It's to do with meaning, which forces its way up like a root growing under a pavement – it breaks the paving stones. Many people would like these neat stones in a nice grid, but unfortunately there is this tree with all its pressures and necessities and you have to follow it.[1]

What we could not say openly we expressed in music [2]

Slick lyric blocks history [3]

EDITORIAL (VERSION)

We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming. What we want after "the break" will be different from what we think we want before the break and both are necessarily different from the desire that issues from being in the break.

Fred Moten

This is the first issue of a new journal called *Cesura//Acceso*.[1] The journal positions itself at the intersections of music, experimental politics and poetics. We want to ask what it could mean to practice politics through music or to think music through politics. A pause in the line, ignited. The pause that ignites. The break, in fire. Acting together, *cesura* and *acceso*[2] offer a way of thinking towards a politics or anti-politics that is moving towards the break, moving within its imaginings, and confronting the limits of those imaginations.

The process of the project itself started in 2013, but has emerged from years spent in conversations, protests, performances, groups, gigs, work, workshops, frustrations, trips, records, books and questions that we have shared and explored as friends. From our experiences of musical and political communities in London, we felt that a space was needed to produce and reveal connections across genres, mediums and attentions. We've seen music acting both as a spark for ludic collectivity and a distraction from encroaching police lines. It is in the entanglement of these seeming-

1 We pronounce it "sezura achaiso" or "sezyura acheyso."

2 See Iain Boal, "Letter to the editors" p.232.

ly oppositional functions that we find our line of enquiry.

The journal works through the collective interests of many of its writers in how music functions—as anaesthetic, catalyst and symptom. It is our attempt to contribute "a tool and a provocation" against capital—towards energising discourse, cultivating alliances, confusing taxonomies, hardening resistances, antagonising norms and finding the "outer-spaceways". We hope to stimulate the interchange of experience, questions, ideas and material between disconnected spheres of practice in music and politics.

As the percolating bubbles[3] at the ghost-tide[4] of capital spill a sedative toxicant into and onto every skin of an idea of love, every body of resistance—music has been subject to the expanding illusion that culture and its aesthetic materialisations emerge out of, and quietly return to, an apolitical vacuum at the service of decoration.

In contrast, if, as has recently been argued, the common horizon of art and radical politics in the present moment is an autonomy of process[5]; improvising impurely; attempting to evade valorisation; then music, a most vernacular of art forms, enmeshed in our

3 "The real bubble is the work bubble. We have been working too much; we are still working too much." Franco "Bifo" Beradi, *After The Future*, Oakland: AK Press, 2012.

4 "Capitalist market-society overflows with monsters […] our haunted self-image, warn[s] us that we might already be lifeless, disempowered agents of alien powers" David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

5 Jaleh Mansoor, Daniel Spaulding, Daniel Marcus, "Occupy Response" *October,* Fall 2012, No. 142: p.48–50. http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/OCTO_a_00122

everyday life, labour and "free time" offers a stealth politics, "hidden in plain sight". Despite a complex relation to the commodity form in the mobilisation of radical affect, the collison of digitisation with the music industry has created a dynamic force in the destruction of profit.

For us, music can be understood not simply as what presents itself in the context of *sound-phenomena-organised-in-time-and-exchanged-for-cash* within the factory of post/industrial capitalism, but also, as an aesthetic-poetic-political mode of enquiry, a mode of perception, a way of learning and sharing—in and outside of the vibrations of sound or the marks of language. Music is also of, and about, bodies (under and in flight from, capitalism)—and bodies are always participating in a generative vernacular of dance and somatics "intransigent toward the detectives of capital"[6]; disrupting capital's alienations and dehumanising ontological cleavages[7] at the same time as presenting these for scrutiny.

Experiments in politics, language and music are interconnected within spheres of survival, struggle and desire, imbricated in the often fraying fabric of our everyday lives. *Cesura//Acceso* probes how these entangled human-social-material practices deal with the tensions between trying to live more of a life, and trying to combat the oppressions that militate to limit any living.

This journal explores—through music, politics and language—the means we have, in spite of limitations, to be part of an ecology of resistance and learning that includes skin, organs, ideas, imag-

6 Taku Unami, *Intransigent towards the detectives of capital*, w.m.o/r 08

7 "Capitalism is a set of separations, or ontological cleavages—between human beings and their innermost capacities." *Endnotes* 3, p.238

ination, flight, asylum and history. It is also a project of unmasking both the roots and reproductions of increasingly opaque and complex malignant factors that sustain our oppressions, and the "unspent" political potential of music.

To bring distinctions into proximity in the journal, there will be myriad manifestations from multiple origins and trajectories. Sometimes content will coalesce around particular themes and registers of language; at the same time we encourage the noise, friction and enquiry that emerges from the spaces on the underside of accord. The collection of contributions in this first issue form a partial representation of voices and positions that will change over time. The shape of this shifting landscape will emerge as future contributions and dialogues come into contact with conversations in previous issues. This issue does not fix a territory that new friends and perspectives are not permitted to enter: we will continue to encourage and accept open submissions.

From within the fog of learning-by-doing, which has informed the autodidactic quality of the production of our first issue, we have attempted to be cognizant of erasures in representation and forces which act to reproduce normative imbalances along familiar lines of gender, race and class. We do not attempt to deny "the pre-written framework"[8]—that is, biases betrayed by our collective or individual genealogies—instead attending to these tendencies and responding to the problems they create as they surface during the process of working through the project. We will continue to work against confines of specialisation to balance academic, non-academic, concrete and oblique ideas.

8 *The Others's language*: Jacques Derrida Interviews Ornette Coleman 23 June 1997, *Genre,* Summer 2004, 37(2): p.322.

Somebody else's idea of somebody else's world
Is not my idea
Of things as they are
Somebody else's idea of things to come
Need not be, The only way
To vision the future
What seems to be, need not be
What need, had to be
For what was, is only because of
An adopted source of things
Some chosen source as was
Need not be, the only pattern
To build a world on

Sun Ra "Somebody Else's Idea"[9]

9 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5ZGIQ4VU-k

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cesura//Acceso is self-published and we don't have the resources of a large publisher. We are subject to increasingly common and intense constraints—a lack of time, space, work, money and resources. We do not have any regular or institutional funding or support and cannot afford to be entirely self-funded. We relied on fundraising to pay for the production costs of the first issue.

We have developed the journal from within the claustrophobic conditions of life lived in the city of London. That is, like many others with a similarly precarious trajectory—we cleave temporary spaces to nurture our project—improvising against the various direct and collateral pressures of work and the city. Without the invaluable generosity, solidarity and help of friends, this project would not have become a reality.

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SEAN BONNEY

LETTERS ON HARMONY

LETTER ON HARMONY AND CRISIS

Thanks for your list of objections. I accept most of them: my vocabulary, my references (my identification papers) are for the most part things I've pulled from the past. Old films, old music: abstractions, commodities. Its exactly the same when I go to the supermarket. The in-store radio, the magazines, the DVDs: all of them register some kind of obsessive relationship with the culture's recent past. Don't think I'm moaning about it. I quite like it in the supermarket, I go there every day, in fact I rarely go anywhere else. Its a kind of map of the future of London, adjusted to admit a slightly censored collective history, where friendly and contradictory forces confront each other with rapidly diminishing strength. Astrology, basically. Or at least some form of stargazing. A weird constellation of information, fact and metaphor that invokes a comforting aura of a very gentle death disguised as a glistening array of foodstuffs, endlessly re-arranged on the gridplan of the shop to give an impression of constant social movement. Its a substitute for the calendar, basically, a system of harmony set up to keep an extremely fragile stability in place. Its why they only ever play certain songs in there. Simply Red, for example. Though that's not quite the case. I was walking around in there the other day, wondering what it would be like if they were playing Leadbelly's "Gallis Pole" over their radio system. You know the song. Did you bring me the silver, did you bring me the gold, and all of that. The guitar picking sounds kind of like a spiderweb. It would actually make the whole thing worse: the vibrations would empty the content of the supermarket back into the frequencies of folk ballads and superstition. Rings of flowers and gallows trees. It would be useful insofar as the contradictions and antagonisms of bourgeois production would be strikingly revealed. It would be a disaster inasmuch as all sound in the supermarket, including the old Leadbelly song, would be reduced to a frequency

spectrum of predominantly zero power level, except perhaps for a few almost inaudible bands and spikes. We wouldn't be able to get out, is what I mean. All known popular songs would be seen flickering and burning like distant petrol towers in some imaginary desert. Well, not really. Actually, that's why I hate all those old bands like Led Zeppelin. They took all those old songs like "Gallis Pole", straightened them out, and made them an integral part of the phase velocity of the entire culture, arranged as a static sequence of rings, pianos, precious stones and prisons. It's not entirely hopeless, though: the circulation of these songs does contain within itself the possibility of interruptions. I've been following the progress of the strikes at Walmart with great interest, for example. They're establishing a system of counter-homogeneity, basically: the structure of the supermarket is kept in place, but all of a sudden the base astrological geometry of that supermarket is revealed as simplistic, fanatic and rectilinear, and the capitalist city as a tight lattice of metallic alloys, ionic melts, aqueous solutions, molecular liquids and wounded human bodies that would prefer not to die. The city is all perimeter. And song is not, ultimately, a rivet into that place, but absolute divergence from it. The event horizon as a rim of music, all vocabularies as an entire symphony of separations all expressed at the moment immediately prior to their solidification into the commodity form. At that moment there is everything to play for. All else is madness and suffering at the hands of the pigs.

LETTER ON WORK AND HARMONY

I've been getting up early every morning, opening the curtains and going back to bed. There have been rumours of anti-unemployed hit squads going around, and I don't want some fucker with a payslip lobbing things through my window. Especially not

when I'm asleep. Though I don't expect to be able to fool them for long—my recent research involves an intense study of certain individual notes played on Cecil Taylor's 1966 album *Unit Structures*, and so obviously, once I've managed to isolate them, I have to listen to these notes over and over again, at very high volume. Someone from the Jobcentre is bound to hear them eventually and then, even though I'm not claiming benefits, my number will, as they say, be up. Taylor seems to claim, in the poem printed on the back of the album, that each note contains within it the compressed data of specific historical trajectories, and that the combinations of notes form a kind of chain gang, a kind of musical analysis of bourgeois history as a network of cultural and economic unfreedom. Obviously, I've had to filter this idea through my own position: a stereotypical amalgam of unwork, sarcasm, hunger and a spiteful radius of pure fear. I guess that radius could be taken as the negation of each of Taylor's notes, but I'm not sure: it is, at least, representative of each of the perfectly circular hours I am expected to be able to sell so as to carry on being able to live. Labour power, yeh. All of that disgusting 19th-century horseshit. The type of shit that Taylor appears to be contesting with each note that he plays. As if each note could, magnetically, pull everything that any specific hour absolutely is not right into the centre of that hour, producing a kind of negative half-life where the time-zones selected by the Jobcentre as representative of the entirety of human life are damaged irrevocably. That's nothing to be celebrated, though. There's no reason to think that each work-hour will not expand infinitely, or equally, that it might close down permanently, with us inside it, carrying out some interminable task. What that task is could be anything, it doesn't matter, because the basic mechanism is always the same, and it involves injecting some kind of innovative emulsion into each of those hours transforming each one into a bright, exciting and endlessly identical disk of bituminous resin. Obviously, what is

truly foul is what that resin actually contains, and what it consists of. Its complicated. The content of each hour is fixed, yeh, but at the same time absolutely evacuated. Where does it go? Well, it materialises elsewhere, usually in the form of a set of right-wing gangsters who would try and sell those work-hours back to you in the form of, well, CDs, DVDs, food, etc. Everything, really, including the notes that Cecil Taylor plays. Locked up in cut-price CDs, or over-priced concert tickets for the Royal Festival Hall, each note he plays becomes a gated community which we are locked outside of, and the aforementioned right-wing gangsters—no matter that they are incapable of understanding Taylor's music, and in any case are indifferent to it—are happily and obliviously locked inside. Eating all of the food on the planet, which, obviously enough includes you and me. That is, every day we are eaten, bones and all, only to be re-formed in our sleep, and the next day the same process happens all over again. Prometheus, yeh? Hang on a minute, there's something happening on the street outside, I'm just gonna have to check what it is. One of those stupid parades that happens every six months or so, I imagine. One of those insipid celebrations of our absolute invisibility. Christ, I feel like I'm being crushed, like in one of those medieval woodcuts, or one of those fantastic B Movies they used to show on the TV late at night years ago. Parades. The undead. Chain gangs. BANG. "Britain keeps plunging back in time as yet another plank of the welfare state is removed" BANG our bosses emerge from future time zones and occupy our bodies which have in any case long been mummified into stock indices and spot values BANG rogue fucking planets BANG I take the fact that Iain Duncan-Smith continues to be alive as a personal insult, ok BANG every morning he is still alive BANG BANG BANG. I think I might be getting off the point. In any case, somewhere or other I read an interview with Cecil Taylor, and he said he didn't play notes, he played alphabets. That changes things. Fuck workfare.

ANNE BOYER

MY LIFE

This is about Mary J. Blige's "My Life" and Lyn Hejinian's "My Life" and Lyn Hejinian's other "My Life" and Mary J. Blige's "My Life 2" and Lyn Hejinian's "My Life in the '90s" and My Life, Anne Boyer's. This is about calling what isn't a *life* a *life* and calling what isn't one's *own* life one's *own*, about the embellishment of any "my" on a life that isn't and can't be or isn't quite, at least not all the time. My Life's aren't *lives*: they are made things. These made My Life's are made mostly of sound. The sounds are made, sometimes, out of calling, so this is about calling, too—not just the calling as if to name (My Life), but the call that summons: *come here*. To call here is to call for the figment: a life, *mine*. We had heard that we were supposed to be alive, that we might exist, that we had names and identities, that we cohered. There were rumours that when the phone rang, there was someone around to answer it. First comes My Life's synthetic orchestration, then there's the sound of the buttons being pushed, then the rings. Sean Combs (sometimes called Puff Daddy sometimes called Diddy sometimes called P. Diddy sometimes called Puff) says "Not this shit again" as he waits. There is, historically, a silence when Mary J. Blige is expected to speak. "What's the 411?" started it. In "What's the 411's" introduction, no matter how champagne and opportunity the people who dialled for it, the 411 was "Mary J. Blige is called, but Mary J. Blige is not at home." The 411 is that this is about calling for My Life and getting no answer or only sometimes getting one. For My Life, Mary J. picks up once: "Yeah yeah yeah, what's up?" There's the eponymousness of life (if I have called something My Life, I have given it my other name) then the regular eponymousness of Mary J. LH: "A name trimmed with coloured ribbons" (35). To have a name to call to oneself is also having a name to call a thing one has made.

To call or name one's self or one's being repeatedly might—Mary J, are you in the spot tonight?—be an involvement with the problem of a kind of non-being, with the disproportionate violence of capital against certain kinds of bodies, with the unreliable fit of our names and our lives to what is called by them (does Mary J. make us feel alright?). At the climax of Mary J.'s *No More Drama* video, a horizontally tri-split screen stacks parts of three bodies enduring the regular disaster (addiction, crime, violence) into a body of not-quite-one. Then, after the personal body in three types of suffering fails to cohere as the general, Mary weeps and sings "no more pain" at a bank of shop window television screens flashing "America's New War." My Life is the general suffering unmaking narrative and unmade narrative unmaking what is "personal" about the personal and the unmaking all of it making the sounds, achronic and dysarticulate, of calling what isn't or can't yet be. My Life also is the suffering named as gender named by capital as "love." The endogenously-experienced violence of the ever-crisis caused by capital's conditions for certain bodies is explicit to My Life: who you love will harm you; you will want them not to harm you so much you want to harm yourself; the empire's fighter jets take out into the night. My Life is about only sometimes existing enough to ask certain questions (like *how do you kill a self that isn't really alive*?) and only sometimes existing barely enough to answer. My Life's are also about calling what barely bothers to approximate narrative two words heavy with several centuries of formal promises: My Life. They are about doing this repeatedly, semi-preposterously, industriously, over decades—My Life's call the promise of narrative out on itself. LH: "The narrative returns from a journey to the pole but the narrator is left behind" (123). But My Life, Mary J. Blige's, is also about calling what is a profound expression and tormented range of annihilative desire "life." There is, says Mary J. later, "a real bad suicide spirit on there." My Life is about what it is like to live as a dead person

whose desire is aesthetic, whose drive is to remedy the disproportion of existing as the non-existent: to commit suicide as an already dead person provides the aesthetic satisfaction of matching up a pair of socks. My Life is also about making sounds out of the desire to annihilate whatever lifelike traces litter the edge of the vacuum where a Mary J. Blige shaped subject only sometimes appears to cease to non-exist. Perhaps My Life, Lyn Hejinian's, is also about calling what is a profound expression of the semi-tormented range of textual annihilative desire "life." Juliana Spahr, from Resignifying Autobiography: "[My Life] does not allow its readers to ask and then decide who Lyn Hejinian is but instead places them squarely within a representational crisis." Hejinian's My Life wrecks the word at the place the word promises. So does Blige's. Mary J.'s My Life is calling after a life so that a life may come, or calling after a life in the woeful cheerfulness of platitudes and deadly romance's innocent and general cliché, or about calling after a life as it is in the form of another person, one who brings a familiar kind of death. My Life, for Mary J. Blige, at least the first time, is also the beloved—as in, "you are my…" The beloved is My Life, also the reason to live, also why to die, also what to call for when one might be calling for oneself. But the beloved is a man, and in this, he is everything and probably also, if you have heard the music, no good.

> Mary J. Blige at the opening for the Mary J. Blige Center for Women: "When I was 5 years old there was a lot that happened to me … that I carry … all my life." Her voice filled with emotion. People in the crowd started to yell in support. "Don't cry!" "It's OK, Mary!" "We love you!" Blige removed her sunglasses to wipe away her tears. "And when … I was growing up after that, I saw so many women beaten to death, almost to

their death, by men." LH: "As for we who love to be astonished, we close our eyes to remain for a little while longer within the realm of the imaginary, the mind, so as to avoid having to recognize our utter separateness from each other" (103). Mary J: "I still love you / You know I'll never live without you / I wish you'd change your ways soon enough / So we can be together." Mary J. Blige made a perfume. It is called My Life. The thing about My Life is almost anyone can wear it. Though a perfume is not an album and an album is not a life and a life is not a book of experimental poetry and a book of experimental poetry is not a work written for a journal of music and experimental politics, one might mistake one for the other when My Life is, for so many of us, so difficult to find. LH: "It isn't a small world, but there are many ways of dividing it into small parts" (50). From a review of My Life: "If I could rate this higher than 5 stars I would. I have never smelled something more Devine. Every women should have this perfume." My Life is distilled, collected into a container of rumour, generally called, paratactic, wavering, intruded upon, brave-ish, feminine, diffused, interminable, libidinal, floral, and what also, in the duration, disappears. Mary J. is singing the living death by wrapping the brink of herself in unalluring allure: "come into my bedroom, honey / what I got can make you spend money." When it comes to My Life, don't believe it. The lyrics instruct the listener not to trust them for how they protest to be trusted. In "You Gotta Believe," Mary J. sings some form of request to believe her eleven times, jammed up and layered against each other, before the start of the first verse. Don't believe My Life, believe My Life's noises. Destabilization is credible production. Sean Combs uses smoothed-down globs of Puff-type samples, confuses My Life's explicitly stated category of feeling with tiny cracks and drops and ambivalent layers, makes of it a silky mess that indicates My Life's place in another category, living death. Love—what Combs called at first "Ghetto Love" and of which he declared Mary J. the queen—is an

eroding trope. "Mary Jane (All Night Long)" is the Mary Jane Girl's "All Night Long" is Rick James' "Mary Jane" is Teddy Pendergass' "Close the Door." Pendergass didn't mean "Close the Door" as in the die-forever kind of way, but Mary J. later said of her death wish during My Life, "it was straight out, 'Bam! I'm ready to go.'" In My Life's production, Mary J.'s charity (toward her lover, toward love, toward gender itself: she covers "You Make me Feel like a Natural Woman" at the end of an album with a thesis that how her beloved made her feel is like a person who wanted to die) faces suit. LH: "The self is a site of time absorbing dissonances. I find that I don't really mind that the cheering at the outdoor concert escapes the site and can be heard for several miles around in the summer night. There is no simple organic link between two instants, instead one must make a pathetic jump, passing from the first into the next, passing the power of the first to the second. But more of that another time. The writing moved sense and made it" (122). From a review of My Life: "I sniffed and almost gagged. It is very cheap smelling, like something that a teenager or a stupid man who buys a gift at the last second and has to purchase at the corner drugstore might pick up. YUK. That's all I can say." Mary J. Blige about listening to the My Life album: "It makes my stomach hurt." My Life longing to be kept alive by what kills it or longing to die by what nominally keeps it alive makes my stomach hurt. This is My Life's summary of Mary J.'s My Life: she begs for it. LH: "To give the proper term for an object or an idea is to describe its end. The same holds for music, which also says nothing" (61).

