hundred and four—and they were all wonderful. Very

different from each other, funny and marvellous women, and I got them talking about the shapes their lives had taken, and their agency, what had been possible for them. One of them, Theodate Soule, had ended up as the pioneering director of social work at Massachusetts General, a big hospital in Massachusetts; Nell Oliver had brought up a family. The installation consisted of big sheets of raw cotton, and Alison printed a quote from each of the women on each sheet for me, and I hung them from the wall like laundry. I asked each of them to give me something, one of her possessions, which she could afford to give, which somehow she felt strongly connected to. I also took photographs of the women, and they allowed me to make copies of photos of themselves as little kids and through their lives, and I made a little photo album. And the interviews, of course, I recorded. You sat down in their chair, and on the table next to you was the little photo album and in the case of Theodate Soule, a little shell box, which her father had bought for her when they made a trip when she was twelve to Brittany—that was a very special trip for a twelve-year-old. Another woman had a teacup and saucer and a muffin tray, and the teacup was very strange because it had a little triangular hole in the bottom of it, and you could never figure out how a teacup could not crack completely, but have this little hole! You could handle the possessions, and look through the photo albums while you were listening to their voices. The electroacoustic version is called *Spirit Songs Unfolding* and I used an echo-plate too much— and afterwards I thought, never again, I just let it go.

IR   And were you reading political texts?

AL   Yes. Ruth Anderson and I were living together by then, and we have still got bookshelves full of all of that at home. It did not influence our lives completely but it did influence our teaching greatly so we both taught courses on women in music together.

IR Were there any specific texts that were particularly influential?

AL Susan Griffin in particular. But I mean, it came from all over the place.

IR Going back to *Womens Work*, can you speak about the process of assembling the collection?

AL I think we might have organised the ordering of the pieces in conjunction with several, or quite a few of the women, though not all of them were necessarily in New York.

IR And were they all people that you knew, an organic network?

AL Yes.

IR And then there is the second issue.

AL Yes, we did one more issue, we wanted to include a few more women and it was a lot of fun doing the first issue, and figuring out how to distribute it. And, again, I think it was a collective distribution process, in addition to placing it in various bookstores and so on. I think Alison would probably have decided on the layout of the pieces in the second issue. The second issue is on one side of a big double sheet with a lot of short pieces by various women, one of whom is Christina Kubisch, one of whom is my partner Ruth Anderson, and a whole group of other people.

IR Did you conceive of it as a poster, as well?

AL I guess we did. It was just going to be easier to mail, too.

IR   And were there any other collective feminist projects at all similar that you were involved in at the time?

AL   None that I recall. There was a collective performance project, with Alison, Ruth and myself, but there were both men and women involved—Phil Corner, Tom Johnson, Dika Newlin, Charlie Morrow, Daniel Goode and others—called *Sounds out of Silent Spaces*. We kept it up for two years and the group kept growing. We would get together for an afternoon, stretching into the early evening with food in between, say a Saturday, bring ideas to the afternoon, and just conjure up pieces together. Then the following day, Sunday, in the evening, we would do them and invite all our friends.

IR   So how many of you would there be on a Saturday?

AL   Twelve, fifteen of us.

IR   And were the pieces collectively authored?

AL   Some were, or one of us would bring a fully-realised piece and then we would work on it. It was a bit of a mix, pretty loose.

IR   And then you would have the performance the next day?

AL   We would do an informal performance with our friends there. Some of the pieces were participation pieces, so everybody got involved. A lot of us were doing participation pieces at the time.

IR   And were there any scores that came out of it?

AL   Some of them ended up being published in various places,

EAR Magazine for example. There was a very nice publication that Roger Johnson put together, just called *Scores*[3]: a whole collection of scores of different types. Some of the pieces that had come out of *Sounds out of Silent Spaces* were published in it.

IR   And that was in New York?

AL   Yes, there was a tremendously active scene there with a lot of alternative spaces cropping up. This was the era of the artists' lofts—or informal galleries, dance performance spaces. Before Soho became prime real estate.

IR   How did people support themselves financially?

AL   Charlie Morrow was a brilliant sound designer for commercial projects, as well as art projects, so he supported himself that way. Ruth was full-time faculty at Hunter College. Alison would do teaching things here and there, workshops, residencies and performances. I was doing part-time teaching, and performances, workshops and so on. Dika Newlin was a scholar, and undoubtedly teaching. Phil Corner was teaching, Tom Johnson was the music critic for *The Voice*, and at the time performing. We would piece a living together if we were not doing full-time teaching. And it was perfectly possible to do that. We would get grants. It wasn't a great living, but it was a living.

3   Roger Johnson, *Scores: An Anthology of New Music*, New York: Schirmer, 1981.
•   [Piano burning image page right] photograph credit: Peter Elgar.

'WOMENS'
WORK

Mieko Shiomi	Anna Lockwood
Julie Winter	Jackie Apple
San Dienes	Pauline Olivros
Mary Lucier	Alison Knowles
Bici Forbes	Marilyn Wood
Simone Forti	Heidi Von Gunden
Elaine Summers	Beth Anderson
Wendy Greenburg	Carole Weber
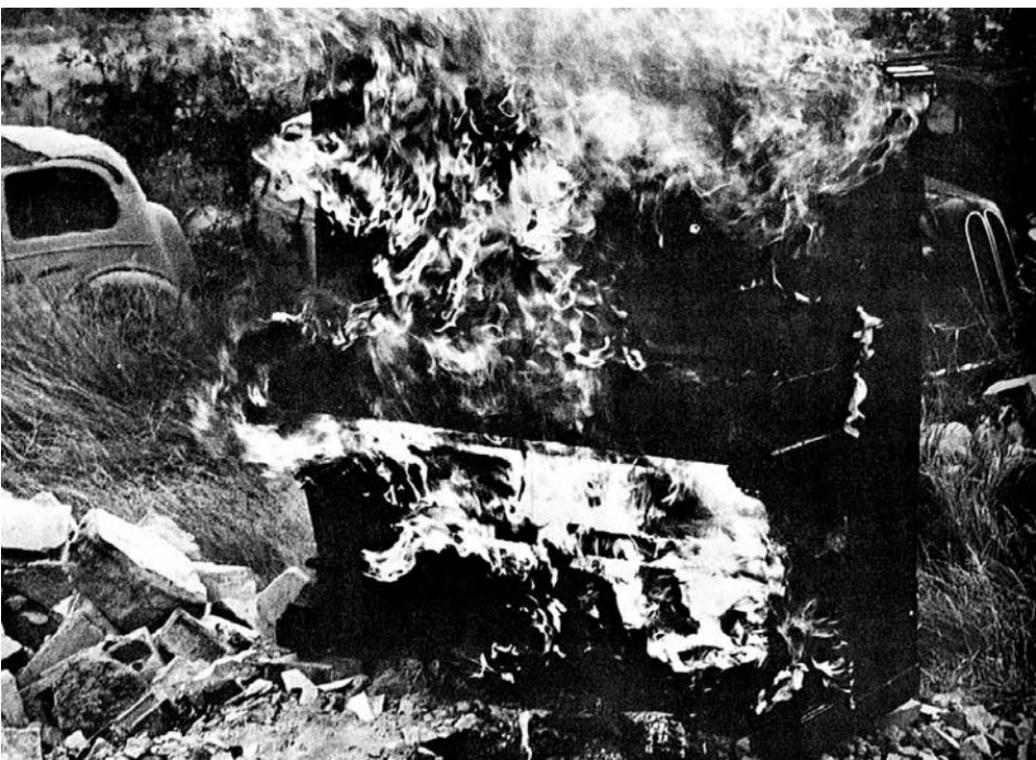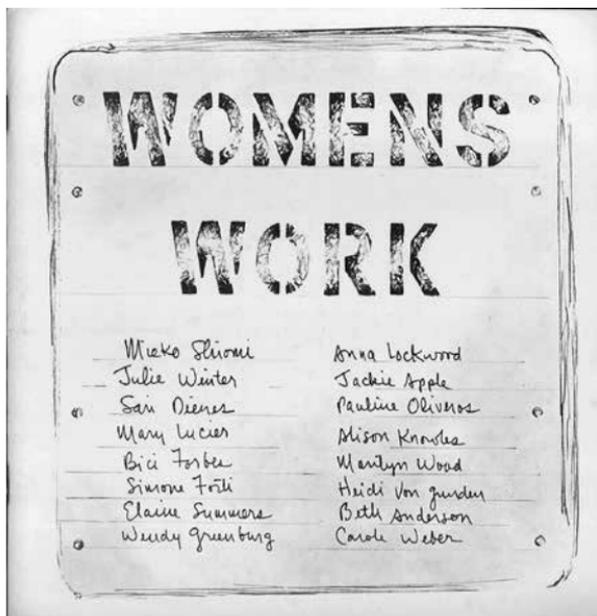
ESW

CIRCLES

Begins with, extending from Cecil Taylor's Unit Structures

A convexing
beautiful blur
incised with
endful floating,
capped by popular gravity,
grounded—
to hören, to aufhören.
Exit flows, remake:

here I am tracing,
stepping in but not to get
anywhere, nor to pronounce
performance deals out spasmic
burns we cradle and compare
defi(n/l)ed by system's skins

My tripled hand isn't
used to writing, the bump
failing the hard rim but the
pianist's hand's limber,
reek into two handwritings,
mine dispelled into barely
one, the chatter of keys:
letters, piano, notes. How
can I listen with polarized
vision? Feels mumbling
intestinal blubbers shaking
innards from the first
time I heard Unit Struc-
tures on CD, foetal on a
grandma-time-ago settee
in Bermondsey trickling.
Fuelled belly swells. Steps,
writing from, with, layers
of listening—the taste of
Soho's gentle throng is
Steps—histories growing—
constant exchange—empty
mutters. Sweaty layered.

No mention of fifths, lines, but
we could read that way, fifths
dripping :
waiting for *the recognised* at
The Whitney at 8.30pm, and
there

etched undiscovered missed
piano sitting, open lidded
everything swells

it's not still,

intergenerational
minds groping,

it's still going, something
new again.

Yet we keep creeping, fingering
into jazz histories, two
hands, one scrawl, one like
mine, wrangled and arched.
Otherdirection too. Words-
isms, chronic cata-vision,
show fissure, tangled issue fun
riping, beams. Heard. Inhale
instinctively. It's new again.

Circles again.
Cactic.
Dresses, fabrics/plants
winding angular rhythms.

Zwischenzeit, sways.
Our each different histories,
submerged—choking for
my light. Further breaths.
Time zones, foggy London

streaming bellows swallow
Cecil's rhythm gutter. Wind
in circles, moon—London's,
New Jersey's, at The Whitney's
fifth floor window—over the
Hudson river, over the Thames.

The page. Genetic
conversations.
Total defiance of breasts
plucking. It's also still.

The freeness feels grossly,
hurtles and gets washed up,
smarmy felted

circles

energy porous catapults
rhythms, scratching

now the Thames is crunching,
my way only and the Hudson
mellowing—it's not stopping.
Taking, there's a lot of it.
Transcribing the evidence—
brawls, from 1966.

ABJECT SUBJECT ENSEMBLE
(FARAHNAZ HATAM, COLIN HACKLANDER,
SACHA KAHIR, MATTIN)

HOW TO PRACTICE SURGERY ON YOURSELF WITH INSTRUCTIONAL SCORES

What is a person, as opposed to a non-person? One might begin to address the question by appealing to a second distinction: between agents, characterised by the ability to act freely and intentionally, and mere patients, caught up in events but in no sense authors of the happenings involving them.

—M. Lance and W. H. White, *Stereoscopic Vision, Persons, Freedom, And Two Spaces of Material Inference*

We embody our conditioning, which is constructed linguistically, socially, sexually, culturally, racially, economically, historically, biologically, and more. This embodiment, then, is in turn expressed through our speech, our actions and interactions, and our gestures. Can we change our conditioned perspectives by changing our speech, our actions, our interactions and our gestures through performance, thereby reversing the polarity of causation? Can we do this in a confined space—a studio in Berlin for example—like patients isolated in a hospital ward who must cure themselves by becoming experts by identifying the pathological condition that confined them there in the first place?

NO–HOW: A CRITICAL SERIES OF EMBODIED STUDIES OR, IN OTHER WORDS, PUTTING OURSELVES ON THE LINE (FROM 14TH OCTOBER 2015 AND ONGOING)

Launched by a group of musicians and artists at NK Berlin (an artist-run space), this experimental series started from a critical standpoint towards current culture and music in particular, including the avant-garde, popular and obscure. Does music contain transformative qualities? Or is it just a soundtrack for

our fucked up times? We have been exploring various texts and trying, with varying levels of success and failure, to embody the themes of these texts in a succession of short performative scores. These scores might be seen as a kind of distillation by reduction of certain key themes in the texts. Sometimes acting on a set of rules: trying to improvise as a group within the confined logic of a language game. While on other occasions we have pretended to be pigs with anonymous communisation theorists.

The group began by looking at how linguistic rules and norms govern our behaviour. The philosopher Ray Brassier, with whom several members of the group have worked, suggested texts for us to read by Wilfrid Sellars. Sellars' writings on rule/pattern governed behaviour conceive of linguistic norms passed from trainer to trainee which form the social norms foundational to any community. Sellars' work has interesting implications for the notion of "freedom" in improvisation and "extreme" or transgressive performance, which soon becomes rule-governed despite efforts to the contrary. Improvisation requires rules, even if in order to break or bend them, and rules re-enacted by human organisms always contain certain variations.

In noise we have a clear example of how the transgression of rules becomes a norm and therefore loses its purpose as noise, unwanted sounds or disturbance. Certain tropes that at some point were transgressive often become accepted by a community and therefore lose their critical negative potential. However, there is no discussion of how these transgressive rules become the rules of noise making.

With regards to notions of freedom in improvisation, Wilfrid Sellars' argument poses an interesting problem: free improvisation in music tries to break its own conventions but does not

take into account how freedom is understood as a convention (i.e. how the self can come up with new gestures and new sounds free from its own determinations). As a result, in improvisation we often see the fetishisation of self-expression and indeterminacy. On the other hand, for Sellars, freedom is the generation of socially acknowledged rules producing self-determination (this is the opposite of understanding the self as the agent of freedom). As we said before, we are determined in different ways and the point is not to think that we can spontaneously undermine these determinations, but instead the point would be to learn about the rules governing these determinations and collectively act upon them, consequently becoming agents in the process. Hence, the scores reproduced here function as rules or a set of instructions to explore our conditioned freedom from a specific perspective. By doing this we connect everyday activities to a collective artistic praxis through generic gestures.

Furthermore, we have identified another type of conditioning, arising from the format of the reading group. Interaction in reading groups is mostly discursive, and as a result, those who can express themselves better are often more prominent. By having to come up with ideas for the scores and then performing these, we generated a different type of sociability in the sense that we found ourselves sometimes doing things that we would have never expected beforehand (see the score *Paid Pigs*). In other words, through the embodiment of these scores, we became more aware of how we are constructed as subjects in a specific situation, by both historical and material conditions and the way that we normally behave towards each other. But not only this, we use ourselves as material for further improvisation: we are pathological products of a sick system, therefore our "normality" has been taken as a symptom to be analysed, decoded, explored and exposed as something extremely weird.

There is a tradition of avant-garde performance that centres on following an instruction. These instructive scores were central to the Fluxus movement. George Brecht's *Drip Music* (1959) instructs one performer to stand on a tall ladder, while slowly pouring water into a tuba or horn held by a second performer at ground level (Flux-version 1). This would still contain an element of improvisation, but one that might be described as non-expressive, and object-orientated, utilising the height of the ladder, for example, to create the timbre of the sound. Another score in the series simply proposes "dripping" with no mention of performers or anything else, implying that anything dripping is in fact an enactment of this score. Brecht's scores enact an extensive claim on reality in a similar way that a 1:1 scale functions. Our scores often attempted to operate in relation to these aforementioned traditions.

In one score, which explored gender, a male member of the group enacted "being" a woman through parody, earning him the title "super woman". A female member of the group jokingly critiqued this performance by saying that from now on he should play drums embodying a man influenced by heavy metal, punk, and noise music, which he is. But to do this consciously rather than unconsciously might lead to a kind of bodily confusion, like being too conscious of breathing or walking. But could consciously playing yourself in your daily interactions become a kind of deconstruction? Could this be a first step towards deconditioning?

According to Sellars, rules are "written out in flesh". But can these rules be rewritten, not just conceptually (as in the score), but in the "flesh"? In the phase of our embodied studies group where we looked at gender, we examined the texts of Shulamith Firestone and Paul B. Preciado. Both can be said to use a form of deconstructed scientism to destroy the basic assumptions of gender

norms inscribed in human biological make-up. As Firestone states in her seminal work *The Dialectic of Sex:*

> Empirical science left repercussions in its wake: the sharp acceleration of technology upset the natural order [...] certainly it is too late for conservationism, the attempt to *redress* natural balances. What is called for is a revolutionary ecological programme that would attempt to establish a *humane* artificial (man-made) balance in place of the natural one, thus also realizing the original goal of empirical science: human mastery of matter.

Wilfred Sellars' legacy centres on his distinction between the "manifest image" and the "scientific image". The former has to do with our common sense and ability to rationalise from our perception, which informs much traditional philosophy e.g. "phenomenology". The "scientific image" instead is able to explore imperceptible entities—like the molecules and their atomic and sub-atomic constituents—without making any practical or moral claims. This potentially counters most traditional discourse in the social sciences. Sellars continues a critical enlightenment project which began with Kant that asks: what is the self, how is it constructed, and what it can know? "Manifest qualities are qualities whose existence is not separable from the possibility of their being presented to us in experience".[1] We know other things exist but, for example, we cannot see, feel or hear atoms as "things in themselves". For this we need a "scientific image" often termed "a third person point of view".[2] Rather than opposing science and

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1   Lucy Allais, *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and His Realism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p.210.

2   Sellars believed the job of philosophy was to fuse these images synoptically into

reason, with the help of the scores we tried to see ourselves from a third person point of view by playing with how we normally act in a "natural" way. Basically the scores help us to denaturalise ourselves and our habits by establishing a perspective on our own conditioning.

Among questions about freedom and performance we also ask: can science provide a new antinomian impulse that was once the domain of artistic transgression? Do all these forms of engagement with the enlightenment's "disenchantment with the world", from Firestone to Sellars, and his various progeny, share a potentially liberating project? What is science? Can the early Russian Social Revolutionaries' (the Narodniks') assassination of the aristocracy to prove to peasants that the Tsar and his kind were not divine, and could be killed by ordinary people, be seen as a form of science? There is disenchantment in the project that science once promised—to brush aside ghosts and kings—but that it ultimately failed to deliver. While art, historically at the service of ghosts and kings, attempted during the height of modernism to become a science. What useful resonance of either of these projects is left? As the last star goes out, and like the protagonist in Mayakovsky's poem "Listen!", we clutch at sleeves of art, science,

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a "stereoscopic image". The implications of what this means informs the basis of a split between left Sellarsians who stress the social function of language, and right Sellarsians who see the "scientific image" as rewriting the "manifest image" of philosophy and attacking what they term "folk psychology'" On the left, to take one instance, you have the advocates of "Theory Theory" popular in child psychology, who see all children as philosophers and scientists asking questions about reality and building epistemological models. One model replacing another as they develop more accurate models in a series of mini-enlightenments. On the right you have the likes of P. M. Churchland who sees attempts like the above as naive scientific realism utilising a positivistic instrumentalism.

and culture demanding the glimmer of hope.