> After great pain, a utopian sociality comes. This is about the revision of My Life that is No More Drama's "A Family Affair." There can be no more hateration, no more holleratin, in this dancery. The situations must be left at the

door: a sonic hollow carved by the beat by which the pain of the individual is filled by the "soldiers" of we who are now open, crunk, dancing en masse, B.S. free for Mary J. LH: "we have come a long way from what we actually felt" (41). My Life, too, relies on its structural qualities. These are as accidental as consciousness or years. LH: "Sway is built into skyscrapers, since it is natural to trees. It is completely straightforward. On occasion I've transferred my restlessness, the sense of necessity, to the vehicle itself. And if I feel like a book, a person on paper, I will continue" (64). Her first My Life, written when Lyn Hejinian was 38, was made of 38 stanzas of 38 lines. Her second My Life, written when Lyn Hejinian was 45, was made of 45 stanzas of 45 lines. My Life in the Nineties, written in the '90s, was made of 10 stanzas of 90 lines. My Life—this one, My Life, my first, Anne Boyer's—is made of three paragraphs: one of 40 sentences, one of 43 sentences, and one of 71 sentences. Combs tells Mary, in the introductory phonecall at the beginning of My Life 2: "Life is a marathon that has many parts to it." LH: "The new cannot be melodic, for melody requires repetition" (51). Gertrude Stein, from Composition as Explanation: "Naturally I would then begin again. I would begin again I would naturally begin. I did naturally begin. This brings me to a great deal that has been begun. And after that what changes what changes after that, after that what changes and what changes after that and after that and what changes and after that and what changes after that." My Life's are about calling what isn't a *life* a *life* and calling what isn't *mine mine*. My Life's are about calling what isn't a life a life repeatedly, semi-preposterously, industriously, over decades. They are about calling too, "My Life" what doesn't resemble it, at least not entirely: not just calling what is not a life a life, but calling "My Life" something that isn't the "My Life" that was called it before, and now calling it again, even as it is begun again, as it is what is "after what changes what changes after that." What My Life is made of most-

ly is sound, and sometimes whatever scented particulates break into the air around the body of anyone who wears it. One of My Life's reviewers: "I don't understand why reviewers are calling [My Life] a granny scent?? If your grandmother is wearing MY LIFE then she is surely smelling GOOD!" My Life is unstable, with the semi-morbid scent of white florals, but its silage is moderated, radiating only to the length of one's own arm. One of Mary J.'s two great producers knew her better than the other. The one who knew her well was Combs. It was the other great producer, the semi-stranger Dre, who with No More Drama lifts Mary J. out of My Life. Combs was producer as chorus, troll, indulger in semi-satirical sweetnesses, encyclopaedist, show off. Dre does not crack the sound under a cracking-up Mary J. With Dre, there are no more ominous, muffled interludes chapping the edges of Mary J.'s voice. One critic had said of the songs of Mary J.'s first My Life, "for all the melody they possess they might as well be breathing exercises." LH: "The new cannot be melodic" (51). What Dre does is build Mary J. Blige platforms on which to unwaver. These are not My Life's Combs-underscored carnivals of almost-dead and interludes of shift. The tracks on No More Drama are not My Life's breathy death rattles wrapped in love sighs, but songs. Some of them, like "No More Drama," are explicit disavowals of My Life's gardenia-scented thanatophilia. The song "No More Drama" is only slightly cruel optimism scrawled over the theme song of the soap opera *Young & the Restless*; it's the knowing manufacture of an improving feeling, felt in the together, summoned to obscure My Life's insurmountable evasive alone. LH: "They used to be the leaders of the avant-garde, but now they just want to be understood" (43). No More Drama is not My Life in that Mary J. does not have to decide whether or not to answer the phone. The option to showily non-exist, to be in the nothing-answer as the obvious resister of being forced to exist like this, the option to mark the misery of life without life with a despairing non-cooperation, isn't a

track. LH: "They say that Goethe refused to let his life become 'an unstructured and unintended series of events,' but rather, 'each major event in it, foreseen or not, was to be pondered and given it place in a newly interpreted whole.' Then compelled to summon strength, to wake up, to get out of bed, and to accept capacity" (108). Mary J. Blige without the drama brings it: the palliative we. This self-helpery is what she now claims to have always intended as her purpose, the place her suffering is given in a newly interpreted whole. No More Drama temporarily turns Mary J. Blige's death-loving living-death of love into a danceable therapeutic industry. Writes one reviewer: "I don't buy celebrity perfumes, but Mary J. is very down to earth than any celebrity. She is not a media whore like a pop or reality star, she is not an annoying artist, you wont hear about her affairs in gossip magazines, etc. Definitely a date night perfume, I'm thinking of buying the roller ball version. It smells very high end and refined." No More Drama matches the post-release claims of therapeutic value often made about My Life, the ones made under the most tenuous theory of sympathetic magic and its reverse: how, again, could My Life heal us? LH: "I could fill notebooks with things interpreted differently. I could puke" (129). With Family Affair, Mary J. conducts the now-habitual small riot of her own eponymousness for an "us" so general it's almost post-racial ("doesn't matter if you're black or white") but (always to her point, who sings of and for the people) not post-class ("work real hard to make a dime"). Yet it seems that it is for herself that she calls her own presence to the utopian song of the situations left outside, as if to convince the Mary J. who barely is that she could be what Dre makes of her: "Mary J. is in the spot tonight and Ima make you feel alright." This is true: she shows up, we feel. My Life 2 ("Naturally I would then begin again") comes after the therapeutic correction. It is not My Life 2, the actual death, or My Life 2, the resurrection. It is My Life 2: The Journey Continues (Act 1). This time, the phone rings and it is Mary doing the

calling, asking Combs if he's cool with doing a sequel. Mary says she was hurting so bad on the My Life album, that when Puff told her to speak about the pain that's what was going on, and he says to Mary J. "What you waiting for, My Life 2, get it!" In the track "My Life" on the first My Life, Mary J. sang the words "My life, my life, my life" in obsessive, despairing repetition, a repetition in which all certain things indicated by My Life (by the words My Life, by the cultural-historical promise My Life, by the formal structure My Life, by the feeling of My Life, by the naming of My Life and what isn't *My Life*) faded, shifted, cycled, reversed, detached, re-attached, corroded, undermined, sickened, dizzied, ached.

She called My Life, called for it, then again called within the song My Life, repeatedly, and then again, and with the promise, too, to sing My Life again, and likely again; My Life appeared, also, at 38, and then again at 45, in the '90s, at 40, at 2011, at 2014—Lyn Hejinian's and Mary J. Blige's and mine but also a perfume, My Life, almost anyone could wear and many people still do. LH: "Politics gets wider as one gets older. I was learning a certain geometry of purely decorative shapes. One could base a model for form on a crystal of the lungs" (39). It was as if there are those of us who believe, by saying My Life, again and again, by naming many things not My Life *My Life* that another My Life (ours), shed of the present's grim conditions and attachments, might finally exist.

SEYMOUR WRIGHT

ITINERANT IDEA–ISM

(To me) ideas are at their most interesting as they are being had; how they move, their scale, their proportion, their evolution, and (but less so) their decay fascinates me. (To me) how imagination, ideas and individuals intersect in inevitable investigation of the weird or new (or "awkward"[1]) is also fascinating; the friction (for it is that) between these live aspects is an endlessly rich creative and warming energy and wealth (to me). It keeps me going, it is the future, and the learning, about which I go on (and on).

Often, this warmth is intangible and only intermittently salient (to me); but occasionally, indeterminate tangibles accrue and illumine this weird power. And then there it is—intense, instant, at once past, present and future—red-hot, sparking, potential-rich (present fun/future treasure). Increasingly, I understand that I am interested in the people, places and things that I am because this compelling (to me) ideas-rich force resides (differently) in them—jazz (to me) is one example, and (my) London is another.

Something I (re-)read recently rendered an instance of this weird aggregate of idea/investigation/imagination/possibility (to me). Worth sharing because (to me) it presents the qualities described above, it presumes (or engenders) some knowledge of jazz, food and London (that I hope do not make it too exclusive). It grows as large as the imagination you can give it.

> We met in a Fleet Street coffee bar, and in between cups of tea and rum babas, [Don] Cherry talked [...]

You don't need to imagine that. It's real; from an article by Bob

1 What I have called the "awkward wealth of investigation"; Seymour Wright, "notes to penumbrae," Harlow: Matchless, 2011.

Houston "CHERRY HITS PUDDING LANE EC3—blows over Thames", published on page 6 of Melody Maker on November 28, 1964[2]. "An abrupt, anonymous phone call to the Melody Maker office" the article explains,

> [...] left the message: "Don Cherry is here at the Monument Club". Frantic phone calls ultimately proved that Don Cherry, THE Don Cherry whose pocket trumpet allied to Ornette Coleman's plastic saxophone turned the jazz world upside down five years ago, was in London.

And, amongst (many) other things that,

> Cherry is at present touring Europe with a group which includes bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Sunny Murray [half of the group along with Roswell Rudd, John Tchicai and Albert Ayler that had in June 1964 recorded *New York Eye and Ear Control*]. He had taken advantage of a lull between gigs to come across from Paris to London for a few days.
>
> All he had was the clothes he stood in, and a 68-year-old cornet which he now uses instead of the famous pocket trumpet.

"What was Don doing in London?" Houston goes on to ask (along with much more about the Ornette-quartet-story, and Cherry's new-old cornet),

> Oh, I've just been moving around. In the evenings I've been

2 The immediately above, and following, quotes all come from this same article: Bob Houston, "Cherry hits Pudding Lane EC3—blows over Thames" *Melody Maker* November 28, 1964, p.6.

> taking my horn and practising on the embankment down at Chelsea. Yeah I practice in the open air. Just standing there.

The ludic ideas-richness of this article (Ornette would not play in London until August 1965, Ayler until November 1966) is potentially indefinite (to me): the surreal (river) Fleet Street (press rendered) repast; the beautiful, devotional Chelsea Bridge (Strayhorn, 1941) pilgrimage (possible); the London-local exchange of ideas and experience (potential).

This half-page article invites imagination with its ample potential; and, what it offers to the imagination is an example of the energy-wealth I try to articulate above. It allows us to ask, for a start, what did Cherry's Chelsea-Bridge-proximate practice sound like?

And, who heard it?

and, what else did he do?

Where did he move around?

and, around (with) who?

and, where did he stay?

and, where else did he play?

and, when?

and, what?

and who with?

and to who?

And, who saw or heard him?

And, who met him?

and what did they say?

and what did he say?

And who did he meet?

and what did he say?

and what did they say?

and did they play?

How?

and, how knowingly?

How did it sound?

How did he look?

Who cared?

and who didn't?

Who knew?

Who knows?

Ideas (actual)?

(potential)?

And how did (does) this move (into) the future?

future/wealth/wonder

STEVPHEN SHUKAITIS

NOW IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THINGS CAN ACTUALLY HAPPEN:

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE MCPHEE

Joe McPhee has been recording and performing for over forty-five years, playing both as a solo artist and in an impressive number of collaborative units including Peter Brötzmann's Tentet and The Thing. In recent years he appeared with regularity at Café Oto in London, one of the key venues for free jazz and experimental music more generally in the UK (and beyond). On any given night McPhee could just as likely be heard playing a tenor, alto, or soprano saxophone, or the trumpet, flugelhorn or valve trombone.

In December 2013 McPhee was scheduled to perform at Café Oto with Survival Unit III, one of his longest running projects. I took this as an opportunity to meet and interview Joe, in particular focusing on his approaches to collaboration and the politics of music and improvisation.

STEVPHEN SHUKAITIS The first thing I wanted to ask you about is collaboration. How do you approach collaboration, not just in terms of particular projects, but in the way projects affect your approach to music more generally?

JOE MCPHEE I really like a lot of what different people do, people whose music I really appreciate. But collaboration, it starts with a real personal kind of relationship. For example I've played for long time with a guitarist in France, Raymond Boni. I was in a trio with Raymond Boni and Andre Jaume. I've had a long time relationship with another trio in the States called Trio X; we've been going on now about fifteen years, it's been almost ten years with Survival Unit III. And each one brings a different perspective to the music; different instrumentation. Tonight you'll hear Fred Lonberg-Holm with the cello and the electronics.

I really like electronics and in the early and mid 70s I was playing around a lot with synthesizers and guitar effects pedals. That real-

ly interests me. I'm also interested in different drumming styles. The Michael Zerang [from Survival Unit III] style of playing is not typical jazz drumming. He brings another very unique aspect of drumming to the group, gives it a very different flavour. And then I have to adjust too; what instruments I'm going to bring. This time I brought the tenor. And sometimes it has to do more with what can fit on an airplane than, you know, really what I want to play. But that's the way it goes.

SS Taking a bass saxophone would be more difficult.

JMP Well, I don't have a bass saxophone. That's Mats Gustafsson. He just got one and I don't know how he's going to travel with that. The tenor is the biggest one I've got. But I've been playing a lot with a plastic alto that I like. I discovered this new plastic alto that I really like.

SS Is there a different kind of a tone out of the plastic alto?

JMP Yes. Early on Charlie Parker played one, it was a Grafton made here in London I believe. And then Ornette Coleman played one and they were made with a kind of moulded plastic that was quite brittle. And it doesn't have the same sound as a brass saxophone, it's a darker kind of sound but it's one that resonates with me that I like very much and so I've been pursuing that. The instrument I have is really designed for children to learn how to play the saxophone but I don't see why I should limit myself to what I'm playing because of what somebody else does or says.

SS Do you think the kinds of collaborations you have change as they continue for ten or fifteen years? Another band that has played Café Oto a number of times and impressed on that level of long term collaboration is the Sun Ra Arkestra, where a num-

ber of the members have been playing with each other for 30, 35, 40 years. And when you watch them you can sense they have this immense repertoire of material that they play, as well as a depth in flexibility in playing developed over those many years. Do you find that you can play differently with people that you play with in longer-term collaborations?

JMP Yes, each collaboration brings its own, unique qualities. It's quite different, for example, playing with a cello that's amplified and with electronics and also with Fred Lonberg's extensive musical experience. It's very different from say, playing with a bass player, or when I have a collaboration in a trio with a guitarist, it brings a different kind of thing. In the trio with Raymond Boni we didn't have a drummer because he's so rhythmic that it wasn't necessary. And I got a reputation for hating drummers because of that. It wasn't true, not at all. And then when I change instrument—if I play the trumpet, valve trombone, soprano or the alto, it brings another dimension to whatever that collaboration is. I don't come with a set of fixed ideas because I hope I'm learning all the time.

SS In a recent issue of *The Wire* you had an article about the reissue of *Nation Time* (1971). And at the end of the piece you're speculating that perhaps Parliament and Janet Jackson might have been influenced by that record?

JMP Could have been! You know, with music of Parliament-Funkadelic. Yes, why not? In terms of speaking about nations, *Rhythm Nation 1814* (1989) and so forth. Why not? It was talking about community, that's what I was getting at.

SS Could you imagine, musically, what a collaboration with Parliament or Janet Jackson might look or sound like?

JMP Yes—because I played for many years about the time when this was made with a group locally where I live that was called Ira and the Soul Project. It was soul, jazz and Marvin Gaye, James Brown, all that kind of stuff. We had an organ, a B-3, Hammond B-3, a guitarist, a vibes player, a drummer and another saxophone player. We'd be very comfortable. And I don't see the difference between that and playing with Sun Ra or playing with Archie Shepp's group at that time or Ornette's double quartet. In fact, one of the tracks on *Nation Time* called "Shaky Jake" is played by a double quartet, which certainly comes right out of Ornette's idea.

SS In the different projects you've been involved in, how much do you see yourself as influenced by the context you're in? And I mean that both musically but as well as more broadly, the political and social context.

JMP It's all a part of it. Probably less focused and orientated as it was here. This was about a period of events that were happening in the United States at the time—in the 70s—with the civil rights movement and all that kind of thing, and black nationalism and so on like that. But it's expanded now much beyond those kinds of limitations to thinking about a larger human community.

SS It seems as though your early recordings from the 70s are very much coming out of the political moment. Would you say that has changed for you or is it just a different moment? What was the relationship between your work and the politics?

JMP The politics and all of that? It's absolutely essential. There's no separation. It's a part of who we are and a bit of why we exist. We've got to be involved. It's a process, it's about change. It's about flux and so on. But I think my music, no matter what has transpired since then, it's always involved some aspect of politics

and history. The early recordings that were titled, for example, the first one that I made was called *Underground Railroad* (1969), which had to do with this network which brought slaves from the south in the United States to the north, to freedom. And I thought if I never get a chance to make another recording I wanted it to be about that. And that's why the second one was called *Nation Time* (1971). But after that it began to expand. *Trinity*, which was the fourth in this series also touched on the blues but another way of looking at the blues. There's a piece in there called "Delta," which is not a twelve-bar blues but is blues in feeling. And then the fourth in the series of CJR recordings was called *Pieces of Light*, which had to do with a bit about knowledge and also a bit of Zen philosophy and introduced me to electronic music, which opened up a whole new world … outside of jazz, into a larger room of music and sounds.

SS It's interesting that on the cover of *Nation Time* you're standing in a Zen garden.

JMP Yes, that was by chance. It was a great place. It's a curious coincidence and there's a lot of food for thought in that. I hadn't given it as much thought as perhaps it deserves. Yes, it was a very peaceful place.

SS What was it like growing up in rural New York? And how did you find your way into playing experimental and improvised music?

JMP Just thinking personally I grew up in rural Pennsylvania and growing up it didn't seem like much interesting was happening musically, or culturally for that matter. I was a big fan of Miles Davis and I collected every Miles Davis recording I could. And a friend of mine, we were listening to the music one day and he

played *Pithecanthropus Erectus* (1956) by Charles Mingus for me and I said "oh my God, what is that?" So I traded my Miles Davis' *Bags' Groove* (1957) for *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, which opened up all kinds of doors for me. And then I began to listen to Ornette Coleman and to Eric Dolphy and of course Coltrane. And that's what kicked it open for me. I thought Ornette's music was the blues. I don't know why at the time people were having so much trouble with and saying that it wasn't real jazz and that Coltrane was destroying the planet, that Coltrane would be the death of humanity. It was horrible what they were saying at the time; the end of Jazz, anti-Jazz and all that. What does that mean? I thought, well, that's the direction I want to go.

SS Would you say that the artists who have the most influenced you have changed over time, over the past forty years? Or are there periods when you go back to certain things?

JMP I think it's a natural progression in the music. It has flux and changes and is the essential aspect of jazz. Then you listen to some really early jazz pieces and they sound like the avant-garde. Of course, in their own time, they were. What does avant-garde mean anyway? Of its time? You can only be in your time, whatever time you're in. And you do whatever you can do and you have to break rules. It's good to learn the rules before but you don't have to; do whatever you want as far as I'm concerned. And out of that, you know, you can discover something.

SS When you were doing the PO music, were you influenced by Arte Povera?

JMP No, it was a concept of PO music coming from a kind of philosophy of Edward de Bono, who wrote a book called *Future Positive* (1979). And it was a way of rethinking one's approach.

One example he gave was: say you're driving down a road and you know your destination is north of where you are, but you come to a hole in the road, which means you have to change your direction. You might have to go west or sometimes maybe even south—in the opposite direction from where you're going, to get around that hole to get to where you want.

Now when you're making this detour you're going to make a whole other bunch of discoveries along the way, that will perhaps influence you and change your original ideas about where you wanted to be. And that's what I wanted, that's PO. The PO is a language indicator to show that it's provocation: don't take things to be what they seem to be. I used that to say, well, if I'm playing something that seems to be jazz (whatever that is) maybe by going in some other directions with other collaborations, I can discover something else: new instruments, new ways of approaching the music, new ways of listening. So that by the time I get to this destination I'm a different person, and the music's different.

SS One thing I'm always amazed by, coming back to playing together, is when I would watch the Tentet play, I couldn't actually understand how it was working. How does it work?

JMP No, we never know either.

SS Clearly something is working but how it actually builds, ebbs, and finds it's own form of movement is very mysterious.

JMP Well, we're an organism. At one point when we started we had all kinds of written music and people would bring in all kinds of compositions and it began to sound more and more like an American Big Band. But Peter Brötzmann's not American, he's middle European, and one day he said to us "you know, this is not

my aesthetic, I don't want to do this." So we took all the music and we threw it in the trash and we never rehearsed again. We only would appear on a train platform or at an airport, all of us would get together and we'd come to a place and then we'd play. But we were never really sure exactly what Peter wanted because he would never tell us. When we saw in Peter's extended interview in *The Wire* we said "uh-oh, that's the end of the band." We said "oh my God, we didn't know," and that was really the end of the band. He decided he wanted to do something else. After we left London we went to France and that was our last concert with the Tentet. But in the meantime I've played with Peter in duos, Fred's been playing with Peter and so has Michael but it's very mysterious, we'll never know how it worked.

SS Perhaps that's what made it so exciting, the not knowing—because if you know, maybe it just wouldn't work?

JMP Well, we never did. We'd try things and not everything worked. Some nights were successful and some nights were not and Peter would only tell us what he hated, he would never tell us what he liked. I don't know if he ever liked anything, we don't know. But then we just say "fuck it, we don't care, we just do what we do and that's it—we're here, we're alive and tomorrow's another day and we'll play some and we'll try again and we'll keep doing it and doing it again." How long did we play together? Fifteen years? That's a long time.

SS Did you work up a conception of politics from improvisation? I don't mean politics, like a capital P sense, like elections and all this, but some sense of community as formed through improvisation, or a form of being social which isn't so fixed. Do you think you can get that out of improvisation?

JMP Yes, but you know, it's on such an individual basis. I don't know how it would work for everyone. Everybody would take from it what he or she would like to find. I don't know. I don't look at it like that. I don't examine anything too closely except after the fact when we have a recording—and I have a hard time listening to my own recordings, a really hard time. Because that's something that happened. I'm off somewhere else by then.

SS So for you is there a sense that if it's over, why go back to it?

JMP No, not so much why go back to it, because you can always learn from what you've done … but I'm just in another place and that was then and this now. In the process of doing it, it's very interesting because that's a time when everything is really live. Now is the only place where things can actually happen. The past, it's over, and the future we don't know. Now is when it's happening. And you have to be really fast, and slow at the same time because while it's happening it's … someone said to me it's like trying to repair a car while it's rolling down a hill: dangerous and difficult, but it can be done.

SS That does sound more than a bit difficult—especially when you're mechanically challenged. Another thing I wanted to ask you about is, how do I phrase this without being off-putting … There are certain artists like yourself who have received a better reception in the UK and Europe more generally than you have in the US. How has that affected you? Was that unexpected or how do you relate to that?

JMP No, it wasn't unexpected. In the US there was less opportunity to perform, there's very little money. The country's very big, it's difficult to get around. In Europe you can be anywhere in a short time. It was a matter of exposure and also a matter of

education. I think that young people are exposed to more varied kinds of music at early ages in Europe than in the United States. Also it had to do with what radio was. FM Radio now is a mess. But there seems to be more variety here. I'm not interested in satellite radio so you can get a station that plays everything from the 60s or everything from the 70s. I don't care about that. I like the music but I don't want all of the same thing of anything.

SS Well certainly when you get those kind of stations there are no surprises.

JMP Oh God, you know, I've been there once and I don't want to go back there. At the time disco was happening I hated it but now I like it because I like to dance.

SS What it makes me think of is the way that conditions for musicians have changed over the past forty years and thinking it seems much more difficult to make a living as a musician maybe today than it was in the 60s or 70s.

JMP In that period for me, I was working for 18 years. - I worked in an automotive ball bearing factory. I mean, that supported me, not that music supports me all that well now, but I get to play more and I get to travel a bit and I get to play with people I like. So in that respect it's much better for me now. I'm exposed to a lot of different situations and contexts and I like it a lot more.

SS Do you think the factory influenced how you play?

JMP Yes because I wasn't going to do that forever. Once the people I worked with asked me about my music and I had made some recordings. They said "oh, can we hear it?" So, I said, yes and let them hear it and they gave it back to me and said "you mean peo-

ple actually pay you to play that shit?" So I said, okay, then I don't do that anymore. I hardly ever play where I live. If you want to hear me play you can come where I rehearse, in my toilet, or you can come to Paris.

SS Maybe this is a cheesy question but if you were talking to young artists today who wanted embark on a more experimental musical or artistic career, what sort of advice would you give them?

JMP Just do what you're doing and don't stop, no matter what. You have to keep at it, there are going to be a lot of reasons preventing you, for why you should stop, maybe so you don't disturb the neighbours or whatever. But don't stop, just keep doing what you're doing. Do what you do, know who you are and yes, make no apology: just do it. It's all in the doing. I don't do it because I want somebody's approval, I couldn't care less. I just do it because I like it. If it's cool with me then I'm fine.

SS It's interesting just thinking about the way you're emphasizing the importance of the present and of doing. I can see how maybe sitting in a in a Zen garden was not so coincidental.

JMP You know, after the fact, I would say that's true. A friend of mine, in fact, the gentleman who took these photographs, after the music had happened, took me to this place and I think he might have known something that I didn't realise at the time. But he said "that's the perfect place, that's where you have to be." Someone knew a whole hell of a lot more than I did at the time and thought that the right setting, that was the place.

In the expanded box set [of *Nation Time*] there are a couple of ballads. There's one ballad called "Song for Lauren," which was a

piece I wrote for a god-daughter of mine, but there's also a piece by McCoy Tyner called "Contemplation," which until now had never been heard, because the music was in my basement for forty years. There are things like that. And I am a big fan of ballads and my reason is because you can't hide there, you can't play tricks in a ballad; it'll be sloppy and it'll be overly sentimental and stupid if you don't do it right. Or it can get to the heart of the matter. I like stories and ballads. I make up ballads all the time. Do it on the fly and then whoever's listening to it can make up their own story and say "oh I thought it meant this." I don't know what it means.

SS Are you still living in Poughkeepsie?

JMP Well, yes, I grew up there and it's close enough to Manhattan, to the airports, to get out when I want. I almost never play there, there's no point. People who I first started playing jazz with are still playing the same music they were playing back in 1962. And they're content with that, that's fine. They wouldn't be so happy playing with me because they think I make noise, which I do.

SS How has Survival Unit survived and changed and gone through different iterations?

JMP The original Survival Unit came out of the fact that in the late 60s and I had been playing with a local band for a number of years and it began to atrophy. People would leave and it dwindled down to a quartet and finally the bass player decided he wanted to go into politics and the pianist wanted to [...] He was raising a family and he needed to make money and the music we were playing was not going to make any money. So everybody disappeared. But there was a little bar where we would play and I would take a record ... well, a record player and 33rpm LPs on a Sunday af-

ternoon, and play jazz for people. I would play anything. And they would have something called a "drink downer" and pour something from every bottle in the bar and put it into a big punch bowl and give it to everyone free. So everybody got completely drunk and they didn't really care what was happening. That was my first Survival Unit because I just sent around and played music for people.

And then I started making tapes so that I could play along with them because that was my intention. One was called "The Looking Glass Eye," I made multi-track recordings or sound on sound recordings and I would play with them. That was really the first electronic Survival Unit. The second Survival Unit was a group where for a time bass players wouldn't play with me, I don't know why but they just wouldn't so we played in New York City at a radio station, it's called WBAI. There's no bass player on that and so Clifford Thornton is on it

Yes that was that. And then we were invited to make a recording in 2004 and the producer wanted people who I hadn't recorded with before as a group. And I thought of Fred and Michael and I called it the Alto Trio as I was only going to play alto sax and alto clarinet and so we started like that. And just before we were to go into the studio the producer decided to cancel the session. He decided to cancel the recording, for whatever reason, financial reasons I was led to believe. So there we were and we had a little tour and decided to carry on and the next year we got a tour here in Europe and we changed the name to Survival Unit III. And it has to do with the fact that this is the third iteration of the Survival Unit, not that there are three people, because it could expand at any time to whatever number. But this has been the longest running group. I'm very happy with it, it's great. We haven't killed each other yet. I don't think we will.

HOWARD SLATER

TNOONA / TENDERNESS / SBN-A-1 66K

TNOONA (1975)

It's best to start nowhere

Hardly begin

Add a cataract to sight

Be but a breath away from the end

And stay there stray there

be steeped there

in determined holding

as an almost spoken rising

20/9/2013

TENDERNESS (1977)

Eyes closed

Molecules

shift in a body

made over to

hover and veer

20/9/2013

SBN–A–1 66K (1972)

A unison weave of the deep

and the high compliment an

insistent dense tinkle that

statics out a non-melodic cluster

The rational notes of two

patiently try to do along to the confined
randomness of no-ones little bells

Going nowhere but subsisting together

8/1/2013

DHANVEER SINGH BRAR

GHETTO THERMODYNAMICS[1]

1

To say that DJ Rashad was a footwork producer is disingenuous, because footwork has never been made by producers. Footwork is the outcome of pressure created by the movement of dancers. What is heard in footwork is the force of dancers movements within the circle. The circle is where battles take place, where the force and pressure of dancers movements were exerted upon Rashad. The movement of dancers in battle generates the over-production of rhythmic differentiation—also understood as footwork's speed—of which Rashad was an amplifier.[2] What is heard in footwork as the furious combination of top layer claps, mid-range synth squeals, and bass rumble, is the phono-material imprint of dancers movements.[3] Rashad understood this as a ghost imprint, the sonic apparition of ghost crews in his sound.[4]

2

To say that DJ Rashad was a footwork producer is entirely on point, because footwork has always been made by producers. Footwork is the outcome of producers pressurising movements from dancers. Rashad drove the kineticism of their limbs as they battled. The intensity of the degrees of rhythmic variations in his tracks should not be understood as a set of instructions he was issuing to dancers though. What can be heard in footwork is the production of an incantatory edge which compels dancers to battle. Rashad made ghosts of dancers, made ghost dancers, made ghosts dance. The precision of the degrees of rhythmic differentiation in his production style compelled dancers to make circles. In turn he was compelled by their gestural experiments in speed to create even more of the pressure necessary for dancers to continually make circles.[5]

3

Rashad operated at the juncture between dancers and producers, as they animated the production of footwork. Emerging as a dancer with the House-O-Matics and Wolf Pack crews he possessed a muscular knowledge of the relations of force at work within the circle.[6] It is no surprise that when he produced tracks, it was often with dancers in the room.

4

If footwork is about the frenzied manufacturing of vibe, Rashad could be considered its premier conductor.[7] Footwork is about manufacturing vibe through the intensification of the degrees of differentiation between dancers and producers as they animate degrees of rhythmic differentiation across each other. Footwork involves taking these speeds and transforming them into vibe through the ongoing production of battle circles. Rashad, therefore, was a node within a general system of conduction. It is not solely conduction in its musical registers that is being invoked here, but also conduction as it understood as mode of heat transference. Rashad was an amplifier of Chicago's unique ghetto thermodynamics.[8] What could be heard in his sound was socially strategised overabundance, a phono-material reaction that kept on spilling over because its vibe couldn't be held.

5

As music made in Chicago's South and West sides, Rashad was aware that footwork was dimensional. The battle circle is as much about the production of ground as it is about audio. The way Chi-

cago's ghetto thermodynamics fuel footwork means it generates infinitely expanding ground from within what is deemed to be restricted territory. Footwork's status as battle music has more at stake than combat. It must not be forgotten that it is music located within a territory which is thought to be encircled by a city. The footwork circle in Chicago operates under the ongoing pressures of racist logic, which manifest themselves through police power, restrictions on movement and urban geography, all combining to designate the city's South and West sides ecologically black.[9] Duress, though, is not the limit of black social life in Chicago, in the same way that it is not the limit of footwork. In both cases it might be the other way around. Supposedly contained within a cordon sanitaire, footwork produces an incessant musical overpopulation which necessitates the production of new ground in ways that explodes those confines whilst holding the circle together.[10] What can be heard in footwork is not only ghost limbs, but the imprint of ghost architecture.

6

Rashad was so attuned to the relation between limbs and architecture, between expansionary circles and confined ground, that he was able to give all of this activity a name—*Teklife*. Operating in the clash between dancer's movements and producer's sensory fields, he realised the forces generated by the circle constituted an ever-expanding space into which he could load, seemingly infinitely, the vibe that constituted the phono-materiality of his footwork sound. In calling it Teklife, Rashad was signalling the way his music was already the outcome of a general intellect to be found embedded within the Chicago hyperghetto—a territory deemed to be underpopulated with people but overpopulated with problems. Teklife is evidence of something buried deep

within, and bubbling on the surface of, areas of Chicago that some well meaning high minds choose to describe as warehouses for post-industrial capital's discarded materials.[11] Rashad's footwork sound both resolutely stays "there" and overflows with such generativity that the designation "there" can no longer act as a container.[12] It desediments the ground of the distinction between "here" and "there", ghetto and metropole.[13]

7

To say that Rashad's *Double Cup* allows us to dance our way out of the prisons of our identities is a fundamental misinterpretation of its dynamics.[14] This album, as with all of Rashad's work, is nothing other than black music. It is black music because what it does is spill over with the blackness some might, from the outside, presuppose as the inherent racial characteristics of the territory from which the music emerged, when in reality it is blackness as the grounded sociality of incessant experimentation internal to South and West Chicago that is being rendered audible.[15] The generativity of the latter announces and short-circuits the regulative impulse of the former. Rashad's overabundant yet precise deployment of high-end scatter and low-end pulse allowed him to animate latent formations of *Teklife* in a range of other environments. The sense-memory London carries of jungle, for example, meant that it was suitably primed for the arrival of footwork.

8

DJ Rashad made music that was the outcome of, and demanded, inhabitation. He had an acute feel for the furious activity of ghost limbs and the architectures of the circle. Rashad's music was not

so much music as location, a place built through the ecological engineering of speeds. In this respect Rashad was never one, but instead a spectacular emanation of an experimental sociality in Chicago that never stops. He was an exemplary case of ghetto thermodynamics seemingly contained by duress yet always overpopulating its limits. Rashad's music overloaded those limits to the extent it became obvious when dancing to (which is to say inhabiting) it, that *Teklife* can be found everywhere, precisely because it never seems to stop pouring forth from the storage house of nowhere.

1 Full credit is to be given to Simon Barber for this poetically precise formulation, which unlocked and put together much of what follows. As he would no doubt acknowledge, the seemingly automatic spitting out of such formulae is never work done alone. Anything written here is the product of time spent studying with our friends Victor Manuel Cruz, Sam Fisher, Lucie Mercier and Ash Sharma. Having said that, blame any bullshit on me.

2 "Tempo in dance music is quite a misleading concept because really it just measures metre and doesn't tell you anything about speed or rhythm. In a sense, I consider speed to mean something different from tempo. Speed is to do with the rhythmic density of the music, in all its polyrhythmic complexity. So to think about the speed of a track forces you to set the metre in relation to its half and double time rhythms. A track at 130 BPM can feel faster than a track at 140 BPM if the space between the dominant beats is most densely populated by rhythmic detail". —Angus Finlayson, "Interview: Kode9"*Red Bull Music Academy*, 13th July 2013. http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/magazine/kode9-2013-interview

3 "Since the first tracks tagged as footwork appeared in the late 1990s, their roaring sub-bass, minced vocal samples and knife-like claps … have been heard, almost exclusively, pouring out of roller rinks and school gyms in the Windy City's predominantly black neighbourhoods on the South and West sides … A deconstructed version of juke, with spell-binding call and response vocal loops, primordial synth spasms, and syncopated bass and drum-machine patterns" —Dave Quam, "These Feet Were Made for Workin': Inside Chicago's Explosive Footwork Scene" *Spin*, 5th July 2012. http://www.spin.com/articles/these-feet-were-made-workin-inside-chicagos-explosive-footwork-scene/

4 DJ Rashad, "Ghost", *Just A Taste*, Ghettophiles, 2011.

5 "Dancers make up their own routines on the floor, with their shuffling feet following the lower frequencies and their bodies popping to the claps. A good footwork routine, full of "soul trains", "pochanotases" and "ghosts" will have symmetry—the patterns that happen on the left side are followed through on the right—and gimmicks are frowned upon"—Dave Quam, "Battle Cats: From the rise of House in the 80s to today's Juke and Footwork scenes, Chicago's circle keeps expanding" *XLR8R*, 9th August 2010. http://www.xlr8r.com/features/2010/09/battle-cats-rise-house-music-80s

6 "Yes correct. I was dancing—that was the thing, it was like basketball, football, skating or anything else. It was something everybody did, especially when you were younger … That was the goal for us, to become House-O-Matics. You had to be good to get in that group. Technically, you lose a lot when you first start battling. But that's how you get better—by battling people that are good, and then you catch on, and when you catch on you come back."—Lisa Blanning, "Chi-Life: An Interview with DJ Rashad" *Electronic Beats*, 22nd July 2013. http://www.electronicbeats.net/en/features/interviews/chi-life-an-interview-with-dj-rashad/

7 "Anyway, I called these scenes 'speed tribes' (named after amphetamine-fuelled Japanese motorbike gangs) that worship speed gods, where the god was a speed, or more accurately an algorithm which carries a mathematical set of instructions of how rhythms and frequencies, it's vibe should be organised. And it is these abstract, numerical gods (or demons) and the way they activate within a specific concrete geographical, physical context, dictating the ways people worship them (repetitive bodily movement in dance) which are what carry the essential differences between different styles"—Angus Finlayson, "Interview: Kode9" *Red Bull Music Academy*, 13th July 2013. http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/magazine/kode9-2013-interview

8 "Maybe I can pick up from that question. I'm worried about using this term because Ramon's here and he actually knows about this stuff, but I want to add to the subatomic and cosmological a kind of thermodynamics. With Rashad, he is the master of this kind of ghetto thermodynamics, it's kind of like a preservation of energy and a giving away. There's a sort of fugitivity and intimacy. You have to be fugitive so you can preserve or conserve this energy, so you can give it away at some point."—Simon Barber, "Black Studies: Grammars of the Fugitive," "Workshop Session 1," Goldsmiths College, Dec 6,7th 2014. https://archive.org/details/Blackstudiesgrammarsoffugitive

9 Horace R. Cayton & St Clair Drake, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City,* University of Chicago Press, 1970; Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second*

Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960, University of Cambridge Press, 1983; Allan. H Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of A Negro Ghetto 1890-1920*, University of Chicago Press, 1967.

10 "I just wrote down this phrase, maybe it will make sense, I dunno—The overpopulation of the measure in expanded space. In early renaissance music there were these composers associated with the musical concept of the black note. If you look at the early manuscripts, they were just hard to read because they were crowding so many notes into every measure, and it allowed for the emergence of the modern conception of the tempered scale precisely in order to regulate this activity, to regulate this overpopulation of the measure. It strikes me that this is a music [DJ Rashad, "Feelin", *TekLife Vol 1: Welcome to the Chi*] which is resisting the regulation of that overpopulation, it's committed to this intense generativity that keeps filling up the musical measure. But the cool thing about it is that this filling up of musical measure seemingly beyond its capacities, first of all measure is maintained as rhythm, so you can dance, but at the same time that measure is maintained it also keeps expanding. There is this tremendous overpopulation but it doesn't feel crowded. It feels like there's still room to move around, to move around in the measure. It gives the lie to a whole range of intense regulatory—to justifications for regulation". —Fred Moten, "Black Studies: Grammars of the Fugitive," "Workshop Session 1," Goldsmiths College, Dec 6,7th 2014. https://archive.org/details/Blackstudiesgrammarsoffugitive

11 "The hyperghetto now serves the negative economic function of storage of a surplus population devoid of market utility … a one-dimensional machinery for naked regulation, a human warehouse wherein are discarded those segments of urban society deemed disreputable, derelict and dangerous"—Loic Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh" *Punishment and Society,* Vol. 3, 1, Sage, 2001. p105.