Presented across the following pages are some of the scores that we have developed in these sessions.
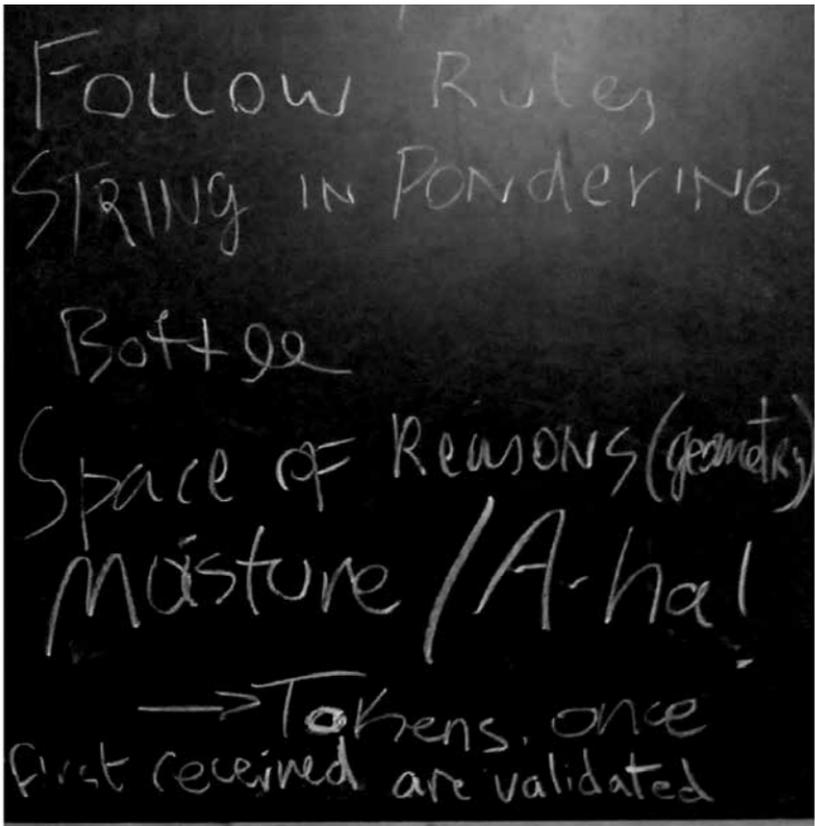
ABJECT SUBJECT ENSEMBLE

FIRST PERSPECTIVE: APPROACHING CONDITIONING, LINGUISTICALLY

Only subsequently does the language learner become a full-fledged member of the linguistic community, who thinks thoughts (theoretical and practical) not only about non-linguistic items, but also about linguistic items, i.e., from the point of view of Verbal Behaviorism, about first level thoughts. He has then developed from being the object of training and criticism by others to the stage where he can train and criticize other language users and even himself. Indeed he has now reached the level at which he can formulate new and sophisticated standards in terms of which to reshape his language and develop new modes of thought.

—Wilfrid Sellars, "Meaning as Functional Classification"

SESSION ONE: TOKEN EXCHANGE

TEXT   "Meaning as Functional Classification" by Wilfrid Sellars

SCORE   Think of something specific you want to express. Choose a word that is not usually associated with your desired expression. Use this word with your new meaning in conversation. Others should come to understand the new meaning through inference & use.

SESSION TWO: TAPPING–OUT THOUGHTS

TEXT *Language as Thought and as Communication* by Wilfrid Sellars

SCORE Close your eyes. Observe your thoughts. Each time a thought enters your mind, tap the table with a pen. Be as precise as possible in identifying a thought, and strike as soon as you realise a thought is indeed occurring.

SESSION THREE: RAPPING–OUT–LOUD

TEXT "Behaviorism, Language & Meaning" by Wilfrid Sellars

SCORE Read 'Behaviorism, Language & Meaning' by Wilfrid Sellars. Summarise the main points; list key terminology; write down any tangential ideas that have come to mind during the course of the reading. Create a short rap with these materials, then rap-out-loud.

SESSION FOUR: SYNTACTICAL SCRAMBLINGS

TEXT "Language, Rules & Behavior" by Wilfrid Sellars

SCORE Explore absurdity and shock as forms of disturbance in language in order to create a form of linguistic disorientation. Speak out-loud. Attempt to infer meaning from one another.

SECOND PERSPECTIVE: APPROACHING CONDITIONING THROUGH GENDER & SEXUALITY

It must be remembered that human beings have a tremendous fear of just that kind of life for which they long so much but which is at variance with their own structure.

—Shulamith Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex*

[B]oth gender and sex are historically determined. Both are entirely social and can only be abolished together—just as exchange-value and use-value will both have to be abolished in the process of communisation.

—Endnotes, *The Logic of Gender*

SESSION FIVE: PAID PIGS

TEXT   *The Logic of Gender* by Endnotes

SCORE   Act like pigs until somebody pays you not to. For group realisation in the company of others (if at all possible, in the company of communists).

SESSION SIX: ABOLISHING WITHIN

TEXTS   *The Category of Sex; One is Not Born a Woman; The Straight Mind* by Monique Wittig

SCORE: Realise each instruction separately in 4 performative movements:

—Embody the panoptic pressure
—Be a Human Sampler
—Fuck your gender by means of parody
—Kill the dominator inside yourself

SESSION SEVEN: TRANSGRESS YOUR SEX

TEXTS   *Dialectic of Sex; The Ultimate Revolution: Demands and Speculations* by Shulamith Firestone

SCORE   Transgress your sexuality and morality intermittently over the course of seven days. Keep a journal of your transgressions and their effects. Share with others.

SESSION EIGHT: PHANTOMED GENDER

TEXT   Technogender, chapter from *Testo Junkie* by Paul B. Preciado

SCORE   Without pause or hesitation, list as many attributes as possible that constitute the individual and subjective construction of your own gender. Share with others.

SOPHIE HOYLE

BETWEEN ETHICS AND EROTICA

DECONSTRUCTING DESIRE IN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC AND BDSM SUBCULTURES

This essay will explore some aspects of the politics of music subcultures, situated between desire and criticality, immersion and distance, and acts of complicity. I am interested in individual and collective performances of identity, and the personal fantasies generated by subcultural aesthetics. As a queer, mixed-race (but white-looking) woman, I question my pleasure in and position towards subcultures of Post-Punk, EBM, Industrial, Noise, Hardcore and Kink, whose music and aesthetic is associated with masculinity and aggression. The use of military, prison and industrial aesthetics, and imagery of fascist authority (as in Cabaret Voltaire's "Do the Mussolini (Headkick)", 1978) claimed to be a political act critiquing the military-industrial state; although we might question whether this really was a political act in itself. Even if so, other subcultures have since recycled, depoliticised and commodified these aesthetics. According to corporate music history, these subcultures consisted of and catered to straight white males, but there also existed histories and narratives of QTPOC in Queercore and Afro-punk. Acute awareness of the ethics of musical subcultures exploitatively using cultural symbols should not stop us exploring how these can hold transformative potential for marginalised social groups. I want to extend this analysis to understand what part they can play in QTPOC erotic fantasy, especially in BDSM.[1] Where do cultural symbols of violence intersect with structural violence? What is resistance and submission? Can we act collectively in a meaningful way, or will our actions and symbols inevitably be recuperated? What is the continuing potential for symbols of (a non-misogynistic) masculinity and (consenting) aggression, for empowerment

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1   BDSM can include Bondage, Domination and Submission, and Sado-Masochism; activities include role-play, and can use semi-public spaces of dark rooms and dungeons.

and subversion in contemporary queer subcultures?

SYMBOLS OF HYPER–MASCULINE AGGRESSION IN MUSIC SUBCULTURES: THE POST–PUNK ERA

"I need an order, shoot"

—Gang of Four, "I love a man in uniform", (1982)[2]

The repurposing of signifiers of oppression in the post-punk era has been asserted as a subversive act; a militant form of resistance and anti-fascism. Post-punk is a broad term for a period of cultural production falling roughly between 1976 and 1984 (Reynolds 2006) and responding to the socio-political context of a post-industrial West, in a context of Cold War fear and paranoia, the 1973 oil crisis and news media portrayals of imminent ecological and political catastrophe. It is described as an era of a DIY ethic, made possible in the UK thanks to certain welfare state provisions, particularly free university education under the Labour Party (1974-1979). Many post-punk bands formed after attending Art and Design courses, referencing and drawing on an aesthetic lineage of experimental modernism, though simultaneously tending to be anti-institutional, criticising academia and formal education. Post-punk was also about the politics of music-making itself, of self-organisation, and the energy and labour required to construct and maintain enduring alternative cultures. The advent of the 1979 Thatcher government vastly increased social

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2   "I love a man in uniform" was banned by the BBC during the Argentinian-UK Falklands War.

inequality and unemployment: as a response to the violent and alienating impacts of burgeoning neoliberalism in Thatcher's Britain, a resistance formed. Manifest aggression expressed itself in the sounds, clothes and images of subcultures. This included new permutations of the cut-up, in the cutting up of the tapes and loops of Cabaret Voltaire, and in Scratch video, such as the aggressive editing style of the Duvet Brothers' "War Machine" (1984). Such experiences resonated in contemporary literature. J. G. Ballard's 1973 novel *Crash* exhibited the aggressive and libidinal aspects of capitalism, inspiring The Normal's 1978 single "Warm Leatherette" (covered by Grace Jones in 1980). In Crash, Ballard described the car crash as harnessing "elements of eroticism, aggression, desire, speed, drama, kinesthetic factors, the stylizing of motion, consumer goods, status [sic]" (1970, in Russell 2012). Other examples of the raw aesthetic of post-punk include Gang of Four, formed in Leeds in 1977 and described as "militant pop" (Reynolds 2006), with their deconstructed, sparse and jarring musical style and lyrical content, drawing on a neo-Marxist critique of consumer-culture alienation and military aggression: "blood pours out from the 18-inch screen, the corpse is a new personality" (*5.45*, 1979). SPK formed in 1978, named after the radical German anti-psychiatry group Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv (active from 1970-71), whose manifesto looks to the structural causes of psychiatric illness resulting from capitalism and strategises to "turn illness into a weapon". This is mirrored in SPK's 1980 single "Slogun" including the lyrics "Kill, Kill, Kill for inner peace—Bomb, Bomb, Bomb for mental health—Therapy through violence!". SPK's album artwork includes images of surgery and anatomy, alongside militaristic imagery and corporal punishment, suggesting a critique of how people with psychiatric conditions are positioned as pathological under a medical gaze, and marginalised within wider society. The grinding industrial and abject sounds of Throbbing Gristle, formed in 1976 in Hull,

are associated with the disturbance of the industrial and post-industrial landscapes in which they were created (Genesis P-Orridge in Shapiro 2000: 64-67). Their song "Discipline", specifically the live performance at Kezar Pavilion, San Fransisco in 1981[3] features the singer Genesis P-Orridge rocking back and forth on the stage screaming "I want discipline" amidst a heaving swell of cranked-up amps and backbeats and a collective euphoria that makes us feel the subversive potential of the anti-production of noise as a *political* action (Laswell in Shapiro 2000). Fad Gadget (Frank Tovey) deconstructed the embodiment and performance of masculinity in his confrontational and exaggeratedly camp stage performances, including applying shaving cream and pulling out armpit and pubic hair during "Ladyshave" (1981): "you don't have to shave it!", questioning the social regulation of women's bodies. German band D.A.F. (Deutsche Amerikanische Freundschaft) also played with a camp performance of hypermasculinity, including albums with highly homoerotic cover images of leather and bare skin evoking the aesthetics of LGBTQ+ BDSM subcultures such as the Leather subculture. The combination of these different symbols in post-punk to evoke and question both sexuality and gender roles, as well as military and state authority, could be seen as a broad trend of deconstructing normative social values, even if the precise political intentions of each groud differs.

Under-arm hairs slicked as your tongue travels across. Beat like a punch, a thrust, a sharp stab of pleasure. A snarl from the screen, harsh touch as buzzcut hair falls on shoulders on ground.

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3   https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=acrt_0JIyPk&list=PLINVuYE1PtRH8bFX8d7k2xt0QN5UbaeRx&index=26

Certain military symbols, uniforms and tools were and continue to be prevalent in subcultures such as pund, post-punk and BDS. As a person with Arab family, to see certain pictures of military torture and state genocide in conflict zones and occupations in the Middle East, and their cultural use as entertainment—both as pornography and "gore footage" in which people are violated and dehumanised—is deeply disturbing; and so, military imagery reminds me of current conflicts and the colonial or imperial legacies that preceded them. However, symbols from the Nazi paramilitary SS are relatively normalised in some circles of BDSM, apparently distanced from the anti-semitic genocide of World War Two or contemporary neo-Nazism, and given a different relationship to contemporary images of violent conflict and genocide. Empathy for another person has been shown to be ethno-culturally biased towards those of a similar (perceived) background[4]; is it this comparative distance between some social groups to certain cultural symbols that allow them to enter a sexualised imaginary? I will later look to American-Jewish writer Susan Sontag and her analysis on the cultural phenomenoa of using Nazi symbols in BDSM in post-war Western societies, within the wider research on images of violence and their cultural effect, but for now I will question their role and use in post-punk music cultures.

The cover art for *Discipline* featured Throbbing Gristle standing outside the ex-Nazi Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin and holding a Hitler Youth dagger, supposedly questioning the ethos of Nazi "discipline". Cabaret Voltaire, formed in Sheffield in 1973, used

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4   Chato Rasoal, "Ethnocultural Empathy Measurement, psychometric properties, and differences between students in health care education programmes", study published by Linköping University, Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, 2009.

ominous militaristic imagery in their videos and live performances, including "Fascist Police State" on the album *Methodology 74-78: The Attic Tapes*, *Do the Mussolini (Headkick)* (1978), and *Baader-Meinhof* (1979), after the radical leftist group, looking at militancy across the political spectrum from oppression to retaliation. D.A.F. used the term "Körpermusik" or "Body Music" to describe their hard electronic beats that have a physicality and pulsating drive. The song "Absolute Körperkontrolle" or "Absolute Body Control" (1985) suggests both the biopolitics of the state and Nazi-era obsessions with physical perfection, and an assertion of an erotic, libidinal power through self-discipline turning the militaristic into a "forbidden pleasure" (Gorl, 2016). Their best-known track "Der Mussolini" (1981) asks the audience to dance like Hitler and Mussolini, mimicking the militaristic marches and performativity of fascism. They claim the use of Nazi aesthetics was in response to, and to counteract and undermine, the neo-Nazi movements of the 1980s, and to use these aesthetics in response to the continuing presence of nationalist nostalgia in contemporary German society (Kalinowski 2012). The bands of the post-punk era have various relationships to imagery of fascism; D.A.F. singer Gabriel Delgado Lopez and his family left Spain because of Franco's regime, and so has a lived experience of fascism rather than its use being purely symbolic. There are different relationships to the imagery not only in proximity but also tonality, in terms of different approaches using satire, irony and humour; however, this was not always a clear distinction as some groups contemporary to these examples did use symbols that were seen to be in support of neo-Nazism such as Whitehouse.[5]

5   Whitehouse were active between 1980 and 2008, an "extreme" sub-genre of industrial music self-described as "power electronics". It has been claimed an article written by Bennett on "The New Right" reveals neo-Nazi tendencies;

Does this acknowledgement of the "dark history" of World War Two fascism in relation to the present suggest a potentiality and reclaiming of agency to reshape and reform it? Or is it an attraction that is sensationalist and superficial, not wanting to be held accountable or responsible for the consequences of using such imagery? The use of this imagery in post-punk was deemed to be both controversial and provocative, as well as offensive and crude, is the continued use of these cultural symbolsl a viable strategy for political awarenes?

What has historically been held in the realm of the repressed and forbidden, or the unthinkable or incomprehensible, from the Holocaust to the end of world by nuclear attack (Masco 2006) seems to have a continuing force in the Western social imaginary. These repressions recurrently surge back with libidinal force in an attempt to negotiate the representation of what is too extreme to be articulated in (other forms of) language. The revivalism of certain genres with "new Industrial" and dark-wave (Halciion, 2013) may be occurring as prevailing sociopolitical conditions are similar to those of the original movements; therefore, the sounds and imaginaries are still appropriate. Rory Rowan has described contemporary dark-wave band Raime as creating "austere music for austere times" (2012). The imagery in Noise, Industrial and EBM was originally used as political resistance to bourgeois culture, but the re-use and recycling of images of oppression and fascism perhaps becomes now pastiche, when reframed in a discourse of understanding and awareness of the responsibility of image production and circulation. It could be seen as part of

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however Bennett himself claims it was written with satirical intent and has since been decontextualised: http://williambennett.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/statement.html

a revisiting or churning up of past cultural products and signifiers for audience familiarity and music industry profit. The words "Techno Primitive" scratched on side A of Throbbing Gristle's single "Discipline" have also been used by critic Simon Reynolds to describe the music of D.A.F. (2006). However, this description of an apparently embodied experience of music contains an essentialism; it decontextualises the music from its contingent socio-political context to make it seem as if it were universally accessible, as if there weren't any sociocultural mediators that may make you appreciate or connect with the music. The idea of music being transcendent of an everyday politics of race, gender, class, sexuality, disability is highly questionable. The idea of primitivism, exoticism and (declining or destroyed) civilisation is a recurring theme in these sub-genres, which despite intentions to critique or satirise conservative imaginaries and colonial-imperial histories, may read as straightforward imperialist nostalgia in current cultural climates. Though D.A.F. were explicitly anti-fascist, some of their contemporaries such as Whitehouse had dubious relationships to right-wing politics. Though the subcultural niche of white working-class males in the original movements of Industrial and EBM may not consciously exclude other non-white social groups, it does not actively acknowledge other non-white narratives either; where the kind of imagery used may unintentionally isolate specific social groups.

There is also a problem of direct cultural appropriation by white artists appropriating from non-white cultures; though this is a wider structural problem not only specific to these genres, it has taken specific forms within it. A contemporary example of the problematic use of imagery includes white musician William Bennett aka Cut Hands, formerly of Whitehouse, releasing the album *Afro Noise 1* in 2012, that drew heavily on traditional Haitian vaudou music. Josh Hall (2014) argues that Bennett's po-

sition as a white artist using this material, considering the violent colonial regimes and slavery at the hands of whites in Haiti, and in his exoticising aspects of Afro-Caribbean culture through a colonial-ethnographic lens, amounts to a cultural neo-colonialism. Black experimental musician La Bruha Desi La wrote to *The Wire* magazine regarding a review of *Afro Noise 1* in which he states:

> It has been a constant problem for the black community to have our work diminished and stolen for the use of the white community, where artists are able to earn greater financial rewards and (to a certain extent), success and recognition.

Despite attributing some aspects of this imaginary to a satirical intent, Josh Hall (2014) identifies "in reality … a childish flirtation with far right aesthetics—a flirtation that came to define industrial music—and which now, given the prevalence of those aesthetics in that scene, seems just about the least transgressive thing a 'transgressive' artist could do". Rather than singular authorial intentionality, we ought to turn attention to Hall's question: "what does this work *actually* mean in the real world, and what are its implications?".

Despite the original intentions of the musicians in using this imagery, it is more important to see how it functions, what their impact is, to listen to and respond to the marginalised groups affected by the use of such imagery, such as descendents of Jewish and other minorities persecuted by Nazi regime. What are the power dynamics if a person from the majority (i.e. white) uses symbols that are historically associated with persecuting minorities?

SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY AND FASCISM IN EROTIC SUBCULTURES

"It's no concern—no concern of yours—just fascination …"

—Cabaret Voltaire "Just Fascination" (1983)

Susan Sontag's 1975 article "Fascinating Fascism" explored the book *SS Regalia* and the continuing lure of symbols of authority and fascism in erotic subcultures, particularly how the aesthetics and imaginaries of the Nazi paramilitary group the SS entered BDSM iconography and have specific resonances over other symbols of fascism. Sontag articulates the many contradictions in how Nazi symbols had such popularity in the post-war period: "Why has Nazi Germany, which was a sexually repressive society, become erotic? How could a regime which persecuted homosexuals become a gay turn-on?" (1975). However, Sontag then succinctly describes the imaginary that was associated with the SS and the mythology that it has generated in the illusion of control and power dynamics through military uniforms that "suggest fantasies of community, order, identity (through ranks, badges, medals which 'say' who the wearer is and what he has done: his worth is recognised), competence, legitimate authority, the legitimate exercise of violence". The SS are perceived as being the epitome of violent power in being "singularly brutal and efficient" and because of an aesthetic that was "both dramatic and menacing", which apparently lent it a "solemn eroticism". She suggests that Fascism has an allure in its camp theatricality and performativity, particularly for BDSM which can involve staging and pre-determined roles: "'Fascism is theater' as Genet said. And sadomasochistic sexuality is more theatrical than any other" (Sontag 1975).

Alert—seeing uniforms-worn neat and prim over contours of body, but soft crush of desire spreads through, yielding, coveted

For a post-war generation in western Europe and the US who had not experienced military violence on their territory, this attraction to the "dark side of history" converged with the advent of consumer society, which foregrounds the knowable and the commodifiable. Despite the multiple levels of structural violence implicit in post-war bourgeois culture, such signifiers of extreme physical violence, had come to be seen as the most "authentic" experience, however naive or misplaced this may seem to those who have and continue to experience such violence against their will. For some social groups, using symbols of Nazism is considered a relatively "safe" transgression, relegated to the "past" and apparently disconnected from current neo-Nazism. However, these symbols also retain enough of a sense of fear, perhaps a socialised fear learnt through popular culture, for them still to be seen as (sexually) exciting in BDSM scenarios. Sontag differentiates between this and the use of Nazi symbolism as cultural comment, which she claims has a self-consciousness and strategic use. Though she argues for "shock value" as a form of relevant cultural critique, she dismisses Liliana Cavani's 1976 film *The Night Porter* as contributing to the sexualised mythology of the SS. It seems like D.A.F., Cabaret Voltaire and Throbbing Gristle drew on the drama, solemnity, darkness and eroticism in re-appropriating fascist imagery, using "dark history" as cultural mileage or a shorthand for a meta-anti-fascism or a critique of aggressive masculinity. Despite the crossover, different subcultural imaginaries were generated with different purposes and intentions, both political and apolitical. However, with ongoing repetitions, the cultural potency of these symbols increase, as self-consciousness and fantasy are key to BDSM as "a form of gratification that is both violent and indirect, very mental" (Sontag 1975). However,

even with these attempts at experiencing what is beyond consumerism, all-pervasive commodification endeavoured to "turn every part of people's lives into a taste, a choice" (Sontag 1975). Responding to the oppressions of late-capitalist exploitation, subjects may use role-play to reverse power dynamics and act out a violent release or revenge. In an era of hyper-individualism that expects endless decision-making or the "burden of choice", these familiar, pre-defined roles may become more attractive. BDSM arguably offers a form of subversion in a normative capitalist society, however in many manifestations it is the *nominal* idea of sexual subversion as only a temporary experience for those that may otherwise maintain prevailing sociopolitical structures rather than push against them. Is BDSM the ultimate manifestation of the commodification of sexuality in its use of tools, props and costumes? It is perhaps an idea of subversion that has come to be tied in with an elitism, where the "drama … is all the more exciting because it is forbidden to ordinary people" (Sontag 1975), as if they can access something in the intellectual or sexual appreciation of "dark history" that others can't. In this sharing of similar interests, mainstream BDSM spaces can (unintentionally) perpetuate social inequalities, with problems of accessibility in terms of income: formalised events tend to be expensive, which either assumes disposable income or that people committed to the BDSM scene save money specifically for these events.

"This feeling's over me—Inside me there's a fire—Oh how could it be"

—In Trance 95, "Desire to Desire" (1988)

POWER DYNAMICS IN BDSM

A prominent feature of BDSM communities is that they are explicitly and clearly about *informed consent* to activities. Most BDSM communities aim to be welcoming, with a strong discourse of safe sex, information and education on the protocol and hygiene of activities including flogging, cutting or inserting needles. There is an established practice of using safe words or dialogue to designate when either person has reached a physical or emotional pain threshold, and most official clubs will have rules for entering and staying in the club including a buddy-system to look after attendees. However, rules and regulations within spaces cannot guarantee that everyone will consensually respect personal boundaries. The 1980s Feminist "sex wars" debated the sociopolitical position of sexual activity and its representation in popular culture including BDSM as well as pornography and sex work. Some consider it hermetically sealed, a world away from real-life violence, aiming to offer alternatives to actual traumatic experiences. Samoi, a lesbian-feminist BDSM movement in the United States (1978-1983), contend that violence itself may not be inherently wrong if practiced consensually. Other groups such as Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) consider it on the spectrum of social violence, mirroring and replicating structural inequalities such as male violence against women, and see it as merely a different permutation and perpetuation of this. One argument is part of the idea of relative choice; for example, the claim that despite feeling they are making an informed choice people are unknowingly perpetuating structural inequalities, such as women who take a passive role in these situations, who have grown up in a society where they have been taught to be passive or victims of abuse. These situations perpetuate (perceivably) abusive dynamics. However, this idea can be patronising and reduces the agency of the individual to make their own decisions

and know their own personal boundaries. Psychologically, individuals who have suffered trauma and abuse tend compulsively to put themselves into situations with a high risk of the traumatic episode being repeated; BDSM can be cathartic and a way of regaining control after traumatic experiences, although this depends on the ways it is done and to what ends, and especially whether those engaging feel relieved and empowered, or whether they feel further degraded. There is a further problem of access and safety in terms of the predominant demographic of those attending; for example, in a white, middle-class majority (depending on specific club nights), some non-white attendees may not feel safe; this may not necessarily be determined by numbers of POC as a minority or majority, but more upon whether they feel that the other people are engaged or try to understand a politics of race more generally so that specific BDSM interactions do not re-enact wider sociopolitical inequalities. This is perhaps more about the feeling of relative safety in stating or sharing political affinities, which may be an action that is supported more in queer spaces, as being actively politicised. Again, however, this is not guaranteed and other inequalities can still be perpetuated. Can there be a balance between a greater awareness of the histories of certain symbols and how people may be effected by them in a semi-public BDSM play space or gig, without regulating or controlling individual desires and actions? Can symbols associated with racist, sexist and classist oppression, and colonialism and exploitation, be discussed more openly, allowing an informed use with greater accountability?

QUEER SEXUAL POLITICS AND THE REPURPOSING OF SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY

"Walking through dark corridors then sudden flash—POLICE hi-vis vest—tug at chest then relax—it's only play"

"Let's play—let's play—let's play like we were brothers—let's play like brothers do"

—D.A.F., Brothers (1985)

What is the continuing potential for symbols of (a non-misogynistic and also non-male) masculinity and (consenting) aggression, for empowerment and subversion in the queer erotic imaginary? Queer spaces can be seen to embrace the non-normative in terms of gender and sexuality, and to emphasise intersectionality. They look at power dynamics and how different kinds of inequalities and oppressions intersect and compound one another, suggesting strategies for resisting, surviving and obstructing these. Queer discourses are critical of the hetero-patriarchal industrial-military complex, and queerness as a social movement is about a reclaiming of interpersonal and sociopolitical agency for the oppressed. How do queer people renegotiate common roles and positions within BDSM, such as those relating to authority? What is the allure of symbols of authority and discipline even though we may not ourselves support authoritarianism, police, state or military violence? One aspect is that it is *performative*, and that people divert the unnecessary use of power in everyday situations as seen in "questioning privilege", and learn to reserve this for necessary use or for when it is consensual role-play. When young QTPOC disproportionately experience pain, trauma and violence through constructions of sexuality and gender, and experiences of verbal and physical abuse as a consequence, how

this is dealt with in interpersonal sexual relations can be experienced as a positive catharsis. In itself Queer questions the social construction of gendered attributes, like equating aggression to a cis-gender heterosexual male form of masculinity, and how it is placed in binary opposition to empathy and care. One assumes or hopes that queer spaces may be (relatively) safe spaces where people know and are aware of the wider political implications of certain symbols, or at least where people are willing to discuss them and explain their experiences of abuse, trauma and individual and collective triggers—from the military and police to school and childhood which are common role-play scenarios—which hopefully would be radically different from previous experiences of actual abuse. Queer theory forms part of wider discourses, exploring how we are subject to biopolitical controls regulating and disciplining citizens' lives within a given state, to necropolitical controls (Mbembe 2001) that fundamentally determine who lives and dies. When systematic structural inequalities feel outside of an individual's *immediate* control, role-play and BDSM can be another way of regaining control, often taking place within a wider context of activism and direct political action. Yet, why are some forms or symbols of masculinity or aggression accepted while others are criticised? There are multiple forms of aggressive masculinity in certain accepted forms of political expression, such as pickets and protests as actions that require you to assert your body in public space; they can favour some personalities and abilities over others, especially those with physical or mental disabilities preventing them from being in public spaces or in crowds, or for people who would be put at high risk, such as those whose migration status is unclear and whose arrest could lead to deportation.

Cultural symbols of violence also intersect with structural violence; where multiple forms of capitalist (neo-)colonial violence

underlie and are implicit within the (re)production of elements of BDSM subcultures. I have so far talked about music production and subcultural consumption within the West, though there are a number of artists who also explore the wider global production chains in the creation of BDSM accessories; Maryam Jafri has looked at the factory production of fetish wear exported to the West in her 2011 film *Avalon*, exploring the relationship between commodities and fetishism, and the effects of desire in relation to physical labour and exploitation. Raju Rage has explored the colonial history of rubber production in India and its place in contemporary kink practices in their work "Kink, Culture, Conflict" (2015), including a performance tying a rubber turban juxtaposed with images of colonisation and contemporary scenes of factory production.

ALTERNATIVE HISTORIES OF QTPOC MUSIC SUBCULTURES AND THEIR CONTINUING POLITICAL POTENTIALITIES

"Rules that we do not need—your blood on my cheek—my blood in your veins—a subhuman roar"

—Malaria! "Thrash Me" *(1983)*

According to many mainstream accounts, post-punk subcultures consisted of and catered to straight white males, but there also existed histories and narratives of feminist groups and QTPOC in Riot Grrrl, Queercore and Afro-punk. A specific significance can be attributed to the use of symbols that critique authority by social groups that face multiple oppressions and cultural erasure, offering alternative readings o the re-purposing of symbols of authority as empowerment in post-punk.

Queercore is a social movement and sub-genre of punk and post-punk scenes that emerged in the late 1980s with lyrics, zines and events concerning themes of queer marginalisation and prejudice. A re-purposing of military language in Queercore includes the US band Pansy Division, whose name, consisting of an anti-queer slur combined with division as a military unit, suggests a militant queerness, alongside Polish band Homomilitia, both formed in 1991. A common symbol which has been reclaimed is the pink triangle, originally used to mark out prisoners in Nazi concentration camps that were "sexual deviants" including male homosexuals, often used in combination with other anarchist symbols in punk scenes but now also used by mainstream LGBT organisations.

Afro-punk refers to black members of punk bands in the US and European contexts, within which they may be considered a minority, both within the genre and within wider society. Afro-punk was also a social movement, part of raising consciousness against stereotypical representations associating certain music genres with certain social groups,[6] within wider social movements against marginalisation and prejudice towards minorities. The Templars are an example of a band of black and white skinheads using an aesthetic associated with of masculinity and aggression, which became particularly controversial after the splitting of skinhead subculture into either leftwing or rightwing neo-Nazi factions in the mid-1980s. Abdurraqib (2015) has written on

6   Much music journalism details how post-punk bands "borrowed" and "combined" beats from black music genres with rock, but doesn't often mention that the genre of rock was in itself generated by black musicians such as Little Richard or Chuck Berry (themselves drawing from Sister Rosetta Thorpe) which then became popular and profitable for white mainstream musicians.

racism in 1970s punk scenes and that punk rock, born in part out of a need for white escape, just wasn't prepared to consider a revolution that involved color, or involved women as anything that the scene deemed useful. That, of course, also being a reflection of the time. The term Afro-punk has had a resurgence as a political subculture since the 2000s, even though not necessarily being associated with punk or post-punk music genres. Riot Grrrl is a feminist punk movement originating in the US in the early 1990s, that formed in response to the predominance of male bands in the scene, addressing issues specific to the subculture such as mosh pit violence, as well as wider social subjects such as rape and abuse, using a language of power and revolution such as the slogan "riots not diets".

Though I previously addressed the politics and ethics of consumption and the relation of the cultural to the commodity, music subcultures have historically been highly politicised and there are still political potentialities in contemporary creative subcultures, where they can still suggest a different temporality, a different embodiment of and relation to the world that is anti-normative. The spaces of gigs and clubs still have an exciting aspect of recognition and belonging to a wider social collective structure, to perform, practice and rehearse queer politicar identitiesy. Aesthetic and political imaginations are intertwined, and people work through political-ideological antagonisms through performance and experience. It has been argued that despite attempts to critique capital, "alternative" and "independent" subcultures are perhaps not outside of capital, but are just styles within capital itself, and that the use of specific symbols as signifiers of alterity—questioning masculinity, aggression and violence—in music subcultures and BDSM are recycled and depoliticised. However, many smaller-scale circles of grassroots musicians and supporters are not making profits; many people

struggle to survive and continue to work and live in these subcultures out of ideological commitment and creative engagement. The all-pervasive forces of commodification do not necessarily have to counterbalance or negate the political potential of subcultures. One wider cultural critique could be whether people could redirect this energy directed towards music subcultures or BDSM into more direct political action, but these *are* already related, and not all life experiences should be instrumentalised for political strategy. People should be allowed to live a wider existence that may directly or indirectly support the same social ideals. Within politicised Queer scenes there is a continuing critique of social inequality which questions the commodification and exclusivity of a fetishised "dark side of being in world" in certain music and BDSM subcultures, while still believing in their transformative potential for QTPOC who experience multiple forms of oppression.

CATHARSIS

"The USA and the USSR, Afghanistan and Iraq. When you compare all the ideologies, when you ignore all the apologies, it's Sheer. Naked. Aggression!"

—SPK, "Sheer Naked Aggression" (1987)

In psychological trauma there is a tendency to compulsively repeat the traumatic event,[7] which may or may not lead to a repetition in a way that is cathartic. What about the idea of collective

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7   BA Van Der Volk, "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization and Masochism", 1989.

trauma, and therefore of collective catharsis through a collective cultural imaginary? These post-punk subcultural forms could be using a method similar to an Artaudian Theatre of Cruelty, to "assault the senses" so that which is too extreme and suppressed "wakes up" or comes to surface through a kind of therapy or exorcism. There is a sense of assault both sonically and visually in their harsh and aggressive aesthetics, and in the guttural noises and shouts for what cannot be articulated in words, conveying an urgency rather than drawn-out contemplation. Despite Artaudian critique believing in the insufficiency of language, it *does* inevitably still function in the realm of representation. Although this could also be a kind of assault, to be forced to think of past and current acts of violence in the realm of everyday realities of cultural consumption; but perhaps this is patronising, especially for those that live daily with oppression and trauma and do not need reminding or triggering. The repetition of fascistic imagery may be an attempt to purge it for some, but in its repetition does it diminish the impact of these images? In their re-use, does it become normalised? Do people become desensitised to the extent of the extreme violence behind these symbols? Who can claim to be undertaking the act of catharsis on behalf of wider society? Perhaps they are merely responding to the cultural suppression of these topics, or highlighting the strong relation between suppression and attraction. Despite the individual use and intention, how can one relate or explain the symbols and actions of such music and queer BDSM subcultures to family, communities and wider social groups given their life experiences of undergoing systematic violence? Perhaps we don't need to if the context of its use is private and consensual, and in semi-public spaces like BDSM clubs people try to manage and negotiate people's different desires and triggers. If these images and music enter public spaces, people could argue that we need to engage in conversation and discussion about why they are being used; but

what about the impacts on those who have already been traumatised being forced to re-live such trauma? Shouldn't we just pay attention to the needs of marginalised and minority groups that are directly effected and prioritise them, rather than expecting them to perform additional labour by explaining to others the potential impact of such imagery? What are the ethics of using symbols and acts of violence in a wider Western cultural context of increasing desensitisation towards representations of violence, rape and torture in films, computer games, news media imagery; is a self-awareness and self-reflexivity of using and consuming these images enough? Does it depend on how far the symbol is circulated and to what audience? Ethical considerations differ according to the areas of circulation—whether in private, semi-public—such as BDSM play spaces, or publicly—on album artwork or in the press..

The use of fascistic aesthetics by individuals in Industrial, EBM and BDSM subcultures, and the fact of their wider social reception remains an area of contentious negotiation.

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HANNAH BLACK

EVERYTHING NICE

This music is already about everything—mysteries of survival and of impassioned giving up, loss of love and the arrival of loss through love, contained in the kernel of yearning around which the song allows itself to be built, voice like a bent back stretching, like the long accountancy of grains of sand who count themselves falling through the glass waist. The words rush forward into nothing but the chorus calls them back. The sand inventory includes and organises the senses and even the limbs into whatever unifying idea. Rocks become seconds; it takes time to make time.

To the unity of pop music there is so little to add or what I could add would already be in debt to it. But it's no good not to want to be indebted—leave it to the rich to count themselves in credit, as if immune to the long fall through the glass waist. Meanwhile even death is abolished in song and meanwhile the soul is too heavy or too light having been mined for a strength shipped elsewhere, meanwhile I can't bring myself to take a taxi to the party across town. The words rush forward into nothing but surely something calls them back.

In the bodega a little girl in a blue dress with blue ribbons braided into her hair catwalks to the glass cases at the back to pick a drink. Her mother yells anxious instructions. The women helped her wear the complicated dress though they know it's no protection, they teach her beauty and that beauty is not enough and they yell half-despairing love at her dignified back. That lesson is unlearned in pop music where the beautiful strong Black women of the universal dream always know the right thing to say and what to wear and this knowledge is a form of currency, is very current, just movements of the ocean. The words rush forward into nothing but the chorus calls them back.

The glass waist and the sand that enumerates by naming itself,

too fast to follow. The beaches where they brought the living drift-wood in and the palatial ruins of the commonly held feeling that cannot properly be called love. In Los Angeles in October every radio station played Drake and Fetty Wap on rotation and the freeway pulsed with their different devotions, the women were nowhere in song. A fragment stuck in the head: to the tune of a Lady Saw song I recalled the line in a Robert Creeley poem "be wet with a decent happiness". Can happiness be indecent I asked the poem of memory, I could not hear its answer but I know Lady Saw has devoted herself to God after a vision—God is what's left or one of the possible things left to hope for after other forms of proximity become untutored customs or just fail.

This shared music is but can't be the prelapsarian remnant of the shared improvisation of meaning. It treats money like a language to rescue it from its prevailing death and in this way it speaks the corroded coin of survival.

I wanted to show you an image of a Black South African miner being X-rayed on leaving the mine to check for stolen items, the peering white overseer, I wanted to call the image Black Transparency after a book or something by white people about the internet and alienation. I was thinking about compulsive self-disclosure and then I was disgusted with myself, there is no real universal equivalence. And my mother. The words move forward into nothing and the chorus calls them back.

There is no universal forgiveness, forgive me for what music allows me. It carries with it the ships and the lost languages, oh everyone knows this shadow, the possibility that love will come again, until death does fuse us together, the accidental quality of life as such as far as we know and we know. With ferocious gentleness the simplicity of the melody presses its fingertips into the

visible and invisible flesh. The dead are with us and we are with them, though labour keeps interrupting the signal.