12 "Here, what is understood as motleyness is now hidden and sheltered, even as racialisation and criminalisation remain in force and continue to expand. People come together here because they are black. But at the same time, they are black because they come together here."—Laura Harris, "What Happened to the Motley Crew? C.LR. James, Helio Oiticica and the Aesthetic Sociality of Blackness" *Social Text*, Vol. 30, 3, 2012: p59.

13 "desedimentation … as in to make tremble by dislodging the layers of sedimented premises that hold it in place … hyperbolic force [which] elaborates itself as or with the kinetic and volatile disjunction of the empirical and the transcendental, of the mundane and the ontological, issuing thereby as a historical yet structural

affront to systems of subjection, even as such systems configure the subordinate and supra-ordinate alike within its devolution"—Nahum Chandler, "Originary Displacement" *Boundary 2*, Vol. 27, No 3, Fall, 2000. pp.255, 283.

14 "More importantly, he suggests that—against all the odds—we might be able to dance our way out of the time-traps and identity prisons we are locked in." —"Break It Down: Mark Fisher on DJ Rashad's Double Cup" *Electronic Beats*, 22 October 2013. http://www.electronicbeats.net/en/features/essays/mark-fisher-on-dj-rashads-double-cup/

15 "The aesthetic sociality of blackness is an impoverished political assemblage that resides in the heart of the polity but operates under its ground and on its edge. It is not a re-membering of something that was broken but an ever-expanding invention. It develops by way of exclusion but it is not exclusionary, particularly since it is continuously subject to legitimated, but always incomplete, exploitation. Its resources, which can never be fully accessed by the structures and resources of legitimate political economy, are taken up the politically and economically illegitimate, in their insistence on living otherwise, in ways that resist oppression, denigration and exclusion and violate brutally imposed laws of property and propriety. It is a mode of intellectuality that, in the face of vicious constrictions of life, integrates the widest possible range of expression—corporeal, sensual, erotic, even violent."—Laura Harris, "What Happened to the Motley Crew? C.L.R. James, Helio Oiticica and the Aesthetic Sociality of Blackness" *Social Text*, Vol. 30, 3, 2012. p.53

COMMUNE EDITIONS

ELEGY, OR THE POETICS OF SURPLUS

ONE

We often find ourselves discussing, often in rooms with other poets, often in academic settings, what it means to say that something is *poetic*. It is for the most part clear enough in reference to other literature, suggesting a higher-than-average degree of patterning the sonic and visual aspects of language. Or to put matters in another register, "poetic" suggests that some relatively larger portion of the communication is borne by things other than denotation and connotation, by measures to be found beyond the dictionary and thesaurus.

But when something beyond language is identified as poetic, problems arise. One can easily imagine some people agreeing over dinner that a particular piece of furniture was poetic, but when pressed, producing five or eleven different explanations. In the last century, poetry did perversely well in coming to stand for something like an acme of aesthetic achievement, indeed becoming a kind of synecdoche for imaginative capacity itself—*perversely* in that it is able to mean so much precisely by meaning so little, or at least lacking a specific self-recognition. Fredric Jameson offers a rather unsympathetic formulation of this inverted development as part of modernist ideology.

> It is as though in return for the acknowledgement, by the other arts and media, of the supremacy of poetry and poetic language in the modernist system of the beaux-arts, poetry graciously returned the compliment by a willingness to adopt, however metaphorically, the technical and material accounts the other arts gave of their own structure and internal dynamics.
>
> Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*

In the late modern era, whether we use the term "postmodernism" or not, poetry has been largely evicted from the catbird seat, while still panting doggily after other modes. Witness the familiar blather about poetry trailing X number of years behind painting or sculpture or what have you, as if the only difference among these practices was that certain *external ideas always and freely available to be gotten from the ether* had been spotted sooner elsewhere, and now it was just a matter of poetry pulling the wool from its eyes and cotton from its ears. We might suggest that this ambiguous delusion about the comparability of poetry and the studio arts, this desire to arrive where painting already is, has a half-submerged class character. One need only consider the well-known phenomenon (we have felt it ourselves) of the poet's jealousy when the painter comes strolling out of his or her studio at end of day, clothes smudged and streaked with lovely and serious-looking oils, runoff turpentine staining sturdy shoes. This envious sense that painters, e.g., *go to work* and have *work clothes*, that they actually *make things*, that they work with their hands—well, this is not terribly challenging to decode.

Surely this is the reason that Jameson's epochal assessment of postmodernism[1] begins with a historically older object, able to stand for the lost era of manual labor: van Gogh's painting of work boots.[2] Grounded in the materiality of production, painting et al. are well-situated to encounter as well its loss, and the ensuing transformations, via transforming their own production processes; hence the much-vaunted dematerialization of the art object.[3] But such a historical understanding must simultaneously disclose the absurdity of poetry trying to reproduce this dematerialization, as if the concept were simply transposable. It is precisely fine art's parallels to commodity production that give the allegory a sensuous ground, and in turn give *the refusal to produce* a political charge.

TWO

These are merely preliminary thoughts toward approaching the question of "the poetic" in an art that is purely physical, activity without direct product. What would it mean to say that a dance is poetic? The occasion for this question is subjective: an encounter with a specific dance or two as the most astonishing experience of art in the last few years. Turf Feinz[4] is a collective from Oakland and environs. They practice turfing[5], a dance style which is also a way of understanding style itself according to an intense localism—an assertion that stylistic distinctions belong not just

1 https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/jameson.htm
2 http://www.ideologystop.net/Pix/van-gogh-shoes.jpg
3 http://www.rae.com.pt/Lippard.pdf
4 http://turffeinz.tumblr.com/
5 http://oaklandwiki.org/Turfing

to a city but to a neighborhood, to a few blocks. Turfing is in turn associated with hyphy[6], a hip-hop phenomenon largely of the Bay Area that simmered during the nineties and emerged nationally around 2006-2007; it is the soundtrack of choice for turfing shows, sharing with the dance style an intense localism, as if its language were landscape.

Hyphy has its own poetics and its own localism. As the immortal E-40 puts it, in a turf-laden video[7], "I'm from the Bay where we hyphy and go dumb / from the soil where them rappers be getting they lingo from." E-40 is not himself from Oakland but from Vallejo, a few towns over. Hyphy had its glory but it never quite went national, never quite broke like it might have. At any given moment, alongside whatever strain of hip-hop sets the measure of the moment, there will be both a faster and a slower subgenre contending for the crown. From G-funk to trap to the present, "slow emergents" are inevitably taken more seriously; "fast emergents" get treated as party music, send some hits up the charts, but never take over. Hyphy was a fast emergent, too much BPM, all about going dumb like good party music should; it never really had a chance. Or so goes one theory. It may be that there were only a couple great hyphy producers, that whatever Rick Rock and Droop got a hold on just wouldn't travel. Droop is 40's nephew, and that made at least a few things possible. For a few months in 2007, everybody in the country knew what it meant to ghost-ride the whip.

This is the practice of exiting your vehicle, either latest model or an older American make, and letting it roll slow, stereo thumping,

6 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GZbaXdK8Js#t=240

7 ibid.

while you promenade outside the cabin, sort of dancing together. It is a joyous practice and the cops don't care for it; the side shows at the center of hyphy culture are not, how you say, legal. The driverless car, or more accurately, the car *almost but not quite* separated from its person, is a strange and suggestive figure. You are the ghost, still spectrally attached to the vehicle you have left; it follows you, or you follow it, a spectacle of the broken but still indissoluble unity of machine and body. Behind it is, among other things, the Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant in Richmond, the largest plant built on the West Coast, half a million square feet. It was the third largest employer around, after the railroad and the oil company, but it closed in 1956, unable to compete with other, more efficient facilities. Needing to employ too many bodies to be profitable, it ended up employing none. Even now it is impossible to put cars and bodies back together again, really, as they once were; even in ritual performance they keep coming apart.

THREE

It is not the association with hyphy, exactly, that makes Turf Feinz poetic; in the first instance, it is the intensely elegiac character of the dances. This is true in the most literal sense: the major pieces (recorded and tracked by YAK Films[8]) are dedicated to the dead. The first Turf Feinz' piece to find a global audience is frequently known as "Dancing in the Rain," from 2009; its proper name is "RIP RichD."[9] It was recorded on a rainy streetcorner the day after the death of dancer Dreal's half-brother in a car accident. It re-

8 http://vimeo.com/yak/videos/page:1/sort:date

9 http://vimeo.com/7597451

mains incomparable. It comprises an astonishingly inventive set of passages, building from a single dancer toward an improvised quartet, the dancers betraying considerable formal training, some ballet behind the classic "Oakland boogaloo" from whence turf dancing springs. The main feel is that of gliding, its intensity amplified by the slick surfaces. On the corner of 90th and MacArthur, the moves feel—despite the remarkable technique—perhaps a bit tossed off, casual. But that's not it. The dance is somewhere between machinic and all-too-human, but it is insistently expressionless. The first dancer is masked up. As others join, it becomes clear that the inexpressive faces are part of the performance: all of the embodied activity with none of the exuberance such motion would ordinarily imply. The dance is soulful, whatever that means, but without spirit. Even as the four members wheel and pivot through space, the dance is flat, or flattened. It is in this way that it becomes fully elegiac. It is about what's missing, or a missing dimension.

It is also about the police. The establishing shot, indeed, is a conversation between one of the crew and a cop in a roller, which must depart before the dance can begin. This will foreshadow Turf Feinz' other best-known dances, part of "the Oakland, California, R.I.P. Project": "RIP 211"[10] and "RIP Oscar Grant."[11] Kenneth "211" Ross was shot to death by officers in December of 2009; Oscar Grant[12] on January 1st of that year by transit cops, though such differences are specious. *All Cops Are Bastards*, after all, and killing African-American kids is pretty much their thing. This is a broader context of elegy as it exists in Oakland; the miss-

10 http://vimeo.com/9133778

11 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atyTZ8prhCg

12 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar_Grant

ing dimension is always the life of kids of color. At the end of "RIP 211," under heavy dubstep (a remix of Nero's "This Way"), the crew gathers against the wall of a squat. An AC Transit bus passes across the frame right to left like a cinematic wipe made from the material of the city. When it's gone, so are they.

This shot will be reprised in "RIP Oscar Grant," finally the most powerful of the trilogy—but in the middle, at the inflection point. Seven and half minutes long, the clip develops with no hurry as the crew makes its way, inevitably, to the Fruitvale BART station where Grant was executed, an event that would set off a sequence of riots and confrontations known as the Oscar Grant Rebellion.

Accompanied by audio collage of news reports and a minor-key piano, the crew one by one offers isolated performances at the site of the killing: patient, slow (and sometimes filmed in slow motion), beautiful. Again they remain expressionless. Just before the three minute mark, one of them glides up and down the platform at moments almost resistanceless and yet absolutely stuck to the earth. No friction, all gravity. There is no taking flight in turfing, no transcendence, no symbolic emancipation or escape. There is only this world, where the bodies are until erased.

At 3:04 the lateral motion is suddenly interrupted by an awkward, astonishing pirouette thrown against his angular momentum, pivoting and then improbably pausing en pointe, just one foot, body perfectly arched. The world is suspended. He tilts backward and toward the ground, his backpack pulling on him. *Catastrophe, a downward turn*. It seems he'll fall, that everything will come down. A BART train enters the picture right to left and obscures whatever happens next. There is the sound of a gunshot. When the train passes, another dancer is mid-move. Things resume.

FOUR

If the social distance between poetry and painting concerns ideologies of production, what then of dance—of allegories of physical labor without an immediate product? It would be easy enough to go to the late modern ideas about performance and post-medium arts, the dialectically doomed attempts to outmaneuver commodification. But this seems inapposite to say the least, and moreover shifts us unremarked to the consumption side, the marketplace where commodities are exchanged and exhausted. This won't do, finally. The dance is production side, if via its absence. It is scored and choreographed to the rhythm of machines but without their presence, embodying the blank technicity of labor without any production to speak of—but still unable to efface entirely its moments of human discovery, the swerve. It is a dance of aimlessness and streetcorner, invention for its own sake, amazing and defeated: a dance, and here we perhaps arrive at the far horizon of the argument, not of surplus goods but surplus populations, excluded from the economy[13] if not from the violence of the state. A post-production poetics.

In this sense, *poetics* means something like a form of *timeliness*. The shape of being historical. By the end of 2009, the year in which Rick D, 211, and Oscar Grant are killed, the unemployment rate for black youth peaked just barely short of 50%[14]—almost half the population excluded from the wage. The dance in this sense is a conversation with Detroit and Athens, Madrid and Dhaka, with the *favelas* of São Paulo; a quiet confrontation with the world as it goes, after the global slowdown, after the social factory could put

13 http://endnotes.org.uk/en/chris-chen-the-limit-point-of-capitalist-equality

14 http://www.dol.gov/_sec/media/reports/blacklaborforce/tables.htm#2

any kind of good life on offer. In Oakland, where unemployment already runs above state levels, the rate for African-Americans is generally double the city average at any given time. In 2008, Vallejo, home of E-40, became the largest California city to declare bankruptcy. Catastrophe calls the tune. It is perhaps seductive to imagine a post-production aesthetic as utopian, emancipatory, freed from the factory whistle. Post-human, even. For now, the inverse is the case. There are bodies. As in the ghost-riding allegory, they can neither be finally separated nor recombined with the car, the factory, with production. They have neither an obvious way out nor a persuasive way back in. This surely is the peculiarity of our moment…

ALBERTO SAVINIO

A MUSICAL PUKING▽

▽ 1917

Although brought up to be gallant

signor jocundo, e
sempre de le donne ... perfecto amicho
savio e cortese più che belle dama

I have never been able to hold back the spasms of the most pressing nausea each time I find myself face to face with Euterpe[1]. My stomach is still refractory to the company of this artistic figurative representation of sounds, the very presence of which sets off in my intestines the same effects and consequences as the most swaying heave of our childhood's swung vertigo.

We have often been wrong about painting and poetry; we have always been wrong about music.

Its tardy development will later operate on that of the other two. Despite this considerable handicap, it will overtake the leaders of the race and arrive, as though in a bath chair, at the finishing post of utter stupidity and huge misunderstanding.

Among the music-makers there has never been a single clairvoyant mind. *Senza il menomo madore d'affettazione*—I must confess a natural aversion for anything touching the chromatic world.

Thanks to intense training, I now easily resist any titillation that comes from harmony or melody.

Everything to do with this decrepit and malevolent art plunges me into the meanest sadness.

1 Euterpe is the Greek muse of music.

I take to all sorts of reading: a “History of Music” demands a painful effort from me. I blush when I see myself placed in the shady tableau of makers of sharps and flats.

One evening, before going to bed, having imprudently opened a book of music, it disturbed that sort of serene mood which is vital to me at this solitary and, above all, precious hour of the day, and it gave me, during my succeeding sleep, a series of obscene dreams and harrowing miseries. I thus learnt from experience and, since then, if I have to devote myself to sharps, I do so in the middle hours of the day; I then have time to repair my palate with some entertaining occupation and reparative thoughts.

In its current state, music is a demented and immoral art; an example of bourgeois perversity; an art open to all the vices.

More odious and sticky than pity, it welcomes in its arms not only widows and orphans, but also entire crowds of renegades and the accursed.

Deceitful consolation for the degenerate, for all those with a weight on their consciences, with cancer in their souls, for all the vile, the submissive, the born-cursed.

Art that flatters and encourages the crowd’s basest instincts; shameless mirror of all the obscenity of a world without laws or morals.

I emphasise two moments in my life that gave me the most intense and most inexpressible disgust: the first took place in my childhood, one day, at the instigation of a blood-thirsty kitchen boy, I sawed the head off a nestling; the second happened in my adolescence, one evening when I was pushed by a music-lov-

ing German into attending a sort of theatrical orgy where the sonorous turpitudes of Richard Strauss provided a scene of debauchery.

Above all, in its current state, music is an insult to the dignity of all citizens, be they aristocrat, bourgeois or proletariat, rather lacking in honesty or clean in their linen and business.

The charm of harmony is the greatest threat to the honour of free men. Among the primary causes of criminality due to degeneracy we must place—in first position—music, well in front of alcoholism!

Dense populations of idiotic, ignorant, filthy, sick, degenerate people enter into the Temple of Music as if they were at home there. And they are—indeed—perfectly at home there, because here there is celebrated a devotion within the reach of all the most repugnant baseness of the mind: it is a publicly funded hospice for all of humanity's rejects.

At the time when, unprejudiced, I abandoned myself foolishly to the embrace of this rabble-rousing vice—alas, so few years separate me from that woeful era!—I constantly experienced distasteful reactions. Remorse gripped me—and I had not even slept with Aspasia!—I loathed myself, I felt guilty, I groaned under the weight of my sins. When the grin of libidinous bestiality had been wiped from my face, I sunk into desperation, I bent my head and doubled over, like a brute who has just reached orgasm.

Post coitum animal triste est!

KEV NICKELLS

HARDCORE TIL I DIE

In typesetting "Hardcore Till I Die," *we have used an original layout sent to us by KN as a point of departure – but in an attempt at some consistency with the rest of the articles – have chosen to change a few things:* Dekar, Prime *and* Klinic Slab *have been replaced with* Arnhem *and* Source Sans Pro*, and the position and orientation of elements has been modified.*

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

There are problems with writing about things that aren't written about often. The line to be toed is also a balancing of ethics and affection. To large degrees, Hardcore is its own explanation—it's fast and mildly absurd music which largely operates as something to stomp your chops off to. But here I wish to say that the sort of people who are part of the scene—whether punters or DJs—mostly come from communities who are often derided in the popular press and ignored or debilitated as cultural producers in the academic sphere. People who live on council estates, people disengaged with conventional education, people in minimal-prospect jobs who want to get mullered and dance their tits off of a weekend. I mean working class people, and I also mean white working class people. I also mean the sort of people who are not merely precluded from mainstream acceptance but also (and contra- much of "underground" culture) give very little in the way of fucks. This article, then, professes complicity in that implied criticism—it benefits Hardcore little to have this written down and disseminated. But here's the thing—as a cultural event, Hardcore remains largely unwatched—and therefore unguarded—in popular consciousness. To persist as a self-organised community—and a financially profitable one at that—and retain its underground status, to hide in plain sight, in a time of apparently everything being available for mainstream abuses, is politically audacious; that this avoidance of the mainstream eye is uncontrived by the Hardcore makes it both indicative of how strong working class culture is and how entirely revolting the working classes are considered by culture's arbiters.

HARDCORE: HISTORY AND HISTORICITY

The early history bit is relatively easy, and pretty well covered by Simon Reynolds' 'ardkore continuum, as currently available in the essays section of *thewire.co.uk*. To recapitulate: in the late '80s to early '90s, ravers were taking a shitload of happy pills. The music reflected this. Raving went from a shoddily-organised bunch of goons in a field to something more militant—to the extent that '94's Criminal Justice and Public Order act (effectively giving police an easier ride to break up raves) galvanised a youth culture more readily inclined towards taking drugs till the sun comes up into taking part in very visible protests in London's Hyde Park. That is, the political actions to suppress culture politicised a great many people who would otherwise not have taken part in direct, explicitly political actions. It's a watershed moment. Groups of people interested in music rarely mobilise over papers in Parliament. Anglo-American "spirit of '68" stuff was largely about broad disaffection, not particular legislation. Punk sprung, rancid-Phoenix like on the fumes of the '78 bin strike but articulated anger in an open, un-specific way. Rock against racism was a particular issue; rock against disco was thinly-veiled homophobia and misogyny—both protesting a particular cause but not a specific act of legislation. Skrewdriver and the musical wing of the British far-right were forever more notorious than popular, and it's no small mercy that the far right in the UK struggles to find mouthpieces with a level of articulation beyond wet mud. Anyway, the point—ravers protesting a specific piece of legislation, a particular incursion upon

MBWEKELA—a term I picked up from some liner notes on a CD by TPOK Jazz, a Congolese Soukous band active from the '50s—'90s. It means, roughly, to criticise in a coded form—to apparently speak in light and jovial forms while, for those aware of the culture and the people, an open criticism. To hide in plain sight.

their rights is a pretty spectacular moment, a moment of the relatively junior popular movement taking direct action against Whitehall.

...HISTORICITY

And from that momentary foray into actual politicisation—perhaps in line with late-Thatcher UK—politics receded from the forefront of rave's popular being. Which is kind of where this article starts, historically. A step back before that though.

Reynolds' 'ardkore continuum plots a narrative, written near enough contemporaneously with events, whereby rave emerges from various channels—prototypically a narrative from early 80s electronic music to hip-hop, mutating into early acid house from imported Detroit house. Around '92-'94, Jungle and Hardcore share largely porous borders, yet to be differentiated. SL2's "On a Rag-

SIDENOTE

Quasi-empirical proofs and stratagems are immaterial to hermeneutical discussions of cultures, especially when that culture or constellation of cultures remain trenchantly averse or resistant to the sort of academic and pseudo-academic renderings which threaten to condescend lived cultural experience into cod-sociological zoology. Another way of saying the same—Saint Audre Lorde: "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Conversely, that which is resists the master's dialogical tools will only ever be "fixed" (as in made taxidermic, paralysed, limp) by those tools. Hardcore's inability to fit into, or be fixed by, conventional cultural ration is its resistance, its violently oscillating motilic kernel.

ga Tip", an early popular appearance of rave culture in the UK, is emblematic. Within a few years, the streams of Jungle (fast becoming Drum 'n' Bass) and Happy Hardcore were rarely to mix. "On a Ragga Tip" was very much in the early Jungle and Hardcore mode, but featured DJ Slipmatt, later a legendary figure in Happy Hardcore. The track is perhaps a nexus of the fork in the road between Happy Hardcore and Drum 'n' Bass (neo Jungle)—at this point, Happy Hardcore isn't quite a fully-fledged genre but a flavour of a broader rave continuum. In terms of yardsticks, it's fair to say that Hixxy & Sharkey's "Toytown" ('95) is the moment Happy Hardcore became its own genre (and debates about whether it was the "first" are relatively immaterial here). Up until about '95, Reynolds is relatively benign in his discussion of Hardcore—in as far as it's not specifically a genre in itself, divested of its relationship in a broader rave culture. After that, Happy Hardcore appears as "the other road"—Reynolds, likely for reasons of personal preference, puts Hardcore to one side, preferring the side that mutated from Jungle into Drum 'n' Bass. A problem here is that rave culture, in spite of being cemented in the popular imagination, has generated little serious musicological discussion; Reynold's writing on the subject plots a fork in the road between Drum 'n' Bass and Happy Hardcore but leaves the latter in a kind of cultural wasteland. Two decades on (!) and there's been little serious discussion of Hardcore to match Reynold's scant outlines, and save a few cursory offhand mentions in papers on matters like drug consumption, mental health or broad-brush "rave culture", it's troublesome to find anything in English specifically dealing with Happy Hardcore culture and music (which includes affiliate genres like Speedcore, Jumpstyle, Gabber etc). It perhaps says something about the Dutch that I was more than able to find plenty of apparently sagacious writing from there, illegible to monoglot me.

WHAT IS HAPPY HARDCORE THEN?

Happy Hardcore is dance music. It's fast. It's largely in regular time. It's probably fair to say that there's 3 or 4 developments which have characterised the genre, and there is a raft of associated genres and styles.* see opposite

PHASE 1: EARLY DOORS

Starting from the top, we have the kind of proto-Happy Hardcore—the Amen break-beats, the fast tempos, the hoover keyboards and the acid piano lines which are characteristic of early-90s rave music. In a kind of primordial soup, lines of differentiation between Acid House, Ragga Jungle and Happy Hardcore are blurry until *Toytown* (1995), and remain so for a while thereafter. As Drum 'n' Bass codifies into Jungle's offspring—characterised by a reliance upon Dub techniques, cutting up Amen/Funky Drummer breaks, rhythmic variation on the hi-hat and minimal vocals—Happy Hardcore plumps for synth basslines, regulates the beat into 4/4, pitches up vocal samples and pushes the tempo. The tempo push has a lot to do with the drugs—Happy Hardcore stuck with ecstasy as its drug of choice (and speed as the subordinate), so the tempos keep up with the heartrate-tipping amphetamines; Drum 'n' Bass becomes more varied (drug-swise), with pill-heads mixing with smokers and, by the late-90s, newly-affordable harder drugs like coke. Drum 'n' Bass finds ways to match the variety of drugs—lugubrious dub basslines for the smokers, quick snares for the pill heads and aggressive kick drums for the coke. Happy Hardcore keeps the more malevolent elements out (of the music, at least) with an emphasis on the OTT Happy of the bright major keys and bright, synthetic digital synths. Boundaries are ambiguous, but for our purposes it's ap-

propriate to say that the characterisations of early, orthodoxly 'Happy' Hardcore are as much about the retention of the day-glo, smiley aspects of Acid House, the hard 4/4 as they are about forging an identity distinct to the more dub-influenced Drum 'n' Bass. A point I'll return to soon—it cannot be ignored that this period of Happy Hardcore flourished mostly in white, parochial areas (as in my home town of Weston-super-Mare), while Drum 'n' Bass became a more urban sound, in cities like London and Bristol with a bigger mix of black and white punters.

PHASE 2: BONKERS/HELTER SKELTER

For a lot of people my age (early 30s), this is where Happy Hardcore gets its reputation, for better or worse. The vocals get pitched up, there's covers of well-known songs, the beats are unrelenting and the whole music loses the rhythmic spacing that its breakbeat forbears brought. Bonkers is a series of compilations which cements one aspect of the reputation—everything is fast and loud, everything bangs away at the thresholds of danceable BPMs and the vocals are overwhelmingly in the so-called "chipmonk" register. Helter Skelter is the biggest rave night in the scene, still playing aspects of earlier rave and some Drum 'n' Bass, but mostly the bills are populated by DJs now firmly considered Happy Hardcore. Simultaneously, Drum 'n' Bass is taking on a more broadsheet-friendly face—with some people (most notably Goldie's *Timeless*, and later Roni Size & Reprezent's *New Forms*) finding conventional, commercial album success. Serious magazines like *The Wire* are writing about Drum 'n' Bass and offshoots into bedroom production, away from the dance-centred rave, start germinating Intelligent Dance Music (IDM).

PHASE 2 (CONTINUED)

This turn of Drum 'n' Bass towards recognisable, validated-by-the-mainstream commercial success belies an important difference with Happy Hardcore. While Drum 'n' Bass still lived overwhelmingly in the inner-city club nights, it became more visible to the mainstream. There was a cultural push towards recognition, culminating in it appearing in the background for adverts. Happy Hardcore, meanwhile, was largely inoculated from that. Happy Hardcore never made a push towards being taken seriously—it is, was, and ever shall be united around its own ridiculousness, the feminised high-pitch vocals and major key themes. But moreover, there's the question of how the music was disseminated—in this era, Happy Hardcore proliferated in tape packs—glorious, garishly packaged dubs of DJ sets from raves. In the school currency I found Happy Hardcore in, no one ever seemed to own an original tape. But if they did, the tapes didn't have barcodes. No barcode meant that, no matter how many were sold, they weren't viable for any charts in the UK. Self-conscious or not, it's an important economical-political statement—Happy Hardcore refused to enter the mainstream by refusing its means of quantification. DJs bought 12"s in marginal amounts, punters traded tape dubs in their thousands but they might as well have been selling plant pots for how unaware the British chart-compilers were. There's that quote about the master's house again—resistance, in Happy Hardcore's sense, meant defining and maintaining a community of interested parties, not epiphanically reaching out to the unconverted.

This, in turn, reveals an important aspect of working class culture(s) and the lie of meritocracy—entry into the market, and the accretion of success, always has (in classic Marxist terms) meant entering the marketplace on the market owner's terms, using the

market owner's tools. Happy Hardcore isn't inherently a working class thing but it blossomed there, on the council estates, out of necessity. Resisting the mainstream didn't mean opposing the mainstream, it meant looking after its own community—word-of-mouth collectivism. The absence of political content in the music (more on lyrical content later) isn't the same as absence of political action. And how middle class a criticism it is to say "how do you know how good something is if you can't see it?" Hiding in plain sight, again.

PHASE 3: HTID AS LAZARUS

Towards the turn of the century, pre-millenial jitters kick in. Raves are poorly-attended and thin on the ground. The generation that first took over the rave scene from the '80s onwards start settling down, or can't handle the drugs any more. Garage, 2-Step and Grime start making their way to the ascendancy, and Drum 'n' Bass (quite frankly) had disappeared fully up its own arse. Those who weren't into that sort of thing headed towards Europe, with the cognescenti picking up on more European styles (for instance, Tresor's brand of techno) or defaulting to the then-omnipresent Ministry of Sound and parochial handbag house. Oh, and there was Big Beat. By God, that was fucking awful. Against the backdrop of the grinding misery of Thatcher/ism, Happy Hardcore was perfectly balanced nihilism in optimism's clothing. The Labour era was by no means a bright new dawn but the chilling despair was temporarily alleviated. And Hardcore sort of vanished. People weren't talking about it, raves weren't happening. Record stores started closing down, and tapes—the earlier lifeblood of Happy Hardcore—were stocked nearly nowhere.

The era this covered is roughly '99-'02. Attributions of the decline are multiple, of course, but it'd take a much more comprehensive survey than this to point the finger confidently. Vague and unsatisfying as it is to say, Happy Hardcore just kind of went into hiding.

PHASE 3 (CONTINUED)

Broader than dance music, and further afield than just the UK, these were the last days of the old music industry. Of course, it's still here, and it's a massively profitable bastard at the top while even more purgatorial at a smaller level, but its manifestation has vastly changed. Enter the Internet, shortly followed by HTID.

Speculation on how or what happened is, again, non-exhaustive. But what happened around the turn of the century is well documented—the rise of Napster and Myspace. The ins and outs and goods and bads of that—democratising or debilitating—are many. On the one hand, increased access to platforms allowing dissemination of music to non-local audience was a massive boon for a handful. On the other, by 2014, making sale of music the solitary means of profit is dead in the water for the independent or less-commercial musician. For Happy Hardcore, it meant that where tapes were once the token of exchange, now there were downloads. Archives of old tapes started appearing. Radio stations, like *happyhardcore.com*, allowed wide access for the cost of an Internet connection. And slowly, Hardcore was back on the map again. The generation that were too young for the first wave of raving discovered Happy Hardcore through the Internet, and suddenly events were happening.

And this time, they had a slogan. Hardcore Til I Die, the name given to a label/promotions outfit, encapsulates the rebirth of Happy Hardcore. While they're by no means the sole people putting on raves (True Hardcore or Raver Baby would be the other notable outfits, though there are promotions up and down the country), it's the sentiment, that in spite of being an no-longer-new form of music, the crowds will remain Hardcore 'til they die. The music doesn't change so much, but the devotion does—no longer competing with its own novelty or competition with a bifurcated rave scene, and long past any concerns about popular acceptance, Happy Hardcore becomes a kind of Gnostic, hermetic culture, devoted to its own propagation alone—a propagation, I'll argue, which is about preserving authentically working class culture with minimal concern for career trajectories beyond its own continuation.

The music of this era is slightly less garish than the Bonkers era but no less intense. Vocals come down a few pitches—still in the super-human higher registers but just this side of chipmonk. Production material changes—CD decks over 12"s for the DJs, digital patches supplementing batteries of old-school synths and the democratising affect of easily-available sequencing software means that broke kids can get involved. Fundamentally, there's a surety—songs are still thinly-veiled metaphors for drugs but there's less reliance on attention-grabbing or giant-slaying novelty (for which see DJ Vibes' "Hey Jude" on Ravers' Choice, '97).

PHASE 4: INSTITUTION (A POSTERIORI)

So far, we're up to around the middle of the last decade—a period where Happy Hardcore has gone well down and re-risen. From there on, it starts approaching institutional status. In spite of

being a joke music in the late-90s, Happy Hardcore remains one of the longest-standing, continually active genres from the rave fallout. Characterising this era is tricky (as we're still living it), but perhaps the most notable thing is how professional it is—Hardcore in the Sun combining the old-school rave vibes with the distinctly late-20s, mildly sensible idea of the package holiday deal. But note it's professional in organisational terms, self-promoting and utilising self-owned media platforms—building on DIY principles over and above any efforts to curb the excesses or appeal to outside forces or, heaven forbid, "go mainstream".

POLITICS

First, the thorny bit. Hardcore is a white genre. By which I mean, it mostly appeals to white people. There's nothing in explicit terms or even discrete terms which suggests a conscious reason for this—mostly, content is about getting fucked—but still it's notable that raves are largely full of white folk. But it's important to note what sort of white folk. My home town, Weston-super-Mare, is an overwhelmingly white area. It's a deprived town, formerly a popular tourist destination and lacking in local jobs or meaningful transport links to nearby Bristol. If you talk to most people in Bristol, they'll say Weston's full of "chavs". This is a matter of inside and outside, which is not so much a metaphor for economic difference as it is a direct expression of the direct affects geographical location has upon a population. Chavs is a term with two meanings for me—growing up, it meant the violent pricks who gobbed on old ladies. When I spent more time in Bristol, I realised "chavs" meant something new—the people from outside of urban hipness—analogous to the proles, plebs and pagans of "outside" the polis from the per-Socratics to present. Happy Hardcore was a very Weston thing, and I didn't realise until mov-

ing to Bristol that it wasn't a "substitute" for meaningful culture but that it was the culture, the actual living culture, of council estates and deprived white areas. So when I say Happy Hardcore is a "white" music, I mean it's specifically a music for the areas which are legion in the UK—lots of social housing, no jobs and a largely static population scraping around in cafes, pubs and dole offices waiting for the next excuse to get mashed. Of course, social deprivation and cultural desolation is by no means the exclusive preserve of decaying white seaside towns but it's important to register that the denigration of the working classes is felt by an enormous number of geographically isolated white people.

I don't simply wish to paint Hardcore as a hedonistic culture of "we've got no money so let's get fucked"—the old cliché of the dumb proles dancing away the misery. The pertinent thing for me is that plenty of cultures are entirely vacuous—the last 30 years of rock music, more or less, have been vapid repetitions of nothing but its own validity as capital and its own position as capitalised. When Hardcore is spoken of in popular media (if indeed it's spoken about!), it's in terms of being "music for chavs"—with scant exceptions (some relatively superficial articles in *Vice* recently lauding its unpretentiousness). From the outside, it's a music that is populated by, and made for, all the people that society doesn't like. From the inside, it's a group of people putting on events, getting people dancing and making some awesome music. There are two flavours of denigration applied to Hardcore—blindsiding and ignoring (see the utter dearth of serious articles) or cod-social criticism (viz, "it's music for chavs"); typically the latter comes with quasi-intellectualised broadsides against the music (see MUSICOLOGY BRIEF over the page).

A few points to emphasise here: the omission of Hardcore from the annals of popular music is indicative of a socio-cultural ele-

LYRICS

A line from Reynold's 'ardkore continuum which struck me as halfway there: "Certainly, sex as the central metaphor of dancing seems remoter than ever … " He offers something of a gestalt, "one-body" metaphor but in Happy Hardcore, for me, it's always been about distended and doubled metaphors—metaphors for love as metaphors for drugs. "You're my XTC" (Gammer & Whizzkid, 2009) perhaps being the more transparent end of that, but U R my Phantasy (Sy & Unkown, 2006), with the play on pharmacy/fantasy (and good old fashioned deliberately slack spelling), or plenty of gospel-esque sentiment ("Lifting me Higher", Dougal and Gammer, 2010) reconditioned to the service of dancing and drugs: And straight up ecstasy/amphetimine sentiments of pushing forward—"More and More" (DJ Hixxy, 2009), for instance. Fundamentally, it's a music where lyrical content is subordinated to the tune—and the tune is always about keeping the beats pounding and keeping the crowds moving. In a sense, Hardcore is a totally egalitarian, socialist music—the sorts of aspirations towards mainstream legitimacy were avoided during the period when Drum 'n' Bass was getting broadsheet attention, and Hardcore's always avoided and eschewed anything other than a total dancefloor pragmatism.

ment of denigration-by-ignorance; that the music is largely listened to, and made by, white working class folk and garners the popular impression of being "music for chavs" exemplifies precisely the political dimension which hardens Hardcore's resolve—that no talking heads are willing to engage the music or culture on its own terms or that it's a "comedy music" exemplify precisely the position of the working classes in the UK, a very post-Labour position—the position of cultural acceptability is afforded only to those working class people who appeal to precisely the banal and stupefying, self-liquifying repetition of cultural capital. Working class people in popular culture are jokers, loveable rogues or people who appeal to bleached-dull middlemass values. Hardcore being so bodily focussed—dancing and drugs—leaves it outside of popular interests of asinine sentimentality. By

MUSICOLOGY BRIEF

Rare mentions of Hardcore in the popular press will often dwell on the barbarous simplicity of Hardcore. I by no means have the wherewithal to exhaustively analyse Hardcore, but a few points: there is a series of tropes to popular music which are rendered uncritically as musicological "goods"—from so-called "real" instruments to decent form (meaning movement in fifths, chords on the first beat of the bar and melodic simplicity). Hardcore, even in its reliance upon relentless, high-tempo 4/4 rhythms, falls outside of this—chordal form means variegated arpeggios in multiple registers, note lengths are typically short and lines follow distinct patterns. Digital manipulation of note decays mean that simple rhythms produce auditory hallucinations of slipping rhythms falling out of phase—an effect that simply isn't felt at slower rhythms, where the brain has enough time to process the multiple lines acting concurrently. In so far as Hardcore features multiple lines acting at once, differently but to the same end, with arpeggiated chord forms, it is closer to baroque form than most canonical popular forms of music. That isn't to say that Hardcore is precociously formalised and con-

trapuntal but that its musicological affiliations—however simplified Hardcore is—are a world away from the lugubrious plodding and melodically barren sentiment of much elsewhere in popular music.

contrast to most pan-class renderings of the working class—say, *Eastenders*—Hardcore eschews notions of depraved family lives or helpless animalistic self-destruction.

I've tended to prefer referring to the genre as Happy Hardcore (as opposed to the generally-preferred "Hardcore" umbrella) for good reason—it's a music of positivity, of collectivism, of coming together and communality. In a sense, the popular narrative (again, think Eastenders) that working class folk are hopeless animals at the mercy of sentiment-ridden irrationality, spirited but ultimately doomed is rejected in favour of something more appealing to the actual lives of working class people. That appeal should be articulated carefully—rather than a blind optimism it ought to be rendered as a libertine expression of open values. Raves are amazing places, no-one cares where you're from so long as you're there to dance and have a good time. The heavy emphasis on drugs isn't an appeal to "bad boy" mentalities (as with much of rock music) but a libertinal (and libidinal) acceptance that folk will do what they want to do. The absence of a legislating ethical narrative is precisely a comment upon the nefarious, machinistic control narratives which appear in most other aspects of popular culture. From feminism we learn that society and capital endlessly repeat legislating, restrictive narratives upon bodies (particularly the bodies belonging to female-identified people). Hardcore is far from the crucible of feminist liberation (it would be fair to say that it repeats patterns of "men do the producing, women do the

uncritical consuming") but it at least contains the germ of bodily liberation—and in practise raves are often venues for self-expression regardless of fashion-body constructs of propriety. For which read: wear what you like, dance yourself ridiculous and don't give a fuck about what anyone thinks.

A corollary of that: if Happy Hardcore's lyrical conceits were listed in order of popularity, "dance" and "take drugs" would be in pole position, followed by "We don't give a fuck". Not giving a fuck is a common sentiment, but it's important to note a distinction in Happy Hardcore's rendition—for punk narratives (particularly the other Hardcore), the agent is always the individual—as in "I don't give a fuck"—whereas in Happy Hardcore the agency is collective, "We don't give a fuck". For the former, the speaker represents an individualistic narrative for sympathy; in the latter, the collective empathy affirms the insidedness of the culture.