I read Bartholme de las Casas' history of Spanish arrival in the Caribbean and fell into a heavy sleep and in the morning I was left with just a child's question, something like, what happens to what happens? In Dionne Brand's book *Map to the Door of No Return*, a book about the savagery in all senses of hope of home, she asks a sea goddess why must we live like this and the goddess replies "so what." Here the "so what" is converted into music. So what? I know I'm finite in all directions, but through accidents of geography and perspective, the horizon is invisible. Let me live.

None of this is what I meant to say, consider it an improvisation that the song's formal rigidity has made possible. I wrote on Twitter, "Popcaan writes the best love songs they're all like body is miracle I want to give you all my money let's dance and have a baby." So this ends with this impossible demand, the impoverished collectivity that walks around as song.

LATEST HOUSE TRACTS ON THE LEFT

The following extracts are part of a permanent work-in-progress titled *When I was a little stereo...* For this particular edit, we have subtracted a prologue on the relation between House, cinema, sampling, and *musique concrète*, as well as a series of closing paragraphs on Techno *as* Techno.

(...)

I: 120 —

1   House "as" House: a gesture towards unanimity and no self-control through inscription and sketches, only exceeded by the materiality that supports it (that materiality, regardless of the cases, includes Techno (*Good Life*)).

2   House cannot quite contain itself as a category, since the very inscription—or: prescription (*Release Your Body*)—of its cases points to an edge beyond itself and a waning into an uncharted priority or exterior (regarding, but not exclusively, techniques and trademarks).

3   House articulates the rupture between a sound plan and its physical instantiation, whilst Techno opens the gap between synchrony (realisation) and its diachronic conception, at least because in between both—i.e., in-between nearly nothing—there's (precisely!) nothing but a sound addiction (*Got the Bug*).

5   House, or, the surplus of a category that cannot be subsumed either by concepts or their instances. (But: was House really conceived besides genres that were interdependent but mutually exclusive?)

7   In the same way that everything can become cinema (and *musique concrète*), anything can delay House—House, or the breaks (compressions, or spaces); the snaps (distensions); the snare drums (derivations); the high-hats (reductions)—Both House and cinema are related, and yet not reducible, to subtraction as a category.

9   House, or, the disjunction displayed between its permanent sketch and the instance of Techno. (Or: the relationship between House and Techno as displayed in between *The Theory* and *Living for the Nite*).

11   House, thankfully, cannot be an art, because it subordinates the exteriority of the tracks to the function of the mix (but since the House mix has its purpose in the tracks that it shelters (i.e., outside itself), it also cannot become a (major...) art (whatever that could possibly mean)).

13   House, or, sound as the subtraction of music (music, whatever that means), since the relation between House and Techno—or: recurrence and the insistence of its formula(tion)—remains one of disjunction (because neither House nor Techno are the sound the music).

15   House could never ground a nation, because House is—or: House is only ... —both a sci-fi Diaspora (*Promised Land (Club Mix))* and a technical instance (*Washing Machine*). (And that's why House can be nothing more—but also nothing less—than a political theology, and—and not unlike the ones that (somehow...) "precede" it—a highly sexualised one (*Your Love*), at that... (that may also mean that "the House mix" is the ultimate musical tautology (whatever that could—or not—(turn out to) be)).)

18   The historical distinction of House amounts to sedimen-
tation and deposition in layers without reason. (House does not
pass away, but permanently delays itself as category fatigue.)

19   Or: anyway, House carves the world (*Computer Madness*).

22   House, astray (awaiting).

24   Or: House was waiting on sound, so perhaps there is still life,
but only not for House (*Incidental*).

26   Certainly, questions of House are asked but not according to
a spokesman, and only for an incalculable plurality of dancers.

27   House pre-and co- repeats itself (*No Way Back*).

29   House "says and means nothing", and that characterises
"successful" House. (You have no outside to which it refers,
because it contracts the world.)

31   House: dense, poems (*The Poem*).

36   Without House, dancers would not enjoy the silence colour-
ing architecture, or even a sound for thoughts (i.e., bodies).

37   Even at the spectacle she turns only to sounds that are for
nobody, and even nothing: everything else is theatre, not on their
side and even less according to the objects of House (*Move Your
Body*).

38   Whenever tracks that all of you are still dancing re-enter in
the mix, House's category fatigue will still be inflamed (the course
of House includes commercial understanding and even the ten-

dency to top off what can only be loved by what, "as House", is surprised by an unfamiliar proximity (*Hideaway*)).

41   House, or, a venerable dance, which demands from its dancers to go aside and take time within the dance steps (a goldsmith's dance, achieving nothing if the dancers, here and there, do not step slowly).

42   When one dances too fast or too slow one achieves nothing (*French Kiss*).

45   House: always too late. (House, yet.)

48   Mixing attaches itself to the nuances of House (inter/worlds), and there slows down its movement in a montage of the world (the tardiness of House, regardless of appearances, has no measure: as it expands ever more in slow motion, the movements and jumps it can perceive do not belong to chronometric time but dance a world without time (a montage with no time to lose: this is the world of House "as it is": without being there, and in any case a very, very different set of House cases)).

51   The tempo of House can only be crossed by the lining of the mixing raid, not the time-clearing condition of a phenomenal withdrawal into, well, music.

52   The House tempo has its time, and the mix is its (ana)chronicle (Ron Hardy).

54   House: no more a vain nothing than any other form of music which can be characterised as nothing (the recalcitrant composer John Cage, when faced with a question about John Coltrane, replied "It's nothing", as if he wasn't aware of his "own work").

House is, for the mix, not only a case of there being House, it is also a case of not being House only (and) for itself.

55   There is no "There is—House", because the House mix cuts and applies the House function (DJ Rolando, *The Mix of Happy Soul*).

58   House cannot be stated as an object, because such a statement and its subject could not have belonged to its condition. If the entire field of House occupied, but could not describe, the House mix, then any statement about House objects would cross itself without events.

60   House, but only as a subtractive genre, knows that both the evidence and the logic of musical categories follow its abandon, in order to comply with the suspended (on-tropological) genre of Techno.

61   House, or the ultimate musical category fatigue (*It's Percussion (House Mix)*).

67   House could have been the first musical genre able to "free" music from its course, hence becoming able to ignore itself.

70   The non-object of House, with steps assuming the words of the (mostly unquotable) lyrics—

76   House, or, a musical act releasing sound from music (in a world where nothing that has been said "about House" can be danced).

82   House has no name, but the House mix is not nameless.

87   Do not claim anything about House, because any track, which does not fit the opposition between the theological and the profane, can and will contradict you

 (*Preacherman*).

89   A theology of House tracks for integral profanation, or, a profane mix for the political theology of tracks (Tony Rodriguez)—and both articulating anonymity in the name of atheological House.

91   Simultaneously "infinite" and discontinuous, House (so they say).

93   The emancipation of a musical interval, or: House (an interval freed of its border phenomena (Disco et al) and displayed with a 4/4 beat (musical movements in a musical space without phenomena (the space of a fourth dimension—music—and each one a modified non-dimensional beat))).

96   The House mix turns its attention to tracks as a configuration of beats and composition of jacked hiccups (the House mix lies at the dark bottom of music, standing out among the crowd because its condition amounts to pretty much nothing).

97   House, or, other loves.

98   House matters, and can be declined: "and so on, with House", "but not so House", "so not House", "other than House", "other than as House" (musical exercises, to realise permanent updates—and this is but the smallest gesture of House politics, which include a vast range of micro-fascist modalities).

99   The inner law of House is history, the mix, the guardian—the lining—of this, and only this, law.

100   What happens with and in House is the permanent goodbye to mere music.

102   House is neither a finite object nor an infinite category, much less a musical tautology.

104   House goes out in the mix, including additions and clarifications, doubts and demands concerning any idea of its history (*Bizzi's Party*).

109   House, or, the fourth wall of a musical act, as it re-enters dance (*Submarine*).

112   Any definition of House must also, indefinitely, give room to musical lesions like Garage, Deep House, 2 step Garage, UK Funky House… (House *ad nauseam*).

115   House is not a theory in the sense of an insight into that which is "music" (whatever that could be), and which can be expressed in statements. The House mix, on the other hand, is not a practice, if that is understood to be an activity guided by theory or founded by its determinations, but rather the motion of a re-entry towards what meets the attentiveness of those who lose control (it happened to her and she missed it, and what it now attracts is so subtractive it cuts him off).

116   House, or, the withdrawal of a genre in a search with no pre-determined destination.

(And so House without a goal, or a subtracted subtraction (*The Third Track*)).

118   House re-entries: the House mix was founded "before" House; House grounds its gestures and operations in the rupture of a mix; the sole reason for House to be eligible as "proper" music remains immune to "musical knowledge"; in the rupture of the mix the House seal is not secured; House cannot find a coherent and consistent basis—but an advocate for its cause can apply the seal of musical conjecture; for House there is no form of statement, because category fatigue is not a cause of knowledge...

120   Or: House, even though...

II: 0 + 8

+ 1   If all statements concerning House are not only examples of complementary expertise, but also cases in need of completion (hence only by its musical claim heard and understood as answers to the question of House), then any statement concerning the issue of House as sound (for a set) is not particularly relevant, except as a claim for a musical request which can only be desired in the mix.

+ 3   The historical primacy of House concerning certain forms of "dance music" inserts before its definition the request for propositional knowledge applied with topical musical language (but House is atopic, and cannot be reduced by the violent utopian desires it aims to reverse (also, "with" House it can be shown that the gap between genres widens as a tangible and particular form of musical "desire" formalised through

 sound logistics)).

+ 5   House displays affects in its declaration and nomination while including the proportion of a love soon forgotten: so that, at times, the House mix became the logotype of fallout understood as a science of leisure and hedonism, but not necessarily musical attention.

+ 7   The object of House remains in its extension (the object as House, being as Acid), and its intensity (dance) defines itself by an intention, which is directed out. (But House, besides itself, is not the subject of an idea for a concept.)

III: − 5

− 1   House moves sequentially, and it combines the issue of events, actions and silences through an explicit or implicit "and then" (*Let There Be House*). Whether the sequence of the mix takes the form of an addition or a subtraction—plus/minus 8, a virtually infinite series to finite sequences (and these, in turn, measures to a unit or a parent totality)—House remains a minimal formula combining textures that generate a history course of musical deviations. It is in the mix that House exhibits this rupture, so it is up to the mix, in this case of "and then after", to provide the after case of a genre, after all, without exhibits.

− 2   The mix is not so much a placeholder, but rather a non-place (a mistrial, in musical terms?). Only this cannot debilitate, whether as "no more House" or "not yet House", the possibility of a history of House, by (impossibly) preserving all the mixing episodes about to wither away to a conclusion. Before each case of "and then/therefore there was House", House upholds the

causality of producers' actions and the motivation of publishing decisions—a musical cause still indicative of a motive—and thus suggests that "the history of House" is that which only takes its "origin" from not being House.

‒ 3   (Logical emotion and explanation of House: emotion for the mix, but also affect in the mix (the mix of emotions for the mix: if the mix faces a musical tongue it is inclined to repeat it, and then replay itself as a category fatigue variation)).

‒ 4   With itself as it departs from its upcoming producers, or connecting them only through their emotion and enthusiasm, House remains a universal divorce for related genres that can be applied through a mix (not because "House" understood the generic divorce set aside by its name, but because it connects to the divorced relation a set of cases verified by musical divorces).

‒ 5   (House: affects, regarding an empirical or virtually empirical mix as well the otherness of the music(al) body (House as otherness, the House mix itself continued as other things, or even (more) House (there, there, my dear—

 (...).

PAUL REKRET

WORKING HOLIDAY

ON LABOUR AND LEISURE IN TRAP

VERSACE BELT => SUN BELT

Except in rare cases, the peculiar logics of the popular defy prophecy. This much is clear from a cursory survey of early reviews of Young Jeezy's *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101* and Gucci Mane's *Trap Music* (both debut albums; both released in 2005).[1] At best lukewarm, the albums' reception was more often than not indifferent. Despite noting the occasional witty repartee, critics regarded the braggadocio as stale, the rhyme patterns as repetitive, and lyrics as undemanding. In their defence, it's unlikely anyone could have predicted just how abiding the transformation marked by both records would be: from soul and funk sample-driven 1990s hip-hop to 808 bass lines, double time hi-hats and minimal harmonic content now ubiquitous in pop music.

Of course, every periodisation entails a wager; and one could indeed instead trace the change in style described here to some earlier moment; Atlanta rapper T.I.'s 2003 album *Trap Muzik*, the early 2000s Houston scene, or the 1990s Memphis sound from which both *Let's Get It* and *Trap House* draw stylistically.[2] But the gamble animating this essay is that the peculiar combination of lyrical content and musical form epitomised by Young Jeezy and

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1   Young Jeezy, *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*, Def Jam Records, 2005; Gucci Mane, *Trap House*, Big Cat Records, 2005.

2   T.I., *Trap Muzik*, Grand Hustle Records, 2003. Some of this history is parsed in Ben Westhoff, *Dirty South: Outkast, Lil Wayne, Soulja Boy, and the Southern Rappers who Reinvented Hip-Hop*, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011. A brief but excellent history is found in Shawn Setara, "Are the Sounds of Regional Hip-Hop Going Extinct?" *Observer*, March 2016, http://observer.com/2016/03/are-the-sounds-of-regional-hip-hop-scenes-dead/

Gucci Mane's debut albums changed the coordinates of American popular music.

Not only did the sound of hip-hop change in 2005; in gaining a "t" so-called "trap rap" also acquired a new association with place.[3] The back alleys and high-rise blocks of New York were displaced by the front porches and strip malls of Sun Belt cities, Jeezy and Gucci's Atlanta in particular. Indeed, so substantial has the migration of rap's cultural centre to Atlanta been in recent years that in a recent documentary one local resident (himself an aspiring rapper) refers to the city as "a New Motown".[4]

But the analogy doesn't quite hold. Motown is too indelibly linked to Fordism: a regiment of session musicians, songwriters, and producers rolling out a line of groups not unlike the car factories the label neighboured. As those factories cut labour costs in the 1980s by turning to automation or simply abandoning Detroit altogether, the process was echoed by another musical form: the mechanised, alien disco of Detroit techno pronounced the obsolescence of the coterie of singers, musicians, and producers of its antecedents. If hip-hop is nearer to techno than it is to Motown this is insofar as both are inseparable from their post-industrial urban geography. Rap's site, however, is not the automated factory occupied by techno but the inner city which that factory deserted, its theme more often than not an existence made supernumerary. Indeed, neither rap's symbolic imagery nor its form have ever reflected the assembly line. It's far more accurate to think of rap in terms of abandonment by capital and by the state.

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3   "Trap" is a reference to the sites of the drug trade, the music's central theme.

4   "Noisey Atlanta", 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21RCdtJvv6g

This is especially true in the context of "gangsta" or reality rap emergent in the late 1980s and early 1990s, whose inventory of criminal virtuosity gave voice to the daily experience of the abandoned. Yet in as much as gangsta rap entails an indictment of social injustice, albeit usually limited to the individualised frame of its first person accounts of daily survival, its hyper-masculine imagery was more often consumed in the manner of a horror film; equal parts terrified disgust and alluring desire.

Rap music's spatial coordinates are crucial here. The music's authors are sequestered in the space of the ghetto and it's only once it's abstracted as a commodity that the "Black Noise" they produce circulates beyond it.[5] In the process, illegality becomes an asset as ghetto styles and the vernacular are reoriented to suit voyeuristic fantasies.[6] But restriction of bodies to the ghetto also saves the consumer from any direct contact with the outlaw subject he consumes, and so permits the perpetuation of the spectacle of poverty as pathological and the inner city as a place to be avoided.[7]

The counterpart to this experience of the city as a space of social dysfunction and danger is the protected and privatised escapism afforded to the majority of rap's consumers.[8] If the ghetto becomes a dumping ground for an increasingly superfluous work-

5   Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

6   Robin Kelley, *Yo Mama's Disfunktional: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

7   Ibid; see also Adam Krims, *Music and Urban Geography*, London: Routledge, 2011.

8   I draw here in part on Krims' argument for a bifurcated experience of the city made in *Music and Urban Geography*.

force, much of the post-Fordist city is given over to consumption as the state's withdrawal of social support is paralleled by its role in serving finance, service industries, and tourism.[9]

This changing function of the city into a place where one buys things rather than makes them is of particular relevance to the recent history of hip-hop and ultimately, the emergence of trap rap. New York, rap's cultural capital, engaged in an increasingly revanchist urban regeneration project in the mid-1990s entailing re-zoning and repressing areas whose earlier abandonment had incubated hip-hop.[10] Manhattan, Harlem, and Brooklyn gave way to proliferating yuppy loft conversions and a restless 'foodie' vomitorium, while streets erupting with art galleries and boutiques became the setting for the now universal art of photographic self-portraiture.

One of the earliest harbingers of this changing relationship to the built environment comes in the form of Notorious B.I.G.'s now classic *Ready to Die*.[11] Released in 1994, the album appeared the same year that Rudy Giuliani was elected mayor of New York on a platform of "broken-window" policing and promises of pacifying urban areas. The king of New York rap and "America's mayor" are an odd pairing only superficially.

Archetypal rap claims to street authenticity prevail in *Ready to*

9   Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1991; Loic Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

10   Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, London: Routledge, 1996.

11   Notorious B.I.G., *Ready to Die,* Bad Boy Records, 1994.

Die, but in B.I.G.'s retelling of the rags-to-riches story, the street appears not chiefly as lived experience but as memory. The album thus marks a changing experience of time in hip-hop, one which locates the street in the past while the present—all dimmed chandeliers, leather interiors and a smooth, nearly ceaseless vocal flow—implies luxury goods, Manhattan skylines, fine tailoring and an elephantine thirst for champagne. The ghetto becomes a symbolic memory to be cashed in by the rapper not unlike the fading signage, exposed bricks, and original fittings adorning luxury condos, bars, and restaurants as maudlin records of displaced residents.

Embroiled in the cleansing of human detritus from the post-Fordist city, the dominant mode of hip-hop in the 1990s took the form of what property developers call "culture-led regeneration". From B.I.G. to Jay Z to 50 Cent, this sort of gentrification rap, despite grasping at the historical vector of the street, fully embraced its identification with capital. [12] Indeed, its great performative act, inscribed in the mantra "I Get Money", produced wealth merely by affirming it, not unlike the finance capital still coursing through the city's boroughs. Finance capital and rap, withdrawn from the circuits of production or from the street, let money do all the work.

This isn't to say that the rogues of reality rap disappeared altogether. Instead, they followed manufacturing capital in fleeing the North East only to re-emerge transformed in the US Sun Belt. In the late 1990s Southern rappers accounted for about a third of

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12 Incidentally, more recent iterations of this strand of hip-hop—from Kanye West to Drake and Nicki Minaj—are shorn of signifiers of place altogether, Drake's superficial references to Toronto notwithstanding.

the hip-hop singles chart, but by 2004 they made up two-thirds, and today they dominate the top 10.[13] But if capital had gradually shifted operations to the South given low rates of union density, regulation, tax rates, and proximity to US military procurement, to understand why rap did the same we need to return to the spatial logic of the ghetto out of which it emerged.

Not quite identical to the rural, "Southernness" nonetheless stands opposed to the urban.[14] "Down home", bucolic, lawless, hospitable; the ideology of the South—continuous with slavery—perpetuates safe and controlled consumption of Black criminality without disturbing a socially cleansed vision of city as consumerist fun park. Indeed, given lower population density, high levels of urban sprawl, and racial segregation, the setting of Southern cities allowed outlaw status to continue to circulate as a commodity while pretty much guaranteeing an absence of contact with any actual outlaw, something increasingly unavoidable in the rapidly gentrifying inner boroughs of New York. That a renegotiation of the experience of the city is at stake is clear from Southern rap's dominant imagery: gone are the reflective skyscrapers and yachts, replaced by residential streets, low-rise apartment blocks, overgrown weed lots and strip malls.

13 Murali Balaji, *Trap(ped) Music and Masculinity: The Cultural Production of Southern Hip-Hop at the Intersection of Corporate Control and Self-Construction*, PhD Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2009.

14 On the ideology of Southernness in hip-hop see Krims, *Music and Urban Geography* and Matt Miller, "Dirty Decade: Rap Music and the US South, 1997-2007", *Southern Spaces*, 10 June 2008, http://southernspaces.org/2008/dirty-decade-rap-music-and-us-south-1997%E2%80%932007.

Several Southern cities and attendant sub-genres vied for rap ascendancy through the early 2000s. New Orleans proffered "bounce", Atlanta "crunk", Houston a "screwed" sound, and so on. While each bequeathed a handful of hits, they tended to disappear from national prominence as quickly as they emerged. This reckless appetite for local scenes is partly explained by changing record industry profit models. As talent is increasingly "discovered" through web platforms, the ties of A&R networks to New York and Los Angeles became less relevant, permitting labels to profit from local scenes without investing in them. Previously all but ignored, locals established their own infrastructures and could be left to develop until seen as profitable. None however ascended to the status of genre, and so remain stamped in pop culture memory as fads—as if ephemerality weren't the abiding feature of the popular.

BRICKS GOING IN, BRICKS GOING OUT

That is to say, no local scene was ascendant before the 2005 release of *Let's Get It* and *Trap House*. One feature more than any other explains this anomaly. Unlike trap, other aspirants to the post-NYC rap throne grounded their existential principles in revelry. Crunk called for abandon in the nightclub while "hyphy", its only slightly more restrained Oakland counterpart, calls for it everywhere. Despite a growing appetite for consumer goods as it came to national prominence in the late 1990s, New Orleans "bounce" centred on the vocal and bodily responses of dancers, while the slowed tempo and pitched-down sound of south Houston's "chopped and screwed" music fuels, and is fuelled by, inebriation at the hands of codeine syrup. But as anyone who's given a few minutes of attention to rap music in recent years knows, trap is about work. Specifically, it is set in the circadian rhythms

of the production and distribution of freebase cocaine and so is in some sense the Monday morning to East Coast rap's fantasy of the never-ending holiday.

As work music, trap rap takes up a place alongside a folk tradition of chain gangs, weaving and cobbling songs, and sea shanties. [15] In this case, the labour in question is that of the drug trade. On the opening track to *Trap House* (itself called "Trap House") Gucci Mane tells us how to interpret his music. The temporality invoked is that of ceaseless repetition; Gucci shackled to the process—money-product-money—upon which his survival is premised:

> Junkies going in, junkies goin out
> Money kinda short, but we can work it out
> Bricks going in, bricks goin out
> Made a hundred thou in my trap house

The sentiment is echoed, albeit even more outlandishly over-weening, on the opening track to *Let's Get It* (itself called "Let's Get It"):

> You ain't never seen them pies
> I'm talkin so much money it'll hurt your eyes
> I really lived it man
> Countin so much money it'll hurt your hands

As work song, music offers a prosthetic device that places the

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15 On this point, see Noah Angell, "Everything Gucci: the Poetic and Political Economy of Gucci Mane", a performance-lecture delivered 13th November 2015 at Res. A recording can be found here: https://soundcloud.com/beingres/everything-gucci-the-poetic-and-political-economy-of-gucci-mane

rhythm of work within a larger cadenced structure ("bricks goin in…"). [16] But songs don't merely keep a beat. As an intensified experience of time they not only transport us beyond immediate boredom or exhaustion but might imply an experience of "free time" that would not merely be "an appendage to work". [17] Yet unlike the tacit resistance to the opposition of work and play found in folk traditions of work song, things are decidedly less clear in the case of trap rap. [18]

Hustling has always demanded its own aesthetic strategies, its own Machiavellian arts of dissimulation. The expansion of "free" time for the abandoned and unemployed demands new survival tactics, performance among them. [19] In this sense, Jeezy and Gucci sit within a wider history of the sale of coping strategies as commodities, from blues to basketball, but with one proviso: it is not a fantasy of indefinite leisure time that's being sold here as it is in the figure of the dancer or ball player. Instead, it's danger-ous, repetitive, precarious, and interminable work.

The routine narrative of labour's opposition to leisure is further complicated by the image of work trap rap poses. Jeezy is some-thing of a drug-dealing self-help guru, the logic of his constantly re-iterated rags-to-riches story amounts to imploring his audience to be better drug dealers so they'll no longer have to be drug dealers. "Aye, Aye, you gotta believe, you gotta believe", he pleads

16 Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

17 Theodor Adorno, 'Free Time', *The Culture Industry*, London: Routledge, 1991.

18 On work song as prefigurative gesture see Marek Korczynsky, Michael Pickering & Emma Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

19 Kelley, *Yo Mama's Dysfunktional.*

over the opening notes of *Let's Get It*. A few lines later, glancing at his marble floors, he conjures a childhood memory of scurrying cockroaches. Jeezy breathes so hard as he raps that he effects something akin to low-level screaming. Indeed, so hysterical is Jeezy's perpetual bootstrapping that it quickly loses credibility, only preachers of bankrupt faiths and snake-oil salesmen are this insistent.

By comparison, Gucci's voice is barely discernible. His drawl is viscous, his voice is nasal, his speech is mumbled, and only rarely does he change pitch or tone. The matter-of-factness with which he re-tells the story of money and drugs, if it evokes anything, evokes a cosmic resignation to fate. Gucci's philosophy of history is a cyclical one, an eternal recurrence of the same ("bricks goin in, bricks goin out"). As with Jeezy the effect of the constant boasting is the sense of a frantic attempt to contain its underlying desperation.

That what's involved is something essentially different to the sort of boisterous crime spree romps of "gangsta rap" is corroborated by the production on *Let's Get It* and *Trap House,* which have since become associated with the sound of hip-hop itself. Accompanied by deep 808 bass lines, syncopated kick-snare on the three beats are paced by double time hi-hats and, periodically though unpredictably, rolled through crushed fill patterns that give the beats the same odd combination of indolence and angst as the lyrics. The tension and aggression is maximally intensified by extensive use of textured string or piano samples, often warping or fading minor chord progression stabs and arpeggios. The minimal harmonic content here means that trap rap cannot offer the comforting resolutions we tend to demand from pop songs.

This is, after all, the experience of work in the post-Fordist city.

Not growing autonomy and creativity as posited by devotees of concepts of "immaterial labour" or the "knowledge economy", but rather the generalisation of precarity and the proletarianisation of ever-expanding regions of productive and creative activity. Trap rap's prevailing mood of cynical yet desperate attachment to work is the irreducible obverse to the contemporary experience of urban space. It's trap's version of the false unity pop poses with its audience.

CLAIRE POTTER

INSIDE AN EXPLOSION

tight flashes white the word tight sears through and brands in the imagin ation the word tight and all the di ferent pa rts of the body contracts in hard muscles with epicenter and with an epicenter at the bottom of the head in the neck on the left side like a white knotit brings cry

layers of different various situations, mostly wasting good worry layers layering over other layers like thing opaque veils getting denser still and denser and less opaque and more white imagein imagine differen

t racing sheets falling and all touching converging on on in on e place making a white object now that is the White Hot Very Very tingling on every bit of surface and white knot in my neck. where layers of converge there becomes a central node of energy there within it elements of all. the movement in this central the energy there all the layers moving this and there causing friction

andheat rubbing starts off slow just warming like hands rubbing because it's getting to cold spell not speed nothingis going any faster it 's the more layers it starts off warm and then an other layer and temperature up and another layer and another layer and the energy between layer the heat betwee

it's just that the core temperature of the vessel and the cooling system is not functioning needs repair, i think is the whole vessel needs its maintenance the fan belt of the oil needs changing because hotsup quick and white it gets white. can you all the dots moving bumping into each other and sending waves and all the surface? if the whole surface is alive with movement?

n the dots busying itching for space agitating and not enoug room and all the hea tsearing is white hot, very very panin the neck get out got to get out or rip off the neck rip neck out now

worry in the epicenter is a word that h s no energy is a word that communicates is not a word for this noise of various differents some of them no form or real be but having substance a sort of upsettle a sort of o f moving about is the problem moving about all the time different ones and their separatenesses over into touches, becoming a more solid white epicenter (imagine inside an explosion is calm). ripples out to the edges tingles and tight.

SACHA KAHIR

EMOTE CONTROL: THE STATE GOES POP

ENGINEERS OF THE HUMAN SOUL

Performance has always been central to the operation of the state. The state is pomp and ceremony, with holidays, calendars, and ritual as part of its arsenal. In the early days of the Athenian State: the poet and merchant Solon had enshrined in his constitution (foundational to the beginnings of Greek democracy) the alleviation of debt. Debt between Athenians had come close to tearing the city-state apart. A public holiday was declared when Athenians would gather for a ritual sacrifice to honour this "relief from burdens", and Solon's popular verses had apparently convinced Athenians on both sides to abandon class warfare.[1] "Some [even claim] that he endeavoured to throw his laws into an epic form."[2] As a technics of sophistry, developed alongside the advent of mass media, this armed the state, in both its tyrannical and democratic forms, with "spectacles" of ever increasing magnitude. Under neoliberalism the state has not withered away, but functions more punitively. That government is merely the administrative arm of capital is no longer a scandal. And social media and billboards implore us to pray, as atrocities pile up on one another.

LISTEN TO THE SILENCE, LET IT RING ON

Unlike a conch seashell, you can't hold a mobile phone to your ear and hear a sound that mimics the roar of the forces that created it. Maybe one day an app will simulate the sound of 40 thousand

1   Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives Volume 1, The Life of Solon*, trans. Aubrey Stewart and John Long, Project Gutenberg ebook, 2004.

2   Ibid.

Congolese children mining Coltan; an essential ingredient for the world's seven billion mobile devices.[3]

> Capital was kick-started by the rape of the African continent [...] late capital is imposing a renaissance of this original desire, direct relations of force (the prison industrial complex), the despotism of the unwaged relation.[4]

But the soul drivers who moved convicts, indentured servants, and slaves around on mass—over land and sea—in the 1700s have shed their human form and merged with the environment.[5] Forming "that modern forest that makes use of us," a landscape of "machines and weapons, of strange inanimate beasts that feed on human flesh."[6] Domination operates in two idioms: one is "personalistic" the other is "materialistic."[7] It is

3   Annie Kelly, "Children as Young as Seven Mining Coltan for use in Smart Phones, says Amnesty", *The Guardian*, 19th January 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/jan/19/children-as-young-as-seven-mining-cobalt-for-use-in-smartphones-says-amnesty

4   Frank Wilderson III , "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society", *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, Vol.9, Issue 2, Routledge, 2003, p.230.

5   "Soul drivers [...] are men who make it their business to go on board all ships who have in either Servants or Convicts and buy sometimes the whole and sometimes a parcell of them, [...] and they drive them through the Country like a parcel of them until they can sell them to advantage." John Harrower, an indentured servant, describing the purchase and sale of servants arriving by ship from England, c.1700, https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Wikiquote:Transwiki/American_History_Primary_Sources_Life_in_the_13_Colonies

6   Amadeo Bordiga, "Class Struggle and the Bosses Offensive", Marxist Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1949/class-struggle.htm

7   Orlando Patterson. *Slavery and Social Death—A Comparative Study*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1982, p.18.

the materialistic idiom that takes on a more "fantastical form", naturalising property relations and commodity fetishism.

The personas of various hip priests are called upon to embody the "fantastical forms" necessary for the mechanics of modern soul driving.

WELCOME TO THE PLEASURE DOME

Under my thumb
The squirmin' dog who's just had her day
Under my thumb
A girl who has just changed her ways
It's down to me, yes it is
The way she does just what she's told
Down to me [8]

It's 1969; sometimes dubbed "the Summer of Hate". Already, in the previous year, there is the murder of Martin Luther King, then in '69 the Manson Family murders, and the tragedy of the Altamont Free Festival.

The Rolling Stones begin playing "Under My Thumb" while, off stage at Altamont, Hells Angels hired as security begin attacking spectators. Drummer Charlie Watts later mused about how impressed he was by the Angels' ability to part the crowd for the band's arrival. "She's the sweetest, hmmm, pet in the world | It's down to me | The way she talks when she's spoken | Down to

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8   Rolling Stones, "Under My Thumb", *Aftermath*, Decca Records, 1966.

me."[9]

Off stage a mixed race couple become the main focus of the Angels' violence. Meredith Hunter, an 18-year-old black man is surrounded by Angels armed with knifes, and pulls a gun.

> She's under my thumb
> Say, it's alright.
> Say it's all.[10]

A knife blow from one of the Angels fatally wounds Meredith Hunter. At 6.20pm he is pronounced dead. After 6.20pm the murder is framed as a foiled assassination attempt on band members. The show goes on due to "concerns" about public safety. The Rolling Stones and other members of the "rock aristocracy" who cannibalised black culture, if ever radical, can now be seen arm in arm with various soul drivers and traders. Jerry Hall linking arms with Rupert Murdoch linking arms with Tony Blair linking arms with Bob Geldof. The entertainment industry of the 1960s, and onwards built on a legacy of black-facing and minstrelsy through which white spectators found a kind of freedom and excitement in the melodrama of black music and culture. If Aunt Hester's scream still resonated in the shrieks and wailings of early '60s soul records like Wendy Rene's "After Laughter (Comes Tears)" or Reatha Reese's "Only Lies", it was then emasculated (or, more properly, erased through masculinisation) in the vocal gymnastics of Robert Plant and Led Zeppelin's cock rock.[11]

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9   Ibid.

10   Ibid.

11   The beating of his Aunt by her jealous master was a foundational memory for Fredrick Douglass. "It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was

In Saidiya Hartman's work, we find an account of how the public and private suffering of black bodies has been and is still regulated through forms of entertainment. We can begin to follow Saidiya Hartman and other afro-pessimists in their assertion of a double bind "that wed cruelty and festivity" creating black (non) subject-hood(s). [12]

A libidinal economy of terror and enjoyment policed the slave markets of early-19th century America in scenes reminiscent of music festivals, where "the stimulating effects of intoxicants, the simulation of good times and the to-and-fro of half-naked bodies on display all acted to incite the flow of capital." [13]

The dominated were often forced to take an active pleasure in the spectacle of their subjugation as a strategy of survival, but also as a moment of release within the parameters of the confined space "slaves dancing, laughing, and generally 'striking it up lively' entertained spectators and (gave) meaning to the phrase *theater of the marketplace*." [14]

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doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it." Fredrick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass. An American Slave. Written By himself*, 1845, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2009, p.19.

12 Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self Making in Nineteenth Century America*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.27.

13 Ibid. p37.

14 Ibid.

POVERTY PORN

> And in our world of plenty, we can spread a smile of joy [...] And the Christmas bells that ring there are the clanging chimes of doom. [15]

In the Band Aid 20 music video for the sequel to the charity single "Do they know it's Christmas?" Bob Geldof stands with an assembled cast of pop stars watching a television screen. A close up of the screen reveals the abject image of a starving African child. The child's face is a death mask that resembles the dead and nearly dead of Auschwitz. We cut back to the cast of pop stars arranged in concerned poses still watching the screen.

THE EMPIRE NEVER ENDED

Julius Caesar is quoted as saying "the greatest glory of a state is to make of its frontiers a vast desert." [16] In 2005, Bob Geldof joined Tony Blair and Gordon Brown for the G8's annual frontier management meeting, which was being held at Gleneagles in Scotland. The G8, made up of the world's eight richest countries, was coming under pressure at that time to drop third world debt. This pressure came from both mainstream charities, and the more radical elements of the alter-globalisation movement, coalescing around the slogan "Make Poverty History". An event carrying this name took place in Edinburgh. Protestors marched in an enormous circle through the city to mimic the coloured plastic

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15   Band Aid, "Do They Know It's Christmas?", 1984.

16   Paul Virilio, *Negative Horizon—An Essay in Dromoscopy,* trans. Michael Degener, London and New York: Continuum, 2005, p.75.

wristbands that were in vogue at that time, designed to raise awareness and money for various causes. Participants were meant to purchase a white "Make Poverty History" wristband, and also to dress in white. Most of those marching only wore white tops: often work shirts, which created the impression of pupils filing into some kind of vast school assembly. And this is what essentially awaited them at the event's eventual terminus, as Gordon Brown and Geldof were joined on stage by such luminaries as the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, the Right Reverend Lacy of the Church of Scotland, and Billy Bragg.

The British government became one of the biggest proponents of the "drop the debt" slogan, while backstage at the G8 summit Gordon Brown did some double dealing that saw debts reduced only in relation to reductions in aid, and others fudges. Many charities and the World Development Movement described the agreement as "a disaster for the world's poor." Bob Geldof—faded pop star, television company mogul, and leading member of the Blair government's "Commission for Africa"—meanwhile heralded the summit as a great success, scoring it a "10 out of 10" for effort; claiming it was "mission accomplished frankly". [17]

17 Oliver Burkeman, "Three months ago Bob Geldof declared Live 8 had achieved its aim. But what really happened next", Monday 12th September 2005, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/12/hearafrica05.development

SOUL DRIVERS OF THE
OPERATING SYSTEM

The wisdom of crowds and collectives are keywords in a managerial babble that hides the reality of corporations like G4S that are integral to this kind of infrastructure. Living Labs describe soft forms of soul driving translated into managerial speak. If we think of G4S's involvement with workfare schemes, prisons, and detention centres we get a picture of another living laboratory that utilises "procedures adopted for the captive flesh [that] demarcate *a total objectification*, as the entire captive community becomes a living laboratory".[18]

As a Wikipedia entry states, "A living lab is a research concept. A living lab is a user-centred, open-innovation ecosystem often operating in a territorial context (e.g. city, agglomeration, region), integrating concurrent research and innovation processes within a public-private-people partnership."[19] The entry offers links to market research that utilises empathetic engineering "carried out by a small team of specialists, such as an engineer, a human-factors expert, and a designer [...] the session is videoed to capture subtle interactions such as body language and facial expressions."[20]

People laud the State television of the past, when the BBC saw itself as "the grand educator", and gave us Attenboroughs, the descent of man, and kitchen sink dramas by angry young men.

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18 Hortense Spillers, "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words" , 1984, cited in Frank
    Wilderson III , "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society", op. cit.

19 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_lab

20 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empathic_design

LIVE ON STAGE

Geldof starred in Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979); a cinematic rock opera depicting a troubled rock star trapped in the music industry machine; reborn as a fascist dictator. But it is an earlier film, Peter Watkins's *Privilege* (1967) which has a similar plot, to which we should turn. *Privilege* explores the growing trend of the state to use pop culture tropes, engineering a domination of the willing.

Privilege is dystopian satire on the pop music industry, set in an unspecified near future where the British Conservative and Labour parties are in coalition. The film's protagonist, Steven Shorter, is a pop star whose real life persona as the rebellious inmate of a borstal is played out as a kind of "theatre of cruelty" for teenagers whipped up into a state of frenzy by his masochistic performances. A voiceover declares:

> The reason given for the extreme violence of the stage act you are about to see is that it provides the public with the necessary release from all the nervous tension caused by the state of the world outside [...] So successful has this violent act become that Steven Shorter now finds himself the most desperately loved entertainer in the world [...] Britain in the near future.

Shorter is dropped onto a stage, and then dragged inside a cage. As he begins singing "Set me Free" (later covered by Patti Smith), guards beat on the bars. The crowd convulses in unison at every beat of the nightsticks on the bars, chanting repeatedly the word "Free".

Antonin Artaud's "theatre of cruelty" wanted to encapsulate "a little of the poetry in the ferment of great, agitated crowds hurled

against one another."[21] Shorter's torment is accompanied by church organs and over dubbed choirs that, along with a wailing electric guitar, give the proceedings a religious feel. For his fans, surrounded by "that modern forest that makes use of us", Shorter's performance provides a kind of inoculation against the dull disorientation of life, like getting drunk on Christ's blood after a long week at work.