ON AUTONOMY AND SELF-ORGANISATION

The relationship of British musical cultures to socialist principles of self-organisation is fairly long-standing—from musician-owned Topic records (formed in 1939) through to art music labels like Incus (formed 1970) and the more well-known efforts towards major label autonomy starting with Punk in the late '70s through to the indie label explosion in the early to late '80s. The imperative is that, while the '80s indie explosion garnered a narrativised trajectory of "start indie, sell-out to a major", British musical culture has long since sought ways to contravene established, capitalised networks. While rave culture is easily painted as gurners and good times, that obscures the strong socialist principles behind it—namely, to get thousands of people into a field with a sound system and DJs without the authorities

getting a sniff of it would surely have taken guerrilla-like levels of collective discretion and self-organisation, not to mention the momentum and passion of a great many interested parties. While 21st-century Hardcore is, relatively speaking, taking place in more legitimate venues, the post-Internet era saw Hardcore drawing on this wellspring of experience to collectively organise successful events with no access to conventional distribution networks. People from the Hardcore community own the labels, are responsible for Hardcore-centred distribution, own the few remaining vinyl pressing plants in the UK... in short, Hardcore is not so much a genre as a full-fledged financially autonomous network of self-interested parties with minimal interest in expansion beyond its own community. Where Drum 'n' Bass found a way to work within mainstream networks (e.g., selling music to TV advertising), Hardcore developed into a cottage industry pointed precisely away from the mainstream. That it is a culture made up of, and selling to, working class people is exemplary of precisely why it doesn't "fit" into a mainstream dialogues. In turn, the dearth of written material is perhaps indicative of how the status quo works—the perfect example of working class self-organisation and collectivism is made invisible, disappeared to the mainstream of popular culture in the UK, or worse, denigrated as "music for chavs".

"Music for chavs"—by way of comparison, I'll return briefly to Incus records. Established by free improvisers Derek Bailey, Tony Oxley and Evan Parker, the label specialised primarily in highly abstract Free Improvisation, a cross-pollination of jazz and the classical avant-garde which eschews rhythm, melody, structure (etc.) in favour of a free and discontinuous collaging of sounds. The crux here is that this independent label—after a fashion of obscurity—has been widely written about, discussed in serious terms by serious academics and very seriously mapped onto po-

litical notions surrounding socialist self-organisation. Hardcore has little in the way of avant-garde leanings—which is to say that dancefloor pragmatism is favoured over musicological progressivism, but which isn't quite the same as saying Hardcore doesn't progress. The point being that there are ways of entering into mainstream dialogue and certain modes of expression are excluded—namely, making music whose purpose is sheerly libertinal and self-expressive; where Hardcore is doubly excluded is that its "we don't give a fuck" is a heartfelt, sincere recognition not of alienation but of unwillingness to take part, even dialectically, with its own exclusion from majority dialogues.

HARDCORE 'TIL I FUCKING DIE

A quote I rarely miss out the chance to repeat: "That's the position of the death drive—be inside and forget it" (Jean-Francois Lyotard). It's a slogan, like Hardcore Til I Die that has become less a collocation of significance and more like a tattoo or blazon, seared into everything. It means different things at different times. Here, it means that Hardcore is precisely the veneration of the working classes—of collective organisation for oppressed groups who, rather than acquiescing to quasi-middle classisms, venerate themselves. Not so much a victory against oppression as a way of escaping any notion of dialectical engagement with the "outside". Hardcore—it's a way of life (another compilation name) is a truism of significant proportions. To eschew not just mainstream acceptance but any means of quantifying (for which read capitalising) acceptance is the mark of a subculture not afraid of its minority status but actively separatist. Its continued denigration is marked only in one direction (downwards from the broadsheet classes) The continued propensity for its punters and practitioners to say "we don't give a fuck" is not dialectical resist-

ance but emblematic of a culture simply and plainly disinterested in playing the game in terms other than those defined by and for itself. Just as "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house", Hardcore has built, over two decades, an enormous parallel culture in plain sight of its "outside", resisting by creating and refuting subjugation (whether that's critical, cultural or musical) to narratives that only ever serve to propagate mainstream, normative values.

Hardcore is not without its problems and issues—again, the issue of the lack of female-identified practitioners and its tendency towards white-centrism—but, critically, to negate its value on the basis of misgivings which are as common if not more common nearly everywhere would be to repeat the denigration of those classes whose voice is consistently ignored. The working class of the UK—the so-called chavs—are by no means the animalistic subordinates they're classically painted as and Hardcore, as a socio-economic model, is as piquant a veneration of working class solidarity and veneration as is possible in the 21st-century. Hardcore 'til I die, indeed...

Massive shout-outs: Matilda Fox for proof-reading and being the most hardcore person I know; Russell "Alan" Hedges for pointing out the class dimension in the first place; Geo for listening to me witter on.

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MEDIA, SECESSION AND RECESSION▽

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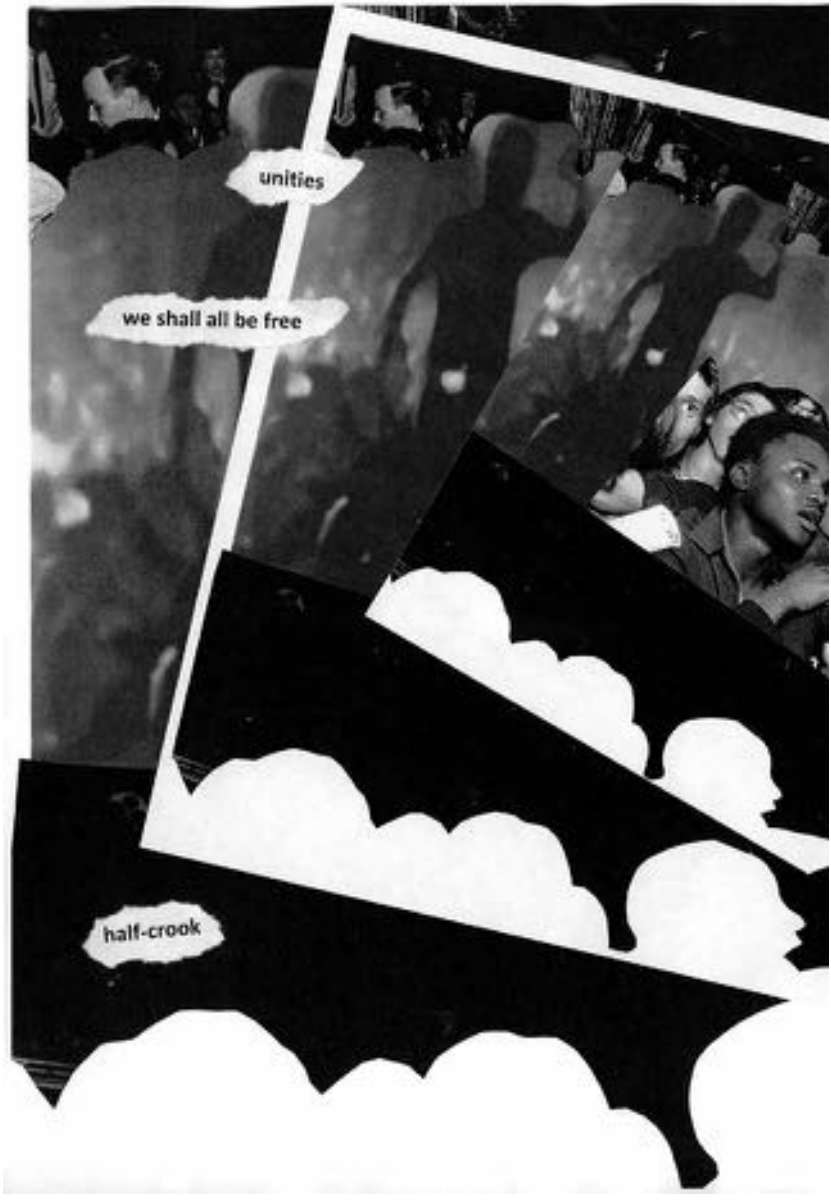
At Club Transmediale, Berlin 2013, a panel comprised of Lisa Blanning, Lee Gamble, Steve Goodman/Kode9, Mark Fisher and Alex Williams, many of them prominent contributors to '90s and '00s UK dance, theory and protest culture discussed the "Death of Rave".[1] The discussion surprisingly took a psychological, nostalgic and melancholic turn, and this approach met strong criticisms from audience members—both those who were too young to have experienced the period in discussion and felt even further alienated by its mystification, and those who experienced the same period differently and felt there were deeper insights to be made. Personally I found myself in the latter camp. If the pessimistic subjectivism of some of the panellists irritated (and this seems out of character for usually astute commentators like Mark Fisher) even more disturbing was the apparent lack of provision of a wider social context or any evidence of either materialist or forensic approaches usually considered appropriate to the study of a corpse.

In an attempt to redress some balance to the discussion of the lost dead object of "rave" culture, this essay traces a history of raves, illegal parties, music and protests in their percolation through independent media (video, pirate radio, flyers, record labels, zines, small press). Rather than asserting a cold, objective rationality totally inappropriate to its object of study, this essay recovers the "personal" discoveries and employment history of a suburban subject exposed to differing articulations of radical-

1 For further details and audio from this panel see: http://www.ctm-festival.de/festival/program/event/2013/02/01/the_death_of_rave_pt_i_uk/ (accessed 24/06/2013) and http://www.electronicbeats.net/en/radio/eb-listening/the-death-of-rave-panel-discussions-from-ctm-13/#sthash.3cNOUd2x.dpuf (accessed 27/03/2014)


unities
we shall all be free
half-crook


shadows
spent

ity in interrelated cultural and political milieus of the 1990s and early-2000s. It does so to argue that neither culture, class composition or "personal experience" are separable from a wider economic framework, and that these political factors are very much accessible through material culture—media. The essay concludes with some reflections on the sedimentation of this history in contemporary media, political cultures and social movements.

Our starting point is 1993 and a fragment that allows us to make a forthright dismissal of the idea that rave culture didn't reflect on the political and economic conditions of its possibility. At the beginning of their set at a club night, Vibealite in Mansfield Nottinghamshire, DJ Ratty and MC Robbie Dee make a cheeky and ironic tribute to the unemployed ravers: "A big shout out to the unemployed ravers and the government who pays for them to go raving".[2] This indicates a few things, firstly that high unemployment was a part of the culture, secondly the state supported those out of work sufficiently that they could go out of a weekend, and lastly this was a source of humour and irreverent, even ironic, pride.[3]

In 1993 I was turning 16. I lived in the suburbs of East London on the London/Essex border. The town where I grew up, Chingford, was a commuter town on the edge of Epping Forest. Typically sub-

2 Vibealite, Mansfield, October 1993, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iXxlTil7Xc&list=PLpt2NTR68_TALE4-LV1g5_CUYO8SUgK1u [(accessed 24/05/2013) DELETED]

3 According to a Wikipedia article, "Unemployment in Britain rose from 1,600,000 to nearly 3,000,000 between April 1990 and February 1993", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_1990s_recession (accessed 14/06/2014). Further detail and comparison between three recessions of 1980-81, 1990-91 and 2007-2008 can be found in—Jamie Jenkins (Office for National Statistics), "The labour market in the 1980s, 1990s and 2008/09 recessions", *Economic & Labour Market Review*, Vol. 4 No 8, August 2010.

urban, during the week the train line to Liverpool Street took the majority of inhabitants back and forth from home to work, many inhabitants worked in financial services industries in the City of London. I, with many of my peers, developed a fierce desire to escape the rat race of this commuter life—to become something other than wage labour. This desire, though necessarily rarely fully articulated in these terms, manifested itself as so many tiny acts of rebellion against the conditioning of education, adult rationality and the banality of a disciplinary culture that seemed always to isolate us as individuals as a prelude to some form of punishment or indoctrination. It was evident that the first thing we needed to escape was the soul-destroying rhythm of the commute to work and home to the suburban house that had been prepared for us, the value-formed canalisation of life.

One direction of escape was along the train line and into the financial district where I'd go skateboarding with a small gang of malcontents. Travelling far and wide on a £1.20 all zones all day travelcard, often with three cards shared between up to six of us since we'd learnt to get at least two people past the barriers on each card. Another line of flight was into the forest where we used play as youngsters and more and more regularly later drink under the stars. Sometimes we'd bump into strangers walking home from raves and outdoor soundsystem parties. One of these was probably Raindance—which started in a giant circus tent in a football field at Jenkins Lane on the East London/Essex borders in September 1989 and later had a revival at Berwick Manor Hornchurch in 1997.[4] An important aspect of these lines of flight was music, and in the woods we had a modest sound system of our own. Throughout the years 1992-1994 I recall sharing the stereo

4 See: http://www.raindanceravefestival.com (accessed 24/06/2013)

between two musical styles—Hardcore, or so-called "Happy Hardcore", fast electronic music with choppy synths and scattering beats, and Indy, or guitar music such as the Smiths, the Cure and then current bands such as the Happy Mondays, Charlatans and so on. The musical split corresponded to the two different types of schools we attended, with those into hardcore coming from state provided schools (free) and those into guitar music being from public schools (which charged tuition fees). It wasn't strictly a class distinction since both parties had working class and middle class members, but as well as petty matters such as which cigarette brand each of us smoked, this was one significant way we culturally recognised and distinguished ourselves, for a short while at least.

Looking back with hindsight, and with the substantial information now available online, we could isolate 1989-1990 and 1993 as crucial turning points in the development of rave culture and electronic dance music in the UK. 1989 had seen the consolidation of significant resources to gather information on and suppress the large-scale ticketed parties taking place around the edges of London, and throughout the UK. Chief Superintendent Ken Tappenden, who had also been involved in coordinating repression against the miners' strike, set up the Pay Party Unit in 1989. Initially the police had little clue about the nomadic and decentralised parties:

> We were logging something like 300 or 400 parties per month at the height of that summer, 1989 ... There was movement of traffic, movement of people and we were losing a little bit of control.[5]

5 Ian Burrell, "Trance encounter: Can it really be 25 years since acid house was born?",

The Unit waged a high tech war of attrition on the party scene; setting up road blocks, harassing party-goers, sowing misinformation; surveilling pirate radio stations, party organisers, DJs, scaffolding and sound system crews. With 200 detectives logging information from all over the country, towards the end of 1989 the Pay Party Unit's database held 5,725 names and details on 712 vehicles. Within weeks, their 200 officers had monitored 4,380 telephone calls and made 258 arrests. This led to legislation in 1990, with the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill, which raised fines for throwing an unlicensed party from £2,000 to £20,000 as well as a possible six months in prison. This legislation and the endless petty repression more or less shut down large-scale illegal parties and pushed the scene towards licensed legal clubs.[6] Spatially this meant the movement again centralised and concentrated in urban areas—tighter and smaller spaces (both juridically and physically)—which might have had something to do with the more antagonistic turn the music took towards broken beats and aggressive vocals sampled from dancehall, ragga and hip hop.

However, in the interim between 1989/90 and 1993 there was a reaction of sorts, with many seeking to "return to the source"—

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30 June 2012, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/trance-encounter-can-it-really-be-25-years-since-acid-house-was-born-7893365.html (accessed 28/03/2014)

6 "It turns out that Graham Bright, MP for Luton who introduced the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990 (or, as he himself called it, the Acid House Bill) had links with the brewery industry. His bill, which criminalised unlicensed pay-in parties, was the brewery's response to a massive drop in alcohol sales to young people. As soon as our trial was over the Criminal Justice Bill was rushed in—and this drove much of the dance music scene back into the hands of The Industry." —"Spiral Tribe Interview: Mark Harrison interviewed by Neil Transpontine", http://datacide.c8.com/spiral-tribe-interview/ (accessed 14/06/2014)

the good vibes, chaos and heterogeneity of the early parties. Spiral Tribe consciously tried to take things underground again beginning by holding small raves in squats in London in 1990, they built up a mobile sound system and began taking it on the free festival circuit in 1991 and 1992.[7] Two years of frenetic activity followed with free parties in the countryside and in squatted spaces in cities. The Spirals and other mobile sound systems initially eluded police attention because the force's focus had been on pay parties, but they eventually attracted some of the heaviest repression yet culminating in the arrest of 13 members of Spiral Tribe, the confiscation of all their equipment and a long trial immediately in the wake of the huge Castlemorton outdoor party.[8] A certain era was over. In late 1992 Spiral Tribe moved to mainland Europe. As the 1990s rumbled on, the legal aspect of the dance scene continued to expand commercially, while its illegal and free

7 "By the summer of 1991, London was no longer big enough to contain our parties, so we went west. It was there, out in the wilds, that we discovered the scattered remains of the free festival movement. By then we'd developed a clear notion that our mission was to unlock and open up spaces—take back the commons—or, if they wouldn't give them back, we'd just set up new ones.",
—"Spiral Tribe Interview: Mark Harrison interviewed by Neil Transpontine", http://datacide.c8.com/spiral-tribe-interview/ (accessed 14/06/2014); see also Tim Guest, "Fight for the Right to Party", http://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/jul/12/90s-spiral-tribe-free-parties *The Observer*, Sunday 12 July 2009. (accessed 27/03/2014)

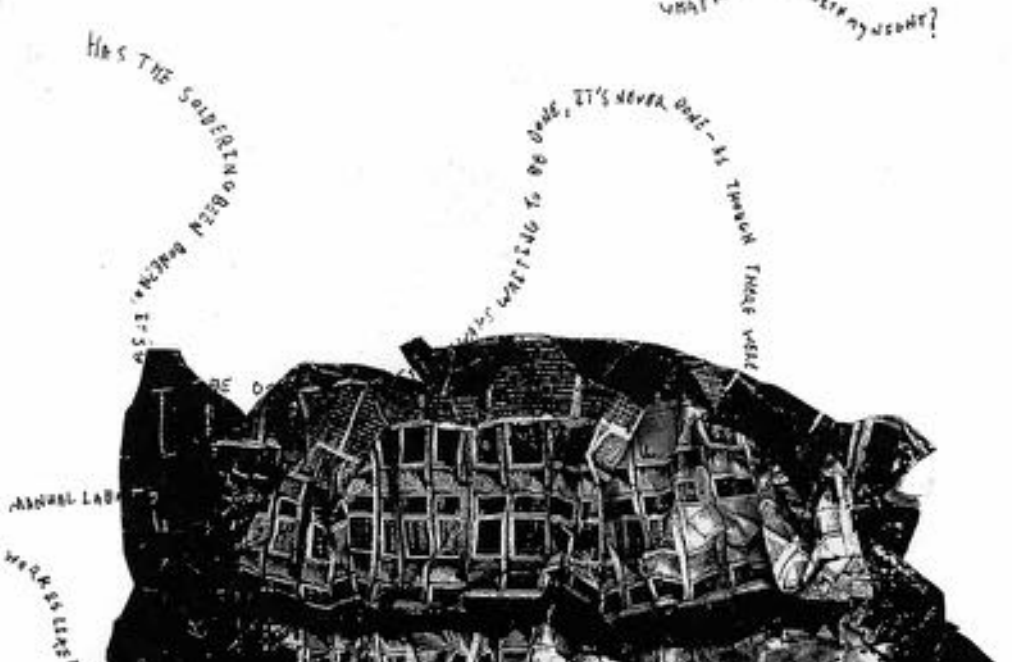
8 The extent of this repression is documented in Spiral Tribe's "Calendar of Harassment 1991-1992". An example, "April [1992]—Spiral Tribe hold a party in a disused Warehouse in Acton, West London. Police turn up in full riot gear. People barricade all the exits and the police use a JCB and sledge hammers to demolish a wall. Eventually storming the building beating people and making them lie face down on the floor. Over 100 people are injured. During the mayhem an ITV reporter turns up but it so freaked out by what he sees that he leaves immediately."
—A4 photocopy distributed circa 1993. The text is reproduced in Tomislav Medak & Petar Milet (Eds.), *The Idea of Radical Media*, Zagreb: Multimedijalni Institut, 2013.

instantiation was to face further criminalisation. If in 1989 some of the euphoria had sprung from the massive burst of liquidity unleashed by Thatcher's boom and from the spectacular political changes occurring globally as the Eastern block collapsed and a student-worker alliance openly challenged Chinese authorities in Tiananmen Square, by 1993 the financial liquidity was drying up and political room for manoeuvre shrinking as unemployment doubled within the year as it became clear that authoritarianism was alive and well in the West.[9]

Around 1993 or 1994 a friend played me a track by Origin Unknown, "Valley of the Shadows". As you can see from the label, the record was pressed in Hornchurch, Essex about 4 miles from where I grew up. With sparse instrumentation, few piano riffs, vocals or recognisable synth stabs—driving bass, broken beats which seemed at once both slow and fast, it sounded completely different from anything I had heard up until that point. I asked my friend, Chris, what people were calling this music, he replied that they didn't have a name for it yet, he didn't know who'd made the track, people just said: "It's Dark…". It was the beginning of a major crossover, since until then the strength of reggae and dub in the UK had been something quite separate from house and techno, suddenly the two genres both began to merge and feed into each other.[10]

9 "I look back on the summer of 1989 and really what I see is a vista of money, there was masses of it and it all ran around in braces and stripy shirts and they were yuppies."—Meredith Etherington-Smith, Deputy Editor of Harpers & Queen (1989) quoted in Summer of Rave, Documentary, http://youtu.be/NCTrb5r5r3A (accessed 14/06/2014) For unemployment figures in 1993 see footnote 3 above.