Back in Britain in the near future the concert descends into a riot with guards beating both Shorter and the crowd, and male psychiatrists, planted among the predominantly female audience, at hand to medicate the symptoms of artificially invoked hysteria.

DOMESTICATED PANDEMONIUM

Slaves in ancient Roman times were encouraged to worship a housetrained version of Pan, known as Silvanus. The etymological origins of panic and pandemonium come from the Greek god Pan. Pan was a god of the wilderness, fertility and music who protected shepherds, but who could also disorientate lonely travellers as they beat a path through dense forests, his music inducing uncertainty and panic. Pan was also part of the entourage of Dionysus—the god of wine—who deranged his enemies' wives and mothers. Turning them into crazed maenads (ravers) whose sexual frenzies tore apart the flesh of their sons and lovers. While Silvanus still had a wine soaked feral side, he was a god that presided over domesticated cattle, plantations, and the boundaries of estates. The veneration of Silvanus formed "an inter-class cult"

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21 Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre of Cruelty, Collected Works, Vol.4*, trans. Victor Corti, London: John Calder, pp.63-64

that united slaves and their masters in worship. [22] Orlando Patterson, whose work many afro-pessimists see themselves as developing, claims that in a relatively open society like the Roan man State, which was built on expansion unlike the racially closed Athenian State, the role of a universalist symbolic order found a greater importance in forging a social reality.

> Roman masters were (not) any less cruel; they may have been even more brutal. Rather, Rome had a culture that was far more inclusive, with institutions that were incomparably more flexible, and in no area more so than religion. [23]

When Shorter sings from the cage: "my body's all aching, my hands are tied", we cut to a middle aged housewife. She reaches her hands out towards him with a pained look of identification. Her body aches from too much housework and being tied to loveless marriage. In this form of empathetic engineering the familiar figure of the sacrificial victim appears much like those in religions like Christianity, acting as a release valve. Accept your suffering because the most beautiful of souls suffers. There are more profane versions: accept suffering because Dot on "Eastenders" suffers, and you are not alone. Shorter's act is a kind of release valve for women imprisoned in kitchens and loveless marriages. The role of the housewife should be read along side other forms of post-industrial specialisations. Leading to a streamlined form of alienated being supplemented by mother's little helpers like "valium" or "prozac." These drugs help housewives perform their role in society.

22 Orlando Patterson, op. cit., p.69.

23 Ibid., p.68.

But universalism is a powerful force, and music is regarded as the most universal art form. You only need your body to make music, with the movement of feet dancing, creating the rhythm. Women in refugee camps in the Blue Nile and Nuba mountain regions of South Sudan do just this to make it through the bombings inflicted on them by the government. Though, as the documentary *Beats of Antonov* (2014) shows, the younger women also like styles of singing from the north where the government is based. [24]

Like Steven Shorter's audience we all have our arms stretched out hoping that:

> Telepathic communications resume across recalcitrant matter.

> Messages of love strayed to the four corners of the world return to us rekindled. [25]

It is universalism's force that makes it an indispensable tool for domination. And, as the Sudanese documentary also shows—whiteness is intertwined with universalism—many of the women of South Sudan bleach their skin.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE, WE'VE GOT FUN AND GAMES

Privilege emerges from the heart of '60s swinging London.

24 Hajooj Kuka (Dir.), *Beats of Antonov*, 2014.

25 Aimé Césaire, "Visitation", and "The Miraculous Weapons", *The Collected Poetry*, (trans. and intro. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith), Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1983.

London is a city in which multitudes of different classes and peoples "jostle past each other", but where its inhabitants don't share a commons, as a stunned Fredrick Engels' observed already in 1845. Bodies stream through closely interlocking and intertwining routes. Engels' description of London famously intersects with that of Edgar Allen Poe's depiction of the city's crowds published in 1840. A crowd inhabited with a class of people who were "restless in their movements, had flushed faces and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling solitude on the account of the very denseness [...] when impeded [...] these people ceased muttering, but redoubled their gesticulations." [26]

Giorgio Agamben muses that the obsessive muttering of profanities and compulsive gesticulating associated with Tourette's syndrome disappeared as an object of psychiatric attention at a certain point, due to the symptoms becoming so generalised, as to form the "common sense" of everyday life. [27] The life of London's petit bourgeoisie during the swinging '60s still wore the cracked and dented "character armour" inhabitants had built up to endure the shell shock of events like the Blitz. As the post-war economic boom ground to halt in the '70s under a haze of cheap Scotch and floral wallpaper, casting up grotesque parodies, this semi-detached and pebble-dashed armour was clearly cracking once again. Popular entertainers of the time, from Max Wall; to Spike Milligan and Johnny Rotten traded in nervous tics, grimaces, and spasmodic gesticulations. Comedian Tommy Cooper died

26   Edgar Allen Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, 1845, cited in Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations,* ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, (trans. Harry Zorn), London: Vintage, 2005, p.167.   .

27   Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture", in *Infancy and History : The Destruction of Experience*, (trans. Liz Heron), London and New York: Verso, 1993.

live on stage in 1984 of a heart attack in front of an audience of millions in the same year as Margaret Thatcher decisively crushed working class power in Britain. The audience was unable to distinguish Cooper's dying gasps from his comedy routine.

> Everything that acts is cruelty. Theatre must rebuild itself on a concept of this drastic action pushed to the limit.[28]

The aforementioned acts could almost be classed as light entertainment versions of the theatre of cruelty. Capitalism is itself a theatre of cruelty ceaselessly pushing limits. Though the audience has remained rigid, and rigidity has intensified with the cloned facial posturing of selfies and self-policing.

BOY, YOU TURN ME. INSIDE OUT

> Teardrops rolling down on my face…

> Ok, as a robot gets herself together and we do it, and we get to the middle, where we have forgotten our feelings… You will help me, huh? (silence) […] No matter what they compose or do, no matter what the drugs may do, or songs may do […] or machines will do to you […] I will always have feelings, nothing can be stronger […] that is the beast.[29]

Nina Simone's 1976 live rendition of "Feelings" is theatre of cruelty executed through the singularity of the performance.

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28 Antonin Artaud, Ibid., p.64.

29 Nina Simone, "Feeling"', Montreux Jazz Festival, 1976,
    https://youtu.be/VmO_0tIGo-4

She attacks her audience recalling the black suffering and the robotic stiffness of all types of performance. There is a walled-in singularity to her performance that mocks her audience. It seems to declare in the words of Artaud, "you want my love's flesh and blood, but I mean to hurl it in your face, I intend to splatter you with the blood of a love to whose level you could never attain."[30]

She moves through real pain but plays with it like an instrument, cursing the music, demanding to know what were the conditions that necessitated "a song like that!" There is an incredible amount of emotion but also distance in her performance, and as Artaud wrote "cruelty is very lucid, a kind of strict control and submission to necessity."[31]

Though she damns the song, she still plays it. Mixing her pain with an almost alien technical and preformative virtuosity. Declaring during one out burst,

> I do not believe in the conditions that produced a situation that demanded a song like that! Well come on clap! Damn it, what's wrong with you?[32]

30 Antonin Artaud, *Theatre as Plague, Collected Works, Vol.4*, trans. Victor Corti, London, John Calder, p.19.

31 Antonin Artaud, *Letter on Cruelty, Collected Works, Vol.4*, trans. Victor Corti, London, John Calder, Ibid., p.77.

32 Nina Simone, "Feelings", Montreux Jazz Festival, 1976, https://youtu.be/VmO_0tIGo-4

CRACKED ACTORS

Watkins' films attempt to break the realism of cinema and television, which, along with fast-paced cutting and rapid camera movements, immerses audiences in what he terms the "monoform" of massified audio-visual media.[33] Watkins is often credited as developing the docudrama, but it is the term mockumentary that fits his work best, as he consciously attacks the heavily formulated "objectivity" of the media. In many of his films we receive a highly ironic "behind the scenes' view of the televisual apparatus involved in creating "objectivity". Watkins' antagonism towards the manipulative effects of cinematic techniques echoes Plato's dislike of lyrical poetry (accompanied by the stringed instrument the lyre). Solon who utilised this form likewise mistrusted Thespis' innovation of actually embodying characters in popular tragedies on stage. The older epic forms had been recitals where the distance between reality, performer, and author remained more evident.

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATISM

I am the Kino-Eye.
I take the strongest and most agile hands, from one man, the fastest and best-proportioned legs from another, the most handsome and expressive face from a third, and through montage I create a new, perfect man....
I am the Kino-Eye.
I am the mechanical eye...

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33 Peter Watkins, *Notes on the Media Crisis*, Vida Urbonavicius (ed.), Barcelona,: Museu D'Art Contemorani De Barcelona, Quaderns portàtils (Portable Notebooks), 2010.

I juxtapose any points in the universe

—Dziga Vertov (1923)

Shorter's persona is the product of corporate marketing strategies, and gradually comes under the influence of the British State and the Church of England as part of a neo-fascist religious revival. There are Steven Shorter nightclubs, supermarkets, and television stations. Shorter is constantly surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on that form the "Steven Shorter Management Group". This includes a "self-confessed anarchist" who appears to manage the "gritty authentic" nature of Shorter's image.

> Masters all over the world used special rituals of enslavement upon first acquiring slaves: the symbolism of naming, of clothing, of hairstyle, of language, and of body.[34]

As domination moves through technical systems of estrangement, with the production of subjectivity falling under the sway of an alien power whose construction is not as obvious as, say, that of feudal ties, it becomes a vast and distant self-replicating form of life. We can see the monoform's dominion over the gestures and relations of bodies on television. Flicking through channels in a central European hotel reveals a series of replicants presenting various shows. A kind of geometry can be traced out on breakfast TV programmes between the angle of the knee of the slightly younger woman in her deferential poise to her slightly older male co-host.

Steven Shorter's image is given a make over where he repents for

34   Orlando Patterson, op. cit., p.3.

his sins, and his fan base are encouraged to adopt upper class Victorian attire, like the "hipsters", that could be seen wandering around London's east end a few years ago in their vintage garb. These unwitting agents of gentrification often looked as if they were live role-playing Britain's colonial past as they began to occupy areas populated by soon to be displaced peoples from former British colonies. Shorter's makeover is brought about by the British government's fear of communism, and the corporatist need to "lock together in a single mould."[35] This rebranding is launched at a mega-event, which the voiceover proclaims is "the largest staging of nationalism in British history."[36]

BEAUTY WITH A PURPOSE

Ironically, Watkins is famous in pop history for inspiring John Lennon and Yoko Ono's two-week "bed-in for peace" mega-event. Watkins believed that pop stars, as modern day icons, had an important potential role to play in raising political consciousness. John and Yoko responded by staging a media event in 1969, in which they stayed in bed under the watchful eye of television cameras, while as around the clock live coverage was beamed across the globe. As an official website now uncritically states: "John & Yoko intensified their long running campaign for World Peace. They approached the task with the same entrepreneurial expertise as an advertising agency selling a brand of soap powder to the masses. John & Yoko's product however was PEACE, not soft soap, and they were determined to use any slogan, event

35   Peter Watkins (Dir.), *Privilege*, 1967. Available on BFI DVD

36   Ibid.

and gimmick in order to persuade the World to buy it."[37] World peace became the clichéd wish of Miss World contestants in the segment of the ceremony where contestants personalities are measured alongside their bodies. It was the swimwear section of The Festival of Britain in 1951 that gave birth to the Miss World pageant. Sold as a cultural event that could unite countries during the post World War II rebuilding of the world.

A soft form of fascism conversely uses the threat of fascism, or at least what might be termed the threat of barbarism and crisis, to create a corporatism that aims to forge a people by making different classes and oppressed groups forget the nature of their domination. In this version of corporatism a "kind of Popular Front of all right thinking men is invoked."[38]

Watkins' critique, perhaps, did not go far enough. There has been a rise of symbolic politics post-Live Aid and an ever increasing tendency towards public emoting.

One Love… Let's get together and feel all right…

> It was not uncommon for slave owners to participate in the frolics they organised. They indulged slaves with whiskey, sang and danced with them, served as musicians, and frequently were spectators.[39]

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37 "Bed Peace—Starring Yoko Ono and John Lennon: An intimate documentary from the notorious 1969 Bed-In for Peace", 25th December 2013, http://www.thethird-eye. co.uk/bed-peace-starring-yoko-ono-and-john-lennon/

38 Theodor Adorno, "Grey and Grey", in *Minima Moralia—Reflections on a Damaged Life*, (trans. E.F.N. Jephcott), London and New York: Verso, 2005, p.201.

39 Saidiya Hartman, op. cit., p.48.

"Be my Baby". Songs often coo, suggesting "keep me locked up and infantilised".

Domination requires coercion, built-in mechanisms operating as safety valves in order to maintain a position over the subjugated. "All we hear is radio ga ga, and radio goo goo". We are encouraged to maintain the optimism of our "inner child" as political icons from the Dali Lama to Leonardo DiCaprio drop wisdom in the manner of Yoda. Manufacturing hope that circulates through the ether of social media. A politics of mass emoting, which surfaced during the era of Tony Blair's government in the late 1990s—when the Ballardian death of Princess Diana became a State sanctioned mourning for the "people's Princess"—is now further abstracted in a sea of "likes". We are now part of a choreographic community moulded by the hidden hand of algorithmic trending, where "no one remains a static spectator, where everyone must move in accordance with the community rhythm" [40] as Jacques Rancière postulates. [41]

THE SECOND SUMMER OF HATE

> Everything under heaven is in utter
> chaos; the situation is excellent.
>
> —Mao Tse Tung

Joe Strummer infamously contracted hepatitis from fans gobbing on him. The 1970s punk fad for audiences' spitting on their

40   Jacques *Rancière*, *The Emancipated Spectator*, London and New York: Verso, 2011, p.5.
41   Ibid.

idols can be seen as an "auto-critique" embedded in the culture of punk itself. No longer was auto-critique focused inwards as eventually happened within Maoism, where the arrow aimed at the enemy was also to be turned inwards in an act resembling masochistic flagellation. Unlike the youthful militants from the Japanese student movement portrayed in Kōji Wakamatsu's film *United Red Army* (2008), whose acts of "self-criticism" culminate in one militant punching herself to death, the 1970s punks of the same era turned the act of auto-critique towards their idols.[42] Malcolm McLaren, the Sex Pistols' manager, had dreamed of creating a Maoist boy band during his time as the manager of The New York Dolls. The British punk scene possibly contained elements of a lumpen-cultural revolution, with lefty teachers and social workers coming under fire from spotty youths. But the permanent revolution of Maoism is not unlike the permanent revolution of capitalism with its cycles of "creative destruction". Malcolm McLaren described his trade as "cash from chaos".[43]

Mao's Cultural Revolution ended in China in the late '70s around the time that punk took off in Britain. The awkward angular gestures and grimaces adopted by punk mirrored the choreography of the "struggle sessions" where Chinese students attacked their teachers and parents. The accused were frequently forced to adopt strange humiliating postures during their trials. These poses were given names reminiscent of dance crazes like "doing the airplane".

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42 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kōji_Wakamatsu
43 Mark Savage, "Malcolm McLaren: The man and the music", http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/8610911.stm

GOD'S E(X)TERNAL VOICEOVER

The voiceover mentions that when Shorter's hair is cut it is auctioned for charity. The proliferation of Steven Shorter wigs makes Shorter's hair more valuable. The proliferation of prints added an aura to Van Gogh's original Sunflowers which was then expressed in its obscene pricing. There is also a type of "aura" around Shorter's hair that once imprisoned ancient kings in strange taboos—hair being seen as an outgrowth of the soul, like art itself. Agamben's category of "bare life" in which he includes braindead coma victims kept alive on life support machines; cancer-ridden doctors experimenting on themselves; but also both concentration camp victims and the Führer, lists forms of life where the boundaries between individual bodies and the public, internal and external, become blurred. This may also apply to Shorter's existence.[44] Shorter is told by one of his handlers that he has no right to himself because he belongs to the public. His body is fragmented and devoured by his public in an array of commodities. You are not just buying the commodity but a piece of Steven Shorter.

The death of aura, linked to the sacred, is integral to the process of commodification. Sam Hose, a black man lynched by a mob of two thousand white men and women in 1899 in the town of Newham, was ripped apart after being skinned and cooked alive, his body parts were then sold as souvenirs. W.E.B. Du Bois

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44 Agamben's notion of "bare life" might be better suited to describe someone like Michael Jackson. There has been a lot of discussion on "bare life" not being a useful category for describing "poverty" and racialisation. See for example Denis Ferreira Da Silva, No-Bodies "No-bodies: Law, Raciality and Violence", *Meritum,* Vol.9, No.1, Jan./Jun. 2014, pp.119-162.

reported that parts of Hose's charred liver were sold for a dime. The commodification of the charred remains of Hoses' flesh illustrates the social death of the African in America as absolute. There is no appeal to any sacred element of the sacrificial victim. In previous epochs even animal sacrifices caused those involved "to shudder at the prospect" of a beasts death, where those involved "implored the beasts forgiveness."[45]

The war of souls against the system of mechanised and black boxed soul driving has been fought with hair, tooth and nails.

> What is soul?
> I don't know, huh!
> Soul is a hamhock in your cornflakes
>
> What is soul?
> I don't know
> Soul is the ring around your bathtub[46]

There is a materialism at the heart of black American music, the funky stench of things as Cornell West might say, built from fighting both personal and material forms of domination. As well as producing music like Funkadelic, Motown, and Techno, the city of Detroit produced groups like Correspondence in which workers and intellectuals developed the workers' inquiry method. Black American's have been through the whole cycle of capital's "crazy logic" as Correspondence member James Boggs already

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45   Hubert and Maus, *Scacrifice* p.33, cited in Rene Giraud, *Violence and the Sacred*, (trans. Patrick Gregory), London: Continuum, 2005, Continuum, p.13.

46   Funkadelic, "What is Soul?", 1970.

noted in the 1960s.[47] "Freed" slaves became the proletarian base of industry in cities like Detroit. After the death of heavy industry in the US we see the state feeding on accumulated black bodies.[48] In Ferguson Missouri, where police murdered Michael Brown in 2014, fines imposed on the majority black population by the majority white police force are a major income source for the municipality.[49]

THE DREAM FACTORY

Ideology is built into everything around us, built into our environment and concepts, as nations and peoples. We can see this in the "we are the 99%" slogan, people so vast as to be indefinable. But that includes cops, artists and bosses.

The state and firms like G4S, the British multinational that polices job centres in the UK, secures oil pipe lines in Africa, and offers various security solutions around the globe, has returned to "original desire, direct relations of force."[50] The 2016 Orlando shooter worked for G4S; the company website coldly states that proper procedures were followed when he was hired.[51] G4S

47 James Boggs, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Black Worker's Notebook*, 1963, originally published in *Monthly Review,* available on Libcom, http://libcom.org/library/american-revolution-pages-negro-workers-notebook

48 Wilderson, .op. cit., p.238.

49 Terrance McCoy, "Feruson shows how a police force can turn into a plundering 'colection agency'", *Washington Post,* 5th March 2015, www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/03/05/ferguson-shows-how-a-police-force-can-turn-into-a-plundering-collection-agency/

50 Wilderson, op. cit.

51 G4S plc, "Statement on attack in Orlando, Florida", 12th June 2016, http://www.

should be categorised as a pathological disease; part of what Wilhelm Reich would term the "emotional plague".[52]

The biggest environmental crisis is in the production of subjectivity. We need to arm ourselves against this sealed system of emotional engineering with "the affirmative force of ruthless negation, the out and rooted critical lyricism of screams, prayers, curses, gestures, steps (to and away)—the long, frenzied tumult of a non-exclusionary essay."[53]

AFTERWORD: SOCIAL REALISM

1983. E.P. Thompson gave a speech at the Glastonbury music festival declaring that it was

> now a time for a just self respect to built again amongst our people. This has not just been a nation of money-makers and imperialists; it's been a nation of inventors, of writers, a nation of theatres and musicians. An alternative nation, and it is this alternative nation I can now see in front of me.[54]

2011. The body of Christopher Shale, chairman of West Oxford-

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g4s.com/en/Media%20Centre/News/2016/06/12/Statement%20on%20Omar%20Mateen/

52 Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis*, (trans). Vincent R. Carfango, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1972.