10 John Eden tells an overlooked history of the initial hostility between dancehall reggae culture and the new craze for "Acid"—"London Acid City: When Two 8's


WHAT HAVE I DONE WITH MY LIFE?
HAS THE SOLDERING
BEEN WAITING TO BE DONE, IT'S NEVER DONE - IT THROW THOSE WERE

OF WORK WHICH
ATTRACTION

Soon I wasn't listening to music made with guitars at all anymore. I began to find different illegal raves, clubs and record shops by queuing for clubs, finding drugs, other parties, records, squatted spaces, finding pirate radio stations (like Touchdown 94.1 FM, Defection, Pulse, Rush) by simply spinning the dial, finding record shops through personal recommendations or drifting through the city—these media objects pointed to each other, overlapped, were found and charged with chance. A particularly important moment was when I found a shop called Ambient Soho stocking many white label records that carried the sounds that I liked and which also often came with zines and sometimes in sleeves with lists of URLs on the back. I found an important text for my own self-understanding written by Howard Slater through exactly these channels, through a record label called *Praxis*, which was linked to a zine called *Datacide* that published Howard Slater's writing and had put out a vinyl edition of Howard's zine *Break/Flow*. This media was incessantly reflecting upon the conditions of its own making and the milieu that was making it:

> post-media activity is not the outcome of a discursive resolution, which would only lead to another discourse, but is the process that allows contradictions to be pushed in the direction of enigmas and provocative alloys. It allows for experimental positions without co-ordinates, it drifts off the map, flees from forced identification (and forced subjectivisation) and takes with it the masks and tools that would enslave it. And so, auto-theorisation is a constant vigilance, a controlled loss, a permutability of the rational and the unconscious. A processing of the self revealing social process. Being both screen and projector, receiver and sender, silent and voluble, being

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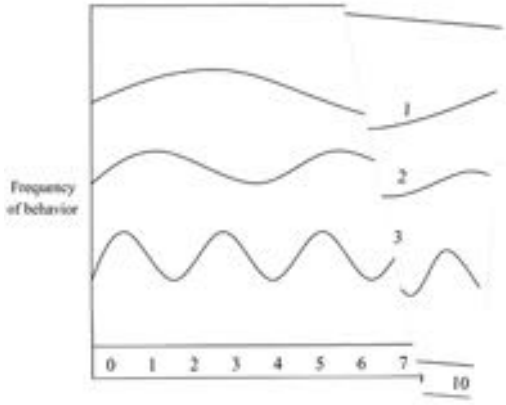
Clash", http://www.uncarved.org/blog/2004/06/88clash/ (accessed 14/06/2014)



> the margins of a centre that doesn't exist it occupies a liminal position that, in continually being dispersed, coincides and overlaps with a post-media practice whose overall rhythms are broader (a breadth that can turn to history and precursors).[11]

There was a sense of extending ones small circle of communication and ones perceptual equipment through this intersection of media. This also suggested that you too could seize these media, vinyl, radio, sound, print—to use, redistribute and make similar connections. The media pointed to each other not so much in a

11 Howard Slater, "Post-Media Operators: Sovereign and Vague" *Datacide* no.2, 1997. http://datacide.c8.com/post-media-operators-%E2%80%9Csovereign-vague%E2%80%9D/

causal chain, as a constellation or a maze from which one could gain a vague suggested direction rather than an authoritative instruction. A good example would be the early rave flyers which simply carried a phone number to call to get information of the whereabouts of the party—a piece of paper led to a phone line which referred to a map which led you to a building or site and the all important music—which was time sensitive and often redundant beyond the six hours just before the event. Pirate radio stations also made announcements for the parties offering a fleeting central node from which to broadcast (e.g. Centreforce Radio) to its listeners and thus direct them to a party location. An example from Biology circa 1990:

> This is a Party Political Dance Broadcast on behalf of the Biology Party. Here are the following requirements for this Saturdays DJ Convention and gathering of young minds...
>
> Firstly, you must have a Great Britain road atlas. YES THAT'S A GREAT BRITAIN ROAD ATLAS.
>
> Secondly, a reliable motor with a full tank of gas.
>
> Lastly, you must have a ticket and you must be a member.
>
> So we now end this Party Political Dance Broadcast on behalf of the Biology Party. Don't waste your vote: stand up and be counted.. because... BIOLOGY IS ON![12]

A sense of exodus, secession and sedition was ever present in the names of venues, tracks and artist names. Cheeky irreverent hu-

12 http://www.fantazia.org.uk/Scene/orgs/biology.htm (accessed 14/06/2014)

mour, in-jokes and subversion were an important part of this. Perhaps the phenomena of humour and the class-cultural content is most evident in the late-1980s early 1990s zine *Boy's Own* ("the only zine which gets right on one matey") which shared a readership across football fans, ravers and gay scenes.[13] The makers of *Boy's Own* consciously stress the class and spatial dynamics of the new culture they were part of:

> Acid house, with its origins in the casual world of beach-loving, E-smuggling hooligans, was when the suburbs stole the reins of popular culture from the middle class art school grads who'd been hanging on to them since the late '60s.[14]

This picture needs to be qualified and complexified with regards to the organisational side of the parties and music labels. We know that many of the early organisers of the parties were public schoolboys and entrepreneurs But there were also football hooligans associated with West Ham's Inner City Firm and enthusiastic chancers such as Biology's Jarvis Sandy:

> I saw the other promoters as toffs, [...] and we were the scruffs. But we were doing it from our hearts. You couldn't beat that. At out parties you could have a barrister dancing next to someone on the dole, but they could be best mates. They were equal.[15]

13 "Boy's Own: A history", http://www.residentadvisor.net/feature.aspx?1139 (accessed 24/06/2013)

14 *Boy's Own the Complete Fanzines* 1986-92 (sampler), http://www.djhistory.com/sites/default/files/BoysOwnSampler02.pdf (accessed 24/06/2013)

15 Biology's organiser Jarvis Sandy quoted, http://www.fantazia.org.uk/Scene/orgs/biology.htm (acessed?)

Energy was run by Quintin "TinTin" Chambers and Jeremy Taylor both of whom who had previously organised high society gala balls in central London. Two other notorious figures were Paul Staines and Tony Colston-Hayter both associated with Sunrise, which held some of the largest parties in 1989 and drew the hysterical attentions of the tabloid media. Paul Staines has a long and ongoing association with right-wing think tanks. In the early 1980s he collected money for the contras campaign of terror against Nicaraguan revolutionaries.[16] Tony Colston-Hayter, "an entrepreneur", is currently on trial, accused as being the leader of a gang of cyber-hackers who stole over a million pounds from Barclay's bank.[17] Self-confessed "Thatcherites on drugs", together Colston-Hayter and Staines founded the Freedom to Party Campaign at the Conservative Party conference in October 1989.[18] This represented the first attempt to politicise and organise the rave scene against the police and media clampdown. Two demos were held in Trafalgar Square in central London in 1990, attracting respectively 4000 and 10,000 people. However, these demos largely appealed to the self-serving libertarian economic interests of the promoters rather than the interests of the people who attended the parties. In a perverse way the politicisation of rave culture therefore appears first as farce and second as history.

I found my way to the first demonstration I ever attended by picking up a flyer in the queue outside a club. It was the Anti-Criminal

16 Matthew Collin, *Altered State: the story of ecstasy culture and acid house*, London: Profile Books, 2010 p.105.

17 Lizzy Parry, "Cyber gang led by Former Rave Promoter..." 13 March 2014 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2580383/Cyber-gang-led-former-rave-promoter-dubbed-Acid-House-King-facing-years-bars-plundering-1-25m.html (accesssed?)

18 http://www.fantazia.org.uk/Scene/orgs/sunrise.htm (accessed 14/06/2014)

Justice Bill march in London 9 October 1994. I didn't really know what it was about, but I knew there was going to be an outdoor sound system and I sensed automatically that political protest was a logical step from hanging out in an underground culture of semi-legal and illegal parties.

The 1980s had begun with a Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher and high unemployment. For the following decade and into the 1990s the general culture had been characterised by the refusal of work (dropping out) and a recalcitrant working class who had fiercely opposed Thatcher's reforms of the welfare state and destruction of industry. In order to allow Thatcher's cohorts in the booming financial industries to asset strip industries and public services thousands were thrown into unemployment or precarious work, public housing was run down, vast swathes of industrial real estate was made empty or deliberately left to rot. One of few concessions of the Thatcher government was to leave relatively untouched unemployment and housing benefits for the unwaged and low waged. This lead to lively subcultures supported by a reasonable state allowance, literally living (squatting) and socialising in the material detritus left by Thatcher's measures. After her reign ended in 1990 the Conservative government remained in power and, as the brief boon from deindustrialisation faded, economic stagnation set in. With the media uproar about the party scene, free festivals etc. it was time to take on the subculture, to discipline and re-division the class. The preamble to this had been a series of hard confrontations with people organising free parties and illegal raves. The group who seemed to draw most of the flack was Spiral Tribe, who after organising a series of parties, some on military land such as the "Torpedo Town", drew the attentions of police (see Spiral Tribe's "Calendar of Police

Harassment 1991-1992").[19] The Conservative government faced:

> the problem of class rule in the new economic reality of global finance capital. [...] which seems to be defying any easy resolution is simply the need to impose austerity, the need to attack the gains of an entrenched working class, without destroying the fragile Conservative social consensus represented by the "Essex Man" phenomenon. With the dream of a property-owning democracy sinking into the nightmare of debt, the consensus is rapidly becoming unravelled, but UK plc cannot retreat. What better tonic than a good old attack on those firmly outside of the deal, the marginalized, whose exclusion the Conservative deal was predicated upon, to stiffen up resolve in the ranks for those attacks which threaten to recompose the class. But even such an apparently uncomplicated weapon has been threatening to blow up in the faces of those trying to use it.[20]

The Criminal Justice Bill was presented to Parliament late in 1993 and introduced a swathe of measures addressing freedom of assembly, picketing, travellers and the new rave culture. It united a diverse subculture of activists, ravers, anti-roads protestors and both "new age" and traditional travellers who understood that the new law would criminalise both their culture and material means of reproduction (in this case housing and the grey economy around raves). The movement had very little to do with any

19 This document can be viewed at: http://saladofpearls.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/spiral-tribe-a-calendar-of-police-harassment-at-free-parties-1991-1992/ For further details on police harassment of Spiral Tribe see footnotes 6 and 7 above.

20 *Aufheben*, "Kill or Chill—An Analysis of the Opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill", *Aufheben* Issue #4, Summer 1995. http://libcom.org/library/kill-chill-aufheben-4 (accessed 24/06/2013)

left parties or organisations and generally did not seek to make alliances with them.

> The movement may be considered in some ways paradigmatic of class struggle in the era following the retreat of social democracy: unhindered by any powerful mediating force and, as such, both relatively incoherent in its attempts to express its demands and potentially explosive. We seem to be moving towards a situation where the traditional means of recuperation of struggles and integration of its subjects—the "left"—is finding itself increasingly incapable of representing struggles occurring outside of the productive sphere. This retreat of social democracy is itself a consequence of new global realities.[21]

What this looked like on the street when I turned up to my first demo was a mess, there were travellers, people with dreadlocks, dogs everywhere, small bicycle powered soundsystems, very few banners and very, very little party political regalia. People were drunk, rowdy, dancing and attacking the cops from the beginning to the end (especially if it looked like they were threatening the sound systems). There was very little sense that we were on a "march" from a to b, nor that there was a politically symbolic destination where we hoped to arrive and deliver our message. Instead the movement was the party and the party/movement was the message. This was as good an introduction to politics as any to me and I didn't see a need for "formal" political organisations then, nor now. The demo ended with a riot as people occupied Hyde Park and tried to bring large sound systems in trucks. The police lost their cool and sent mounted police on horseback charging through. For some hours riderless horses reeled around

21 Ibid.

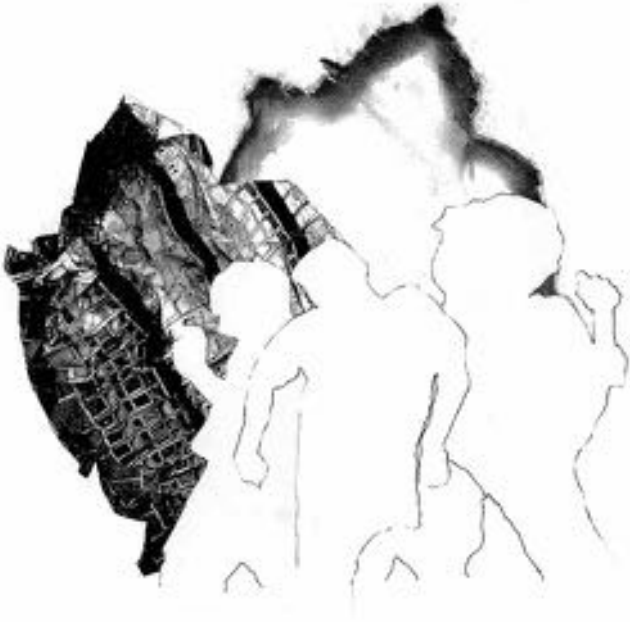

Mapping Squat Parties
24/10/99 Westway
Nr Warwick Ave
(Convenient concrete ship)
Ref MB 35(a)
17/10/99 Corner of Clerkenwell Rd
and Onslow St (Big ister
building) Ref SC 5
10/10/99 Plumbers Row (old
Ref SC (sh)
10/10/99 Hornsey High St
3/10/99 Whapsite Rd, Canning Town
26/9/99

to the sound of booming techno through the central London "royal" park. An aspect which complicated the crowd dynamics was that some of those organised around the "Freedom network" involved in the initial organisation of the demo had stressed the need to "keep it fluffy" i.e. to keep levels of violence towards the cops and property destruction to a minimum. This took on a vigilante dimension in the clashes which arose and people from this group took to daubing "violent" protestors with pink spray paint. Needless to say this was useful to the cops later as they cleared up and tried to arrest isolated protestors, they went for those with pink paint on their clothing. Given the chaos this was a pretty bad tactic, many who'd done nothing were arrested. There was a retort in the form of an infamous pamphlet put out by the anarchist group Class War entitled *Keep it Spikey* given out on the day of the demo before the riot and later reproduced in its entirety by a national newspaper, *The Sun*. This hopefully gives some indication of how heterogeneous the protest was and what is true for the protest was doubly true for rave parties in themselves.

> What unites these groups in such a way that they have become such hate targets of the government is that, although they may be a long way from consciously declaring war on capital, they share a common refusal of the work-ethic, of a life subordinated to wage labour. As such, they pose an alternative to the life of desperately looking for work, which must be made unattractive.[22]

The 1990s marked the beginning of the period of the "re-imposition of work". More specifically the full shift which Thatcher had begun, from an industrial empire to a globally networked service

22 Ibid.



provider. The 1990s was this transition, the means of rave and techno culture were a combination of technologies, spaces and income which had been the outcome of devalorisation. Vinyl, radio, loudspeakers, trucks, empty buildings, these were the technologies of a period of industrial production and mass culture. What did it mean that throughout this period of the late 1980s and 1990s hundreds of thousands of people across the country were literally exhausting themselves each weekend and into the working week? Was this a practice for a flexible monadic future? What energies had been unleashed, where had they come from and what threat did it pose that these energies could not be productively employed in industry? What were those gestures, where people appeared to be mechanising themselves in time with the new rhythms of a digitally accelerated life? Was it acting out something to come, a form of exorcism, training of the senses through defamiliarisation, a self-appropriation of self-alienation?

The following anecdotes from a friend give an account of the subtle changes in relations during the second-wave of rave culture and the common experience of politicisation:

> In retrospect, the discovery of rave culture was my first real lived experience of any kind of subversive or political subculture that didn't feel like a mere fashion or lifestyle. I grew up in Newbury, a small suburban town which, over the years, became a kind of meeting point for an array of different protests—Greenham Common, Aldermaston and the anti-roads movement, due to the construction of the Newbury bypass—as well as a jumping off point for free parties in the surrounding countryside. There was an overlap between many of these different groups, which I'm not sure I fully grasped at the time. There is a strange way in which the specificity of time becomes acute when you are growing up, to the extent that you can end up experiencing a whole

> historical moment quite differently from those who are just one or two years older than you. Being only 35 now, I caught the tail end of rave culture, when the free party scene was starting to subside a little and was being driven back into indoor spaces with varying degrees of commercialism.[23]

That these experiences were both "vague" and, concretely and spatially felt is suggestive for the kind of materialism which would need to be developed to properly understand and situate them politically in a situation in which they did not recognise the existing formal institutions of politics.

> In retrospect, I think that the discovery of those spaces was one of the most formative moments of my teenage life, not so much aesthetically, in terms of the music, (I was much more inspired by funk, blues and hip hop than I ever was by dance, techno or trance music), but more in terms of the different quality of social relations those spaces seemed to offer, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. Like many people who grew up in a small English suburban town, the entire ritual of going out drinking in bars and clubs could be pretty tense and oppressive, and seemed to revolve around trying to either fuck or fight, or trying not to be fucked and/or not to be fought, depending upon your gender. And this pressurised dynamic becomes your social life, your way to relax, to have fun and to let off steam. But it also becomes the environment in which you learn about social relations. The discovery of rave culture felt like a sharp contrast to this experience and a huge relief to be able to sidestep this kind of pressure. I think it was formative in demonstrating something about how social relations can be better. Of

23 Anon, in conversation, 2013-14.

> course, drugs were a central part of this too. But it was about more than just drugs in a simple cause and effect way, and more about making yourself into the kind of person with the kind of mentality who would rather take those drugs and be in those spaces and enter those relations. So I think it was a fully transformative space. That is not to say that bad things never happened in rave scenes. I'm sure they did.[24]

Spatially, rave had begun as an inner city phenomenon in small exclusive clubs, swiftly shifting to the periphery (beyond the M25) of cities, and to rural situations, largely to escape the attentions of the police. At the beginning of the 1990s it came back to the inner cities in clubs and squats, the streets and again back out into dispersion to the edges of cities where warehouses or cheap venues were available. Interestingly this meant inner city kids exploring the rural countryside, much as their grandparents had in the late-19th and early 20th century. There were strong elements of suburban culture and many of the records and artists I knew of were working in Essex, Hackney, Brighton and Bristol. There was also a strong culture of anonymity, ("Origin Unknown"), secrecy and humour ("faceless techno bollocks") as well as strongly decentralised elements. The internet, as I began to use it in the 2000s, was synonymous with the futurity of this rich subculture, but also was to be the means and infrastructure for the new working environment being developed.