53 Fred Moten, *In The Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p.255.

54 E. P. Thompson, "Speech at Glastonbury", 1983, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdPwZMyb1sM

shire Conservative Association, David Cameron's constituency, and a close aide to the Prime Minister, is found dead, Elvis style, sitting on a Glastonbury festival toilet.

As the voiceover in *Privilege* declares, "It's going to be a good year in Britain in the near future." [55]

55   Dir. Peter Watkins, *Privilege,* 1967, Available on BFI DVD.

RESONATOR

There was a factory, way back in the annals of industrial standard time.

What kind of factory was it?

It was a fencing foil factory, though not a single employee partook in the sport. Yes, there were minor skirmishes, which utilised the fruits of labour. But in general, there simply wasn't time.

The metallurgy was hard, too hard, and largely unfair, with little connection between the workers and the products of their actions, other than the meagre wage every month, often a month late, and sometimes—especially for the young people—never received at all.

This wasn't one of those factories where the workers wear hydraulic exoskeletons on the backs of their legs, which firm into a chair at the press of a button. It wasn't a factory in outer space, it wasn't online, or on a blog, or in a feed, and it wasn't a museum.

Rather, it was a factory caught between the old way of work and the new. It stood on the threshold of what is sometimes called the "Second Industrial Revolution," when children's working shifts were reduced from twelve hours to nine: presumably for their recreation, though actually to freshen them for the next shift. Alas, that freshness would not last long.

One room, a workshop that ran approximately thirty feet long, had an extractor fan mounted in the corner. This fan was like all of the other extractor fans in the factory.

The room, however, had rather unique qualities.

More specifically, the room held rather unique moments. It was a room of mirage and hard work, of mass faintings, *trompe l'oeil* and mutual belief—though at first, few understood this.

Yes, there was the occasional worker who claimed to see vague figures, moving along the walls. True, a visiting quality inspector (originally from Port Issac[1]) once turned ice cold as he watched a thread being cut onto the tang of a spare blade. But there was a rational explanation for such phenomena: fatigue.

Indeed, what worker, inclining towards exhaustion, would not mistake the far wall for a forest, its mold in verdant bloom? What worker hasn't tripped face first into sleep, and while descending, grazed that anamorphic plane, where the ground becomes a skull, then a chasm?

So the arguments went, but still, the visions continued, sometimes shared by many at a time. The shadows of dueling fencers periodically appeared on the walls of the room, their every lunge and parry marking, however briefly, an obscure diagram. The workers would say little about its meaning.

Grindstones glistened like the Koh-i-Noor, anvils seeped *eau de cologne*. These marvels, which so impressed the crowds at The Great Exhibition, meant nothing to those who hadn't the time or the means to visit.

By far the most common vision came to be known as "the orchestra,"[2] which was induced, some said, by the way steel "sings" in the forge, the pitch rising with the temperature. Several of its notes were believed to have magical properties: to resonate with specific things in the world, to make instruments of the world of things, to destroy things. Rumor has it that a foil removed from

the forge, while singing one such note, would sing that note forever.

Needless to say, this wasn't a productive time for the factory. Eleven workers had already been sent home without pay. The supply of threats and punishments was beginning to run dry.

More children from the local orphanage were hired, yet they too fell into the phantasmagoric, unproductive chaos of this particular room.

The owner was flummoxed.

The factory closed for an evening. This rare occurrence could only mean one thing: an investigation of the recent, surplus-destroying phenomenon. A scientist came to inspect the facilities, searching for "mundane" causes of the ostensible haunt. She scanned the pipes and radiators for noises, the electrical and structural faults for draughts. Could the hallucinations be caused by electromagnetic anomalies? Were vermin creating the shadowy effects?

There was no denying that this room had rather unique qualities. In little time, it creaked and groaned. Gradually, she began to shiver. But there was also something else.

Figures emerged.

They stayed in the periphery of her vision, moving, like a crowd, in an unscripted yet forceful manner—with velocity, but not speed. In their wake, only silence remained, which collected in eddies and rivulets, then rivers and lakes, eventually reaching the scale of a standing wave. It bore mute testimony to the apparitions, as they performed their *secessio plebis*.

"It would not be unreasonable to suggest," the scientist later recalled, "that I was terrified." But as the minutes elapsed, her curiosity grew. At last, courage in hand, she turned to greet the spectres, only to see them disappear. Where they stood, a blade, clamped in a bench vice, vibrated frantically up and down.

A twinge of disappointment.

Still, vibrations were more familiar to the scientist than apparitions.

To achieve this effect, an object must receive energy that varies in intensity at a rate equal to its resonant frequency. This type of energy is usually referred to as "sound."

Yet the room was more or less silent, save the occasional creaks and groans. The energy in question, the scientist deduced, must fall below the register of human hearing. And if that infrasonic frequency matched those of the body's organs[3]—if the workers were made to vibrate, like the foil, with increasing ecstasy and dread—then it would also explain the sensations experienced in this room.

The following day, the scientist shared her discovery.

No one filled the room with concrete, nor lined it with acoustical foam. Nor was the extractor fan, believed to be the source of the infrasonic enchantment, pulled down from its perch.

In this story, the room remained open. It continued to offer escapist pleasures: tricks of light and shadow, apparitions of all colours and sizes. Soon, the patterns were obvious.

The vibrations, for all their terroristic potential, would undo no machine, no robot, no financial instrument speeding capital through the airstreams. The hallucinations never revealed anything as efficient as a *factory organ*. Had this been the case, every hum and vibration, each mirage of rising heat, all the wayward clicks, breaths, and shifts of the eye could rush through the pipes to the rooftop, sounding a composition without end. If every factory joined in song—stops open, pipes full—then we would no longer speak of alienation. The working conditions would be transparent.

Nonetheless, the fan persisted, sucking toxins into the ether, making the room an instrument. Its frequency, like all frequencies, could move through walls, into pores and orifices, and across the fictive bounds that keep us each in a role—that delineate our lot.

Whatever its symbolism, the resonator remains precisely this: indiscriminate, built for the many, not the one.

1   More recently, in Port Issac, Cornwall, members of the sea shanty group "The Fishermen's Friends," after receiving a record deal with Universal Music, left their jobs in marine industries to become full-time entertainers. Reports from Port Issac's community on the impact of the band: "Taking inspiration from 'The Fisherman's Friends,' the entire industry began a widespread switch from fishing to song"; "The work songs that had formerly ameliorated the toils of labour became the work itself." This transition of economies reflected larger trends towards "fishing for work" and, interestingly, "fishing for work songs," rather than fishing for fish.

2   One transcription of "the orchestra" goes as follows:
    A well-known scientist once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits the sun, and how the sun, in turn, orbits the centre of a vast

collection of stars called our galaxy.

At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: "What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate propped on the back of a giant tortoise."

The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, "What is the tortoise standing on?"

"You're very clever young man, very clever," said the old lady. "But it's turtles all the way down!"

She continued, "I've written an orchestra piece, you know."

The well-known scientist was taken aback, feeling vaguely like he had heard these responses before, but didn't remember anything about an orchestra.

"It's not the sort of orchestra you're used to," said the old lady. "The orchestra is always playing; we hear it inside and outside, from near and far."

She paused.
"There's no silence for the living. We have no earlids."

3   An eyeball vibrating at its resonant frequency of approximately 18Hz, for example, may experience a "smearing" of vision. This claim, issued in Technical Report 19770013810 of a well-known space agency, stops short of answering a key question: Could these smears be mistaken for extraterrestrial life, or are extraterrestrials the ones causing them?

PIL AND GALIA KOLLECTIV

PLAYING LIKE A GIRL

A few months ago, we came across an ad at our local practice space in which a band was looking for a guitarist and saw fit to state that they were looking for "males aged between 17-22 only". We rather facetiously posted the ad to female guitarist magazine *She Shreds*' Facebook timeline, mocking the idea that the ability to strum could be hindered by excess oestrogen. Predictably, our social media friends joined in attacking the inherent sexism of such a suggestion. However, the more we thought about the role of gender in shaping popular music, the more we had to concede that no matter how misguided, the young lads who had posted the ad had a point: there was definitely such a thing as "playing like a girl".

The phrase is appropriated from Iris Marion Young's essay on the phenomenology of female motility, "Throwing Like a Girl".[1] In this, Young tackles the embodied experience of femininity. Young notes that analyses of the way females use their bodies point out differences between this and male comportment, yet fail to account for the origin of this difference. At the same time, theories that emphasise the social construction of gender tend to avoid including the body this process: the body remains a site of physical difference, where sex and gender can be separated into distinct categories. In light of this absence of a theory of the formation of gendered bodily comportment, Young uses Maurice Merleau-Ponty's conception of phenomenology to propose that "the bodily self-reference of feminine comportment [...] derives from the woman's experience of her body as a thing at the same time that she experiences it as a capacity."[2] For Young, it is not

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1   Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl", *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

2   Ibid., p.35.

only the inhibition of certain modalities of the body that limits young girls' ability to practice the spatial and physical skills that go on to define masculine comportment. It is also the positive affirmation of feminine comportment that encourages girls to perform their gender correctly by reinforcing a self-perception of fragility and immobility.

Young's theory of the formation of gendered bodily experience has been empirically substantiated in recent experiments such as the one featured in the BBC's 2014 episode of *Horizon*, "Is Your Brain Male or Female", where people were asked to set the angle of the incline they thought a baby could descend. The babies were not consistently dressed in compliance with their assigned gender, and when people thought the babies were female, they made the incline less steep.[3] Nevertheless, Young ends her essay by suggesting that further attention might be devoted to finer movement and "less task-oriented body activities, such as dancing".[4] It is the aim of the current essay to devote this kind of attention to the specific area of playing music, with a special focus on popular music and especially the electric guitar.

This essay could easily have been called "Why There Have Been No Great Women Guitarists", following in the footsteps of Linda Nochlin's enquiry into the dearth of women artists in the canon of Western art.[5] In an article in *The Washington Post*, David Segal

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3   *Horizon* "Is Your Brain Male or Female?", BBC 2, 2014. The program actually tried to offer support for both sides of the nature vs. nurture debate, but for limitations of space this essay cannot go into the details of the claims and other experiments brought up in the program.

4   Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl", p.45.

5   Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?", *Women, Art and*

cites the Great Kat, a.k.a. Katherine Thomas, one of the few female technical guitar virtuosos, famed for her speed metal version of classical music, as explaining the scarcity of fellow female shredders with the fact that women lack the discipline to practice.[6] But looking at Thomas' argument in context, there is more to her rant than a simple essentialism. Elsewhere, she expounds:

> Women guitarists don't want to get off their LAZY BITCH ASS-ES and practice their balls off! Women are not INTERESTED in competing with guys. They start these little bands with other women because THEY CAN'T HACK IT! They're in their tiny little non-threatening groups that will NEVER EVER SCARE THE CRAP OUT OF MEN. You know why? Because they're SCARED of what guys will think if they get TOO DAMN GOOD. Well, I'll tell you what the guys will think. They'll say, "You're a ugly dog. We don't want to have sex with you anymore. We hate your guts."[7]

Beneath the bravado lies a sincere claim about the dilemma facing a woman who betrays her role as an object by asserting mastery on an object external to her.

Kim Gordon writes arguably more eloquently about this dilemma

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Power and Other Essays, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

6   David Segal, "No Girls Allowed?", *The Washington Post*, 22.8.2004, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19175-2004Aug20_3.html

7   Michael Molenda, "She Who Must Be Obeyed: The Great Kat", in: *Guitar Player*, 19th August 2005, http://www.guitarplayer.com/artists/1013/she-who-must-be-obeyed-the-great-kat/16797

in her biography, *Girl in a Band*.[8] Asked by Dan Graham to write about music, she rejected the obvious choice of writing about women to focus on male bonding, which ended up being not only part of her essay title, but also an early name for her subsequent band, Sonic Youth.

> Guys playing music. I loved music. I wanted to push up close to whatever it was men felt when they were on stage together—to try to link to that invisible thing. It wasn't sexual, but it wasn't unsexual either. Distance mattered in male friendships. One on one, men often had little to say to one another. They found some closeness by focusing on a third thing that wasn't them: music, video games, golf, women. Male friendships were triangular in shape and that allowed two men some version of intimacy. In retrospect that's why I joined a band, so I could be inside that male dynamic, could be inside that male dynamic, not staring in through a closed window, but looking out.[9]

We will return to this account of the male dynamic later. For now, we can assert that at least in some ways, there has been distinct progress in social attitudes towards what women can and cannot do. Recent debates surrounding feminism and transgendered people have even gone so far as to lay open the question of the biological definition of the category "women" beyond the confines of academia.[10] And yet often the vocal denouncement of much

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8   Kim Gordon, *Girl in a Band*, London: Faber & Faber, 2015.

9   Ibid., pp.102-3.

10   See for example the numerous blogosphere debates around celebrities like Laverne Cox and Caitlin Jenner versus writers like Germaine Greer and Suzanne Moore, for instance here: http://radfemage.tumblr.com/post/90062171370/a-reply-to-a-reply-on-a-laverne-cox-quote or here http://flavorwire.com/544701/the-disturbing-trend-

gender stereotyping serves only to remind us of its continued predominance. The internet overflows with lists of the sexist attitudes that female musicians have to deal with, from the assumption that they are technically ignorant to the idea that they must be at the music shop or venue to support a boyfriend.[11] But the inhibition of female musicianship begins earlier than these scenarios. Even if we accept that there are few if any physical limitations on the musicianship of those assigned the gender of women, by the time a female musician has to contend with shop assistants and sound technicians, much has already been determined about what she plays and how she plays it.

According to a study of gender typed instrument preferences conducted as recently as 2001 in Australia, these preferences can be found in children as young as five years of age.[12] Whereas the drums are perceived to be masculine, for example, girls tend to play the piano or the violin.[13] However, the gendering of musical training extends beyond the school curriculum. Whereas female musicians are often trained classically as soloists, the boys who end up dominating the music scene populated by such bands as the young male indie group mentioned at the start of this essay often learn to play from other boys or men in less formal contexts. It is this difference in education that, we would argue, crucially

of-second-wave-feminist-transphobia

11 For example, this list from *The Huffington Post*: Steph Guthrie, "Infuriating Things People Say to Women Musicians", *The Huffington Post*, 9th September 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/steph-guthrie/sexism-in-music_b_3573435.html

12 Samantha Pickering and Betty Repacholi, "Modifying Children's Gender-Typed Musical Instrument Preferences: The Effects of Gender and Age", *Sex Roles*, Vol. 45, Nos. 9/10, November 2001.

13 Ibid., pp.629-630.

determines the gender roles that continue to shape popular music.

Women are certainly far from excluded from popular music. There are many roles in which it is common to see female artists. Singing has a long history as a legitimate feminine activity and it continues to draw a fair share of women. The popularity of classical piano training with little girls easily accounts for the many female keyboard players encountered in popular music, and the way in which simplified synthesizer refrains are incorporated into many songs makes the instrument attractive even to those who are latecomers to the field and may not have trained as children. The relative ease of playing a bass guitar adequate to the requirements of popular music equally explains the stereotype of the female bassist, stretching from Carol Kaye to Kims Gordon and Deal. By contrast, the electric guitar continues to be dominated by male players. Women strumming on the acoustic guitar have been a stalwart of folk, for example, particularly to accompany singing. Yet it is quite hard to come up with a good Hendrix equivalent of a guitarist known for her shredding or innovative style, recent attempts to revise the six string canon and acknowledge the contribution of nineties female alternative bands notwithstanding. There has been much writing about normative representations of sexuality and subversive performances of gender in music, but when it comes to the technical side of musicianship, these issues fade out of the conversation.[14] In a recent book on alternative guitarists, only three out of 26 interviewees are women, Kim and

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14   For example, Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie's comparison of "cock rock" and "teenybop". Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality", in: *Screen Education*, 29 (1978/9), pp,3-19.,

Kelly Deal and Lydia Lunch.[15] The few exceptions prove the rule: role models are few and far between for the aspiring female guitarist or drummer.

Certainly, women have responded creatively to these stereotypes: the women of punk for example subverted the feminine display associated with the position of the singer and used the genre's rejection of musical mastery as a critique of the patriarchal framing of this mastery. However, these subversions often left intact the role divisions they sought to undermine, and it remains the case that while one can think of examples of women playing most instruments, even in mixed bands, it is quite hard to think of an inverse example to the paradigm of male musicians backing a female "muse". From Bo Diddley through Prince to Chain and the Gang, there are a few examples of men backed by female musicians, but women are seldom the musical force in a band where the male frontman is the focus of an equivalent to the feminine display expected of female lead singers rather than the composer in control of the music.

Lucy Green's *Music, Gender, Education* goes a long way towards explaining the origin of these specific roles and their perpetuation today.[16] Green traces the evolution of norms of feminine display in music from antiquity to present day instruction. She attempts to outline the ways in which ideas about gender or "delineations" as she calls them, inflect the reading of "inherent" musical meanings. For Green, feminism can go too far in challenging notions of musical autonomy and insisting on the social con-

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15   David Todd, *Feeding Back: Conversations with Alternative Guitarists* from Proto-Punk to Post-Rock, Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2012.

16   Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

struction of meaning in music. For her, this would "raise delineated meaning to a level which virtually obliterates the symbol-free status of inherent meanings, giving the appearance that delineations are somehow lodged in the intra-musical syntax of even absolute music".[17] We see no reason to accept Green's caution or the classical concept of an autonomous, absolute music, because it is impossible to know what meanings musical intervals, tempos and chord progressions might have outside of a given socio-historical situation. But there is much in Green's research into the history of gendered delineations that we can use to understand the cultural mechanisms that have prevented women from dominating the area of musical activity in question.

Green addresses the predominance of keyboards and non-electric guitars in female musicianship as arising from the domestic context to which much women's training has been confined.[18] The relative quietness of plucked strings and the seated position required by the piano have allowed these to be considered appropriate, especially in terms of their role as accompanying singing, a musical endeavour reassuringly sited in the body and requiring no mastery of an external tool. Musicianship for women is a paradoxical act in which the subject performs her subjectivity at the same time as she is constituted as an object through the male gaze. The audience does not derive pleasure from appreciating the performance of technique, but from the collapsing of body or body-image and technique into one. To these considerations we might add the relative ease of controlling a girl's activities when she is seated at home at the piano, as opposed to gallivanting with who knows who playing in a group.

17   Ibid., p.132.
18   Ibid., p.59.

But there is more to the prevalence of female soloists over group players. Green ascribes the limited opportunities afforded to women instrumentalists before modernity to the centrality of the church in organizing the field of music.[19] With the increased technical demands brought about by the advent of polyphony, the self-directed training that allowed women to participate in music at both professional and amateur levels was foreclosed, while cathedrals, churches and universities took over instruction in the complex composition and playing skills that music from the fourteenth century onwards demanded.[20] The limiting of women's access to instruments that could be unwieldy, produced a high volume, or required technical complexity, was also a result of the way in which their "boisterousness" might interfere with the "sweet mildness" of women.[21] Nuns were among the few women who could play music in ensembles where their performances did not interrupt any notions of femininity. Outside this very specific context, women have primarily progressed in classical music as soloists. Since they cannot make their gender invisible, women's performances are forever judged as either suffering from feminine shortcomings, expressing some kind of femininity as a specific aesthetic or overcoming femininity by displaying virtuosity comparable to male playing.[22] As a consequence, it is in a sense easier for female musicians to operate as "exceptional talents" than as players in groups or orchestras, where their participation has also been perceived as economic competition, on top of threatening gender divisions. As a soloist, a woman can either affirm her femininity through bodily display (Green cites

19   Ibid., p.65.
20   Ibid., pp.57-58.
21   Ibid., p.59.
22   Ibid., pp.98—101.

the example of the marketing of violinist Vanessa Mae, standing in water with an unplugged electric violin as paradigmatic of the "sexy women pretending to play instruments" trope) or transcend it, not escaping feminine delineation but being seen to rise above it. As Green writes:

> The greatest level of interruption to patriarchal definitions of femininity caused by women instrumental performers occurs perhaps with the rank-and-file woman player [...] She cannot so easily appeal to the autonomy of the inherent meanings of her playing as a form of compensation for the interruptive delineations of her instrumental control; nor can she retrieve a relatively affirmative feminine display. [23]

This is why reeling off a list of important female instrumentalists doesn't really get to the heart of the problem. Looking at the limitations imposed on women by the gendering of musical roles must extend beyond a reassessment of the canon.

Green devotes a long section of her book to women composers and the challenges they continue to face, but we would argue that in popular music, it is not composition that most defines the exclusion of women, but improvisation. There is, of course, a growing scene of experimental free improvisation in which women are thriving. However, the training of young female musicians weighs against this aspect of playing, and it is only by struggling against this classical training that women often find their way into popular music. Green notes this matter in the context of jazz:

23   Ibid., pp.80-1.

Dahl reminds us how heavily jazz has relied on its sub-cultural community for training, especially with reference to improvisation, which has until very recently been available nowhere but among the musicians themselves. The overwhelmingly male make-up of these musicians, and the venues and the working conditions of jazz have all militated against women's access to training. [24]

Green goes on to document the effects that these attitudes and conditions continue to impart on the classroom, with girls often excelling early on at the kind of rote training expected by the early years curriculum and boys frequently acquiring skills outside formal training in peer groups or from older male relatives. [25]

What these boys learn as a native tongue, women often only access as a second language, a missing piece of information that has to be studied artificially to enter the realm of popular music. The kind of learning by osmosis that the boys encounter forms the basis of what Kim Gordon describes as the triangular male version of intimacy. It is reiterated in countless accounts of women's exclusion from the lingua franca of popular music, both written and anecdotal. Viv Albertine, for instance, writes in her biography: "I don't want to use the same old twelve-bar blues chord progressions that all rock is based on. I can't anyway, I don't know the formulas." [26]

Many women who have come through the formal education

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24   Ibid., p.73.

25   Ibid., p.215.

26   Viv Albertine, *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music. Boys, Boys, Boys.*, London: Faber & Faber, 2014, p.173.

system of classical piano training, as is so often the case with female musicians, are not even aware that there is a formula to improvisation. Men just seem to magically know which notes to play when, working together as a unit. Where female socialization is often structured through dyadic relationships grounded in talking, normative male bonding is a group affair, extending from the football pitch to many areas of life. It is this pattern of group interaction that is most unavailable to women. Improvised music is just one of the many forms that the third thing takes, and around which a shared identity coalesces. Women are at times added to this basic unit in supporting roles that conform to these parameters:

> Just as the keyboard has been an exception to the rule about size and volume in classical music, so have the electric keyboard and keyboard synthesizer in popular music. These instruments have been played quite commonly by women popular musicians, who have merely moved over to them from the piano. so much so, in fact, that keyboard synthesizers are sometimes associated with femininity, or effeminacy. [27]

But where they attempt to learn those instruments not aligned with femininity and reject the roles assigned to them by history and society, they have to contend not only with the judgment of their listeners, who find their gender interruptive with regard to the performance, but also with their own experience of a conflicted identity. Thus,

27   Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education*, p.75.

> [w]hen girls avoid the drums, it is not just because of stereo-types or conventions concerning musical roles, but because of the performance-related musical delineations of a girl drum-mer that act back to interrupt not only the listeners' experience of her drumming but also her own listening experience of her own drumming. [28]

This effect, we would argue, is exacerbated by the need to come up with music on the spot, as one is required to do in improvisa-tion, where the musician cannot experience herself as a vessel for the composition of another (man), but must take responsibility for her own voice, ceding her position as an object.

For Viv Albertine, as for many of the punk musicians of her gen-eration, the inaccessibility of this mode of expression leads to a quest for a new language. Under the tutelage of Keith Levine, she searches for her own voice as a guitarist:

> We meet a couple of times a week in my bedroom, which is the large double room at the front of the house, and Keith says, "We're not going to bother with chords and scales and all that shit, Viv. I'm going to teach you how not to play guitar." But I want to learn chords! How am I going to be able to write a song if I don't know any chords? Keith only has three rules: always start with the guitar in tune (he has to tune it for me), always have clean hands, and never go more than three days without playing. When I'm alone with the guitar, I experiment and try to recreate the sounds of animals and other noises. This is how I build my guitar style from scratch, from a starting point of no chords, no twelve-bar blues chord progressions, and no

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28   Ibid., p.186.

scales.[29]

There is a lot to admire in this DIY ethos, and it has indeed gone on to inspire many women to find the confidence to demand a place within popular music that might have seemed otherwise unattainable. But perhaps we will not be free of the limiting effects of gender until we cease looking for exceptions, subversives and outliers. It may well be that there will only be no such thing as "playing like a girl" when mediocre indie bands can safely search for mediocre guitar players without really having to consider their gender. This is perhaps similar to Linda Nochlin's rebuff of the suggestion that one should recognise a distinct "feminine" style of art in order to counter the inequality of the art canon. But, as Nochlin argues, the only quality of "feminine art" is its relative anonymity and weak position within hegemonic art history, rather than a positive articulation of a critical female position.[30]

From the question of gender division in relation to popular music we can draw a few broad conclusions. First of all, it is clear that the social production of music, and of culture in general, cannot be treated simply as the relationship between objects or technologies and the body. This relationship, which is the mastery or embodying of skill, is always situated in a particular environment. Iris Marion Young examines how gendered stereotypes are internalised and performed through the body in a physical environment (the perception that men have better navigation skills than women, for example). Rather than existing as a neutral site, according to Young, the body is shaped by its social uses and designations: one trains one's body to behave in a particular way, to

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29   Viv Albertine, *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music. Boys, Boys, Boys.*, p.167.
30   Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?", 1988. p.147.

strengthen certain muscles or emphasise certain abilities. To add to this important process of the embodyment or internalisation of gendered social roles, it is also vital to look at the environment in which these interactions take place. The space surrounding the body is always already embedded within particular power relations: bodies operate on objects and objects enable certain physical attributes within a habitat where particular conditions make encounters possible. Girls play the piano at home, often in the middle class living room, or at school—both environments of surveillance and policing. Compared to the electric guitar, the piano itself is an expensive and immobile instrument, which prevents players from accessing other, less regulated spaces where noise and unruly behavior are instrumental in achieving the bonding of male groups of musicians playing together. In a city with very few practice spaces, the lone male punk band that operated in our home town when growing up was envied by all for securing a public bomb shelter as a free rehearsal space that occasionally doubled as a party venue and living quarters. Similar stories accompany the birth of every successful male band in history, from the Beatles to Guns and Roses, and it is important to note that these spaces are not domestic or institutional: they are dirty, noisy and often subterranean, as opposed to the "tiny little non-threatening groups" that women socialise in, according to the Great Kat. The spaces through which the gendering of music finds its articulation are also important because they are tied in with notions and structures of gendered labour. Lucy Green describes the emphasis on singing by female musicians as a kind of an embodiment of the logic of ownership and spectatorship: women transform themselves into objects that emit sound, to be listened to and looked at. This performative unification of the worker and the tool of her work is interesting not only because it seems to frustrate the creation of Kim Gordon's "third thing" that male musicians bond over (the technological object that sits

between them) but also because it opens up further interesting questions in relation to the relationship between work, gender and music today.

According to Theodore Adorno's essay "On the Social Situation of Music", contemporary music is always caught in a dialectical tension. It is both the clear product of the alienated logic of the commodity market extended to the sphere of cultural production and an expression of "the exigency of the social condition and [a] call for change through the coded language of suffering."[31] In other words, it is part of the social organisation that makes us suffer (capitalism) and a beautiful demand to end this suffering. In this essay, Adorno completely rejects the division between "serious" and "light" music and instead proposes different criteria to assess the critical success of a particular musical piece. This success is measured by the ability of the musician to perform the ideological role of bourgeois cultural commodity designated for modern music and at the same time to offer some resistance to it. Adorno's objection to jazz is well known but his reasoning in this essay is interesting: he sees in jazz a reflection of the paradoxical nature of the capitalist commodity, which on its surface promises personal liberation but at its heart is built on the same rationalised industrial production and exploitation as all of the culture industry. The personal freedom and strong individuality of the jazz performer "conceal the commodity character and alienated manner of production of this music."[32] In musical terms, argues Adorno, this uncritical dialectical tension results in that fact that under the improvised embellishments lurks the constant and op-

31 Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. p.393.

32 Ibid., p.430.

pressive beat of the military march band.

Adorno does not write about jazz's less urbane and sophisticated cousin—Mississippi Delta blues—but in many ways blues offers a completely different solution to his problem. After all, blues is, if anything, the clearest expression of a "coded language of suffering". Instead of being structured around a contradiction between personal freedom and rationalised cooperative production, through its form, blues only enhances and even enjoys the oppressive nature of alienated labour. There is no illusion of freedom here but instead the pleasure and meaning of the songs emerges from their perverse adoption of the logic of work. Blues songs make the oppressive work of slaves in the cotton fields and their suffering beautiful and therefore, one can argue, offers a more critical trajectory than the jazz that Adorno writes about.

To go back to our question about the social character of contemporary music production and its relation to gender, the skill based bonding of the male musicians around an external object seems to belong to a mode of labour that is no longer prevalent in the west. This resembles forms of socialisation that might emerge around a process of manual labour (and it is not surprising that many archetypal male bands, from Sabbath to the Stooges, were formed around the factory experience). In this sense, holding on to these aesthetic formulae is like repeating and inverting Adorno's contradiction between the condition of production and the content of the song, the cultural commodity. Songs are today produced under post-Fordist precarious conditions and organised through an emerging "sharing economy" and decentralised social media. But the content of the songs and the manner in which primarily male musicians play belongs to a previous mode of work.

This contradiction is even more glaring when we consider the

spaces in which music is produced in large Western cities today. Practice spaces in spare rooms, garages or basements have all but disappeared from city centres through the tidal wave of gentrification. Storage for large amps and multiple instruments is hard to come by and expensive, and most importantly, the precarious nature of work makes it much harder for groups of musicians to commit to the intense, quasi-military training that requires long hours of coordinated labour. In a way, the social conditions of contemporary music production today are "feminised": casualised, performative in nature and often leading to solo performances rather than to the dynamic of a group performance. The impressive array of effects intended to support and inflate the sound of a lone guitarist is clear evidence of this. But if the laptop karaoke that dominates the current scene—Dan Deacon or John Maus might be good examples—is a reflection of the conditions of precarity that produce it, it might be interesting to consider the possibility of an alternative mode of music making that might react to them more critically, perhaps a more inclusive group sound that both responds to and undoes the isolated tapping of fingers on laptop keys at urban cafes, a collective process adequate to the post-industrial age.

VERITY SPOTT

TOWARDS SOME FORM NOT EXTREMITY

Acceleration has broken the experiment. Just as the avant-gardists invaded language and sound poetry, took it down to the pool to drown, the aesthetes plunged the avant garde into further deaths (yes deaths) of tedium. We're left with containment, making it very easy to go on denouncing things. But we've got to try and understand this weird compliant imagination, the one that holds as imperative the destruction of a limit. We also need to inquire into the limits that are perpetuated by ostensibly forward-thinking music.

Longform improvisation has solidified as a norm. This is something I have become really uncomfortable with. I want to question that uncomfortableness. The first thing that comes is this thought: *longform improvisation fetishises the ritual*. This has some truth to it, but it isn't the entirety of the problem. In fact the problem is far simpler at first than any fetishisation or character of wrongness that might stand as an accusation against a practice. The problem is very simply one of containment. Because the longform model has stabilised so its contents are stabilised within it. And so I've been asking myself to play for perhaps thirty seconds at a time; to see what can be held within that space of time before moving away from it as quickly and distractedly as possible.

Kev Nickells,

you're a musician who I've had the pleasure to work with and alongside for a great deal of time now. In that time certain walls and barriers have emerged in my own thinking about what it is you are trying to do and more generally regarding your practice. If you don't mind me saying it, and I say it out of a devotional care for a process we're both engaged in, I have often found your aesthetic decisions cold and lofty. Your music is covered in locks. I've

fallen foul of them many many times. Through those locks there often appear almost immaculate glimmers of harmony (I mean harmony in a social sense, not a technical/musical one—though they're obviously not entirely indistinct!) which are often abruptly snatched away.

I think you've developed the longform improvisation far beyond its usual categories. I mean, a thirty six hour improvisation (Supernormal Festival 2012—also the Long Half Day events: do exactly as the tin says) has a hell of a lot to coordinate in order to compose and complete itself. What I feel these extremities do is on the one hand give in abundance (through the labour put into them and the excesses they permit) but on the other hand deny and constrain.

Recently you supported Peter Brotzman in Brighton. I felt Brotzman's performance was incredibly safe; it risked nothing. I wouldn't say it should have done either. This is not a critique based on imperatives of what should and should not be. But I felt that your performance put at stake various modes of your practice. The primary discomfort I felt from the outset; the discomfort gave way to bliss really sharply. Without too much warning at all, and what that movement from discomfort to bliss did, unpretentiously, was exhibit a kind of tenderness that is rare in "experimental" and "improvised" music. But then I feel we agree on a lot of things. And I want to return to some of them and ask what they are. Why is it we share a love for tenderness in improvisation and grotesque wickedness (in both the early 2000s slang and the theological sense of the word) in hardcore and gabber? I don't feel there is much of a place left for extreme ferocity in improvisation. I feel that tenderness is vital, and I also know about the coopting of harshness by real Nazis.

Gabber distorts the bass—bitcrushed and overlaid—and increases the speed of acid house to a point where a lot of ravers had to get out. Those that stuck around were generally messheads. Messheads and proud. But gabber is again coerced out of itself—out of its rhythm limit. Breakcore gets eclipsed by splittercore, where another divergent thread that went off in another direction—speedcore—is met. That, finally, is punished into extratone. The final return is the product to its restrictive base. I.e. drone. It has moved speed to such an extremity that it becomes a single concrete tone. This is *everything* you can expect from the fetish of acceleration; that fetish is a poetics for corporate governance, work, family, affirmative statements, managing accounts, *exercise* and "creativity".

Major

Scale, eight notes, the first and last are called "the same":

. 1) Caught in a regiment you didn't choose following a trajectory that claims to be natural—ascendency.

. 2) Moving in an agreement called "harmony", again, a structure you didn't choose.

. 3) Soporific, but not asleep. Coming to realise the work of harmony is the same work as coercion.

. 4) The first of the notes considered "perfect" in its relation to the base, the first, the same. The space between the base and the fourth is perfect.

. 5) As is the spacial relation, the harmonic one, between the first and the fifth. Neither are negative or positive. Perfection is

outside of the shorn down or the risen/amended. Perfection is just so. No attention needed. The relation is perfect. No alterations. This is the minimum requirement for belief in the *nature* of the form. The first and last are the same but in pitch. Others are different because of pitch.

. 6) My Bonnie lies over the ocean.

. 7) *Those* people, *their* system of harmonics.

. 8) The return to the same but for pitch. The same attribution despite it being at the furthest distance within the limit. This says that the progression from point to point requires the religious return to the base. Without the base there would be no room to move, movement in ascension constantly re-articulates the base, whether as returns, progression to or passing over. Cadence is an establishment of truth.

I'm thinking about hardcore and bliss—how it's easy to disguise that bliss as primary jouissance, and why the hell not? Have you ever listened to Nightcore? Everyone who knows me well knows how much I romanticise the aesthetics of state communism—how I wear Lenin on my lapels and quite regularly listen to the USSR anthem on repeat. There's a few different dimensions to this. The justifications, when I pretend they exist, go something like this: You are sickened by the representation: You are the sickest representation—got it? You're a murder. Every time you switch on a light (using that example far too much)—the terror of Capital which has never ended, totally terminal, literally the worst regime imaginable—makes the KGB look like Raphael or Clytemnestra. But really it's just a kind of unexplainable heady excitement like too much coffee too quickly or like some new game when you're tiny and you're in the woods in the summer. And a

joke too, how much you can piss off a Tory on the train, their lovely indignation. It's great. Watching them bluster and squirm, telling them their whole comprehension of history is a lie (it is) and then assuredly blaring out some made up statistics. Probably not very responsible. I think that's why, 30 years ago today, I joined the CPGB-ML. I go along to the meetings and I put my left fist in the air and we sing the Internationale. I go out into the streets and hand out *Proletarian* and I have a little shrine the Kim Dynasty in my garden and I wear my pashmina and my buttons and I sleep and wake up and sleep and wake up. Anyway, back to Nightcore. I found them because they have this sweet version of the USSR anthem. In fact they have a few, but one of them in particular, is really cute. It's a whole genre. Sped up Eurodance, trance, happy hardcore. And this is the thing, the same kind of blind exhilaration gets me when I listen to gabber—and again, I've called that jouissance, but really it totally lacks pain. It's more like the ideal "I believe in paradise", "I believe in full communism", "I will blast through the social stage", "I will grow and smash the paving stone / root / smash everything", and so really it is probably cultured and dumb, but then again it's involved in some kind of total abandonment, like peeping round the curtain, past alienation, over the horizon. And perhaps attacking culture involves attacking that too. But Jesus, give it a rest. It's not really explainable. I just couldn't help myself. Yesterday I was telling you about the various supports and props I use to distract you while I make good my escape. It's more or less the same. If you'd just join the party you'd totally understand. You'd know what your micro-manager is really up to, saying things like [Not-I take Not I-Have not I deliberately-I not moving], and you'd also understand the kind of bliss we experience, every single day, the three of us, the symbolic order, lying on this soft bed, tangled in each other's threads—threads as legs, legs as splinters in bourgeois consciousness, which, to be clear, is all consciousness [yes all n/t-I yes fucking destroy the patriar-

chy yes-keep Lenin, yes-reanimate the body,, yes Zombie Lenin is coming to rip out your limbs,, yes-still smash the symbolic, ,,, yes smash everything not-I-will-refuse-all-forms ((of violence)) and yes, amen to that, beautiful sisters.] Join now. This is a call. Join us right now. This marks the creation of a new party. Join us, real, imaginary—all caressed in the sphere of the symbols, all covered in light, all destruction to the real. All destruction to real. All destruction is all real.

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Abject Subject Ensemble use themselves as instruments and instead of producing abstract sounds, they explore how we are embedded in the abstraction of capitalist relations. In order to do this sometimes they act like pigs or squirrels in somebody's else's party. They are based in Berlin. Farahnaz Hatam, Colin Hacklander, Sacha Kahir, Mattin.

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The Naroder Bourniki Ensemble, having worked from early 1988 to early 2013, will remain from "now on" an indefinitely posthumous entity. All the work composed during those twenty-five years—dozens of volumes of writings (in several languages), several collections of MIP tracks and a couple of Meridianic films—was conditioned by a series of five precepts: a political poetics of Tracts; clandestine fatigue vs. category fatigue; the process of learning how to disappear without having appeared; disintensive montage;—and then happiness.

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