Increasingly through the 1990s and especially after the Criminal Justice Bill had become the Criminal Justice Act those on the dole found themselves on the one hand under tougher conditions as a New Labour government introduced so-called "welfare to work"

24 Ibid.

conditions and stronger disciplinary apparatus around benefits. On the other hand it began to be possible to find white collar casual or flexible work in London's booming communications, financial services, advertising sectors, or couriering etc. As squatting became increasingly criminalised and rents rose the squeeze was successful and effective, as was the commercialisation of what had throughout the late-1980s and 1990s remained relatively self-organised form of culture (not that there was not money to be made in the grey economy of drugs, clubs etc.) It is this pressure that *Aufheben* summed up at the time as the transition from "Dole Autonomy" to the "The Reimposition of Work". It marked a successful counter-revolution and one which still rolls on. Having successfully attacked the level of working class reproduction via welfare, successive governments have gone on to remove free education and other benefits which were an important source of youth autonomy and a barrier between those who hoped to stay out of wage labour as long as possible and the new flexibilised McJobs on offer.

> The lack of an unemployed movement today is despite a relatively high level of non-representational political activity among those on the dole in recent years; indeed, the dole is the very basis for a number of the most vigorous direct action movements. The energies of the natural opposition to the attacks on benefits (the unemployed and the politically active) are currently being channelled in other directions. Workfare is being introduced in the UK, not because the unemployed have become "acquiescent", but because a potentially powerful opposition prefers—misguidedly in our view—to fight over other issues or to seek individual solutions, rather than to defend the conditions that make some of their campaigns and activities

possible.[25]

Leaving university at the end of the 1990s, one of the last students for whom the state provided the costs of tuition and a maintenance grant, I was immediately unemployed. In between periods on the dole I took a spate of casual jobs for catering companies who served business functions in the city and an early cyber cafe in Soho, the Global Cafe – where at the end of the night the whole bar staff would go raving. Living with my sister far east of central London in East Ham, on my way home from work late at night I called anonymous "party lines" and followed directions to illegal parties which took place in the deindustrialised belt of Canning Town, Stratford and Hackney, an area which in recent years was cleared for the 2012 London Olympics.

Towards the end of the 1990s I began to experience a convergence of the small media I had been following around at a small project space called the Info Centre. The space, run by artists Henrietta Heise and Jakob Jakobson, brought together Situationist-inspired journals, publications and small zines such as *Inventory*, *London Psychogeographical Association*, *Association of Autonomous Astronauts*, and *Break/Flow*. A low-key invitation card would announce "We have brewed beer". The Info Centre hosted a reading room of these publications and others and I often visited to read back issues and pick up new issues and posters. I became close to the people behind *Inventory*, later writing for the journal and with the help of member, Damian Abbott, setting up a one-off one day pirate radio broadcast.[26] Somewhere along the line I came across

25 *Aufheben*, "Dole Autonomy versus the Reimposition of Work" 1995. http://libcom.org/library/dole-autonomy-aufheben (accessed 24/06/2013).

26 Craig Martin and I conceived of this project in response to an invitation from

Mute and began finding texts by writers I followed turning up on their website. The collision of critical thought about technology, extra-parliamentary politics, music, film and art was much broader and accessible than the arcane and hermetic publications I had found interesting up to this point and there was a sense of an expanding field in which other reader/writers were making complex connections. In March 1999 I attended a performative street installation by *Inventory* called "Smash This Puny Existence". The event took the form of an open newspaper/billboard whereby the group had flyposted an entire alley stretching in an L-shape between Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road and stood at either end of the street holding "Golf Sale" signposts directing passers by through the literary diversion. The same day and about half a mile down the road there was an all day "post-media flea market" called Expo-Destructo: post-media pressure.[27] *Inventory*, *Mute*, *Break/Flow*, Reclaim the Streets, Backspace and many other groups took part. In a sense the two events, a print publication which had taken to the street and a flea-market of internet sites and online cultures summed up the uncanny and unbounded dynamics being explored in media in London at the time. The convergence noted above had its epiphany in many ways in June the same year with the Carnival Against Capital (J18) coordinated by Reclaim the Streets (RTS). Backspace, a media or hack lab, was

Cubitt's curator Polly Staple. Typically none of us knew anything about the radio equipment that Damian helped us install on the roof of the gallery—http://cubittartists.org.uk/2002/05/25/broad-cast/ (accessed 14/06/2014)—The idea to work with radio came straight from my teenage suburban experience of listening to radio pirates and a performance Inventory had put on and I reviewed for Mute, one of my first written articles and the first for Mute.

27 Expo-Destructo, http://bak.spc.org/iod/destructo/flea-market.html (accessed 14/06/2014)

Base
Soul
Bass
Suburbs
Banners

20 quid to get in

Base
Soul
Bass
Suburbs

the key link providing much of the technological infrastructure (web hosting and archiving) for many of these groups, and media artists, but also formed an important social and working space.[28] The festive protest realised all the aspects of a disorganised street party with a very clear and universal target: capitalism, and in this case the very formidable edifice of finance capital as it had taken form in the City of London, London's financial district. Though it was not until the following year I would be fully unemployed, working three jobs and studying and still only being able to afford to live at my sister's house far from the centre of the city it was not a stretch of the imagination to connect the ascendency and confidence of the financial powerhouse of the City contributing to the squeeze on living conditions of London's inhabitants. Moreover, the sense that we did not have any respect for the rules, wealth and power of this highly "secure" zone of the city using it as our party space, wrecking and disturbing it with weird frequencies and out of control bodies also felt like a visceral retort to high finance's arid and sterile organisation of space. Whilst J18 put capitalism on the agenda, then and after there were serious questions about the residual lifestylism of the movement that led to this now renowned event. *Aufheben* strongly criticised the inability of this activist movement to confront the removal of its means of social reproduction—reform of unemployment benefit, housing benefit, criminalisation of squatting and so on. There is

28 I'd come across Backspace a few times in this period, especially since many of the rudimentary, text and animated gif-heavy sites I visited linked off from Backspace's home page, but probably with not much of an idea what it was until I started visiting the physical space just before it closed. One more important spatial dynamic to note was Backspace's proximity, just near to Tower Bridge, to both central London, south and East London. A quick look at http://bak.spc.org/ will give you access to an archive website pretty much as it was in 1998/1999.

much to learn from the comparative weaknesses of recent activism in the new landscape of UK plc which was becoming patently clear in the movements' disappearance in the 2000s. This is not to suggest that the tactics developed by RTS under the spell of the rave movement haven't continuously been used to great effect.[29] Banishing a few essential critical remarks to the footnotes, I'd like to move from history to the present, considering what remains worthwhile discussing in the legacy I have sketched in the conclusion.[30]

29 The following pair of articles reflect an interesting struggle over the forms of authenticity attributed to music in a recent protest situation: Paul Mason, "The Dubstep Rebellion", 2010. http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason/2010/12/9122010_dubstep_rebellion_-_br.html (accessed 14/06/2014), Dan Hancox, 2010, "This is our Riot Pow", http://dan-hancox.blogspot.de/2010/12/this-is-our-riot-pow.html (accessed 14/06/2014). The Deteritorrial Support Group's text, "All the Memes of Production" reflects some interesting problems for the transformation of a wayward cultural movement into a political movement, http://libcom.org/library/all-memes-production-deterritorial-support-group

30 Excellent criticisms of J18 and the general tendencies explored by Reclaim the Streets-style activism can be found in Reflections on J18, http://www.afed.org.uk/online/j18/index.html (accessed 14/06/2014) Particularly harsh critique pertains to the movement's lifestylism, here attacked by Monsieur Dupont: "'anticapitalism' has predicated itself on the assumption of radical expressivity, the pivotal moment of any Reclaim The Streets event is the arrival of a smuggled in soundsystem. […] for them cultural manifestations in the streets are manifestations of resistance to capitalism. But radical expressivity is only a final layer of varnish on a product that has had a long trip down a conveyor belt, why should this last process of many be valued so highly? To advocate an anticapitalist culture in the belief that it can be 'spread' and will eventually overthrow capital is a confusion of cultural content for productive form; anti-capitalism is a fragment of pop culture and functions as such, it cannot escape its confines, even down to the repetitious and exclusive nature of its events."—Monsieur Dupont, *Nihilist Communism*. http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/monsieur-dupont-nihilist-communism (accessed 24/06/2013). In the

The situations we have seen developing in recent years with mass mobilisations in North Africa, Europe, US, South America and West Africa have shown some commonality with the cultural predilections of both rave and the political movements associated with it. The logic of occupation, reterritorialisation of space (take overs of the city and central urban spaces), music, poetry and diverse iterations of internet memes producing complex feedback between the street and the net. Often it has been both difficult and somewhat pointless to attempt to discern where culture ends and politics begins. These events have taken the form of youth revolts, but also, more generally, revolts of wageless life.[31] They have activated a "surplus humanity" at different points in a class spectrum which encompasses the peripheral life of a casualised lumpenproletariat, elements of a factory proletariat for whom the social democratic class deal is now far from reciprocal and sections of the educated proletarianised middle class. Each successive revolt has thrown the existing stability of means,

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spirit of critical recovery Neil Transpontine's writings cover a wide range of cultural and political events which crossed the period and fed into rave as a "movement", or at least sometimes more, sometimes less, coherent moment:"These Laws: Up Yours!—Documents Relating to 'Revolt of the Ravers'" collects a wealth of helpful documents related to the article, "Revolt of the Ravers", accessible here: http://datacide.c8.com/revolt-of-the-ravers-the-movement-against-the-criminal-justice-act-in-britain-1993-95/, further essays on a broad spectrum of dance and political culture are archived at: http://history-is-made-at-night.blogspot.com

31 "The destination of the unemployed, of the 'reserve army of labour', was to be called back into active service. The destination of waste is the waste-yard, the rubbish heap." "The production of 'human waste', or more correctly wasted humans … is an inevitable outcome of modernization"; "refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants' are 'the waste products of globalization'."—Zygmunt Bauman quoted in Michael Denning, "Wageless Life" *New Left Review* 66, November-December, 2010. p.96.

use, uselessness, misuse, contingency and chance into question. In a revolt when people use whatever is available "use" itself is changed. As in William Gibson's famous dictum from the story *Burning Chrome*: "The Street Finds Its Own Use for Things." A mainstream media approach has tended to pose new technology, particularly social media, as instrumental to these revolts but this dogma not only orientalises such movements but also tends to subdue more complex mediations.[32]

In the revolts of the present moment we are increasingly seeing the suspension of the normal ordering of objects and behaviours, new relations come to the fore and they find their material to hand. New uses derive from and extend new and unforeseen relations. What shapes do these apparently spontaneous iterations of "social form" comprise? When people use bread as media to communicate their lack of the basic foodstuff, when they point a baguette as a weapon at the cops, when looters use a mannequin leg to break a shop window to impose some asset relocation from below we are talking about media as impure means. Those means which amidst a capitalist crisis of valorisation make themselves

32 "The question is not whether the net produces liberation or subjugation: since its creation, it has always been producing both things. That's the net's dialectics, one aspect is always together with the other, because the net is the form capitalism has taken nowadays, and capitalism itself is the contradiction in process. [...] Under capitalism, everything works like this: consumption sets free and enslaves, it brings about liberation that is also new subjugation, and the cycle starts over on a higher level. [...] struggle should consist in fostering practices of liberation to be played against the practices of subjugation. This can be done only if we stop considering technology as an autonomous force and realize that it is moulded and driven by property relations, power relations, and production relations."—Wu Ming, "Fetishism of Digital Commodities" http://www.wumingfoundation.com/english/wumingblog/?p=1895 (accessed 14/06/2014)

available to use and misuse in these intense moments of social revolt, combination and communication. Whatever gets employed and distributes a given signal is in this sense media. This at least suggests that heretofore, media activists have posed the question of ownership of media falsely. All media (even in the conservative sense) are the product of social labour—the labour of those who work and not just "media workers". For this process to be profitable in capitalism, media, like every other commodity, is separated at the site of production from those who made it. This initial separation is furthered in media distribution since through this process it becomes a thing owned by an individual. We literally do not get to enjoy the fruits, and wealth of our labour and we won't until we have abolished capitalism. Therefore it is not necessary to pose what is "free" of capitalist control, but rather how and when we take these things back, how and when people self-mediate through devices, how they modulate the given signals. The myriad forms of post-production re-use of "media" are I would argue, some kind of surfeit which cannot either be disciplined to stay at home, nor privatised and sold. Obviously, from one perspective the surplus of energies and ideas which catalyse in social movements will almost certainly also later provide material for new forms of commodification. But, this is not necessarily the only way of seeing things, rather, in the new shapes invented in the cyclone of present revolts, such as the strange ritualised dancing and chanting of Al-Ahlawy's football supporters, people turn themselves into communications devices, through mimesis they self-alienate and become machinic in order to open a space through which something new can pass.[33] Similarly, post-rave

33 Ultras Ahlawy chanting "Oh Council of Bastards" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XvnIOzX64I&feature=share&list=PLpt2NTR68_TALE4-LV1g5_CUYO8SUgK1u (accessed 01/07/2013)

dance movements such as footwork, turfing and swaggers take dance out of the dancehall into streets and urban spaces distributing their increasingly contorted forms of mimetic non-oral expression via online video channels.[34] These moves, forms of organisation and self-composition describe novel concentrations and combinations of energies, they carry their own history and forms of self-reflectivity with them. They are the working out of our interminable present and its radical mediations.

34 Chicago footwork, http://youtu.be/1b37lXT5ucE and http://youtu.be/SFDbWLTaRog (accessed 14/06/2014); Oakland Turfing, http://youtu.be/g-t01opsPos and http://youtu.be/JQRRnAhmB58 (accessed 14/06/2014); Paris Swaggers, http://youtu.be/UwfXj9JVXrI (accessed 14/06/2014). For an apt politico-poetic analysis see, Commune Editions, "Elegy, or the Poetics of Surplus", also in this volume.

JOHANNA ISAACSON

CRUEL OPTIMISM OF THE WILL IN BAY AREA PUNK PRODUCTION

Cruel Optimism of the Will in Bay Area Punk Production
Zen fascists will control you
100% natural
You will jog for the master race
And always wear the happy face
Close your eyes, can't happen here
Big Bro' on white horse is near
The hippies won't come back you say
Mellow out or you will pay!

This 1979 anti-hippie polemic from the Dead Kennedy's song "California Uber Alles" baptised the post-sixties Bay Area counterculture in hippie blood. With this anthem against the politics of "smiling auras" and compulsory meditation by Jello Biafra (a reformed long-hair himself), a sold-out counterculture was buried. Punk was then back in fighting form: "I wanna fight and know what I'm fighting for/ In a class war," sang The Dils. But how could this new wave of resistance escape the cruel fate of the hippies? Punk itself was a victim of what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism;" its efforts to form a counter-public collectivity would struggle in the shadows of capitalist crisis and the implosion of older models of radical politics. These are the contradictions that gave rise to the hundreds of bands, show spaces, infoshops, and zines that made the Bay Area the capital of punk modernity.

By 1986 punk was not just a battle cry, it was a scene that required institutions like show spaces and record labels. It's in this context we see the rise of the Gilman Street project, a punk music venue in Berkeley which welcomed audiences of all ages. The club opened soon after the closing of Mabuhay Gardens and The Farm, two important punk venues in the area. You could join as a member by paying $2 per year, and membership came with rights to participate in decision making. The rules included: no drugs, alcohol,

violence, misogyny, homophobia or racism, and no major label bands were permitted to perform there. For eighties teenage Bay Area punks, Gilman was a semi-utopia: a creative, social space where they could come of age in ways not permitted in family and school institutions. Says Zarah of her introduction to Gilman at 14 years old:

> Gilman was dirty, it was small, but it was impressive because of how many people were there. I was meeting lot of people right away (people my age). I was in love with the place form the first time I saw it, even though it was, you know, gross.[1]

Alexander Kluge calls this kind of DIY institution a "counter-public sphere," a place that redefines spatial, territorial, and geo-political parameters, reflecting new transnational boundaries while remaining subject to the constraints and logic of dominant post-Fordist forms of production. These spaces of material, psychic and social reproduction open up space and time, producing multiple temporalities that are in tension with each other. In this counterpublic sphere, the Gilman punk could experiment with residual temporalities, such as DIY artisanal production, without ever leaving home—the sphere of universal, fungible commodity production.[2] Kluge argues that all areas of social life take on this productive temporality of nonsynchronous time. The temporality at work in DIY projects is both immersed in and resistant to productive time. In this elastic sphere, people like Robert Eggplant,

1 "Zarah" in Ed. Brian Edge, "924 Gilman: The Story So Far San Francisco" *Maximum Rocknroll*, 2004. p236.

2 Alexander Kluge, Oskar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p19.

creator and primary writer of *Absolutely Zippo*, could find a narrative that was livable, social, and at times ecstatically political. Eggplant describes himself as a somewhat lost soul until attendance at the "new world" of Gilman made him into a punk convert, speaking to his hunger for openness and community, totally immersing him in its culture and social scene:

> When I first came to Gilman (yes shortly after I came to punk) I was faced with something that I never encountered in my previous subculture groups, (that being rap and metal). There was more in the atmosphere than music. (Yes even more than liquor and sex). It was politics.[3]

Gilman materializes and spatializes this feeling of community, fortifying a subculture that could once only be described as an impulse or a feeling with a layer of solidity and permanence. The club has the appearance of spontaneity and haphazardness, but it represents years of concrete work that were put into finding, funding, and creating the space.[4] The space supersedes the temporary squats and show spaces that preceded it. Most of the organizers developed their skills by organizing illegal shows, gradually building up to getting a permitted, legal establishment. The group that had been organizing underground shows collaborated with *Maximum Rocknroll* to find a location and to acquire

3 Edge. p113.

4 As Robert Eggplant says of the need for The Bay Area Booking Collective: "The Bay Area has a well-known history of movements creating art and culture outside the industry—be it from LA, NY, or Europe. It doesn't mean that it's easy to create, showcase your work, and gather with like-minded people. The truth is that it takes a lot of mental energy to establish a space and draw a crowd."—*Slingshot*, 104.1, Autumn 2010, p1.

the appropriate funding and permits.[5] After lengthy attempts to get the city to approve, Gilman Street was born as a self-regulating institution. This permanence is an important asset to the scene and yet with every step away from the fleeting and ephemeral Gilman approaches punk's dreaded nemeses: hierarchy, bureaucracy, reification.

Despite these threats, Gilman served as a punk haven and base from which to build a radical community. In the eighties Gilman provided a home base for anti-racist punks to fight off skinheads. In this moment, racist skinheads were a strong, insidious presence in Northern California. Because of overlapping musical tastes, the Gilman staff had to drive off Nazis from hardcore shows and in some instances the punks of Gilman rallied to fight Nazis at racist demonstrations. In the nineties Gilman became a centre for punk protest against the Gulf War and the Rodney King decision. For Ben Sizemore of the Bay Area anti-capitalist band Econochrist these politics were inextricable from hardcore aesthetics. Radical politics were a bodily and totalizing power:

> Bands like those got my heart pumping and my spine tingling. I could feel the chords hit me in the gut. I felt like they were singing directly to me. The music moved me, but it was more than music, it was something else, a more powerful feeling and it ran deep.[6]

These were the politics of musical ecstasy and at the same time the politics of the mundane everyday, quotidian survival and mu-

5 Edge. p73.

6 "Ben S." in Ed. Brian Edge, "924 Gilman: The Story So Far San Francisco" *Maximum Rocknroll*, 2004, p157

tual aid:

> Hell, people I've met at Gilman have become some of my closest friends. I've met people at Gilman who hooked me up with work, housing, and have just helped me out with my problems. More importantly they've helped me realize I'm not alone and that there are alternatives to this fucking competitive, dog eat dog, oppressive, materialistic, earth raping, dominant culture that we find ourselves in.[7]

In this milieu mutual aid extended from attending and supporting Gilman shows to all realms of the everyday—dumpster diving, parties and communal living.

Gilman's everyday politics provided a social and political world for young punks stranded in an atomized world where, as in Karl Marx's prognosis, "all that is solid melts into air." But with the anchorage of Gilman as an institution came what Econochrist calls "the same damn old circle game:"

> *we scream fight the system's schemes*
> *but we still work for the machine*
> *so safe in our social clique*
> *time to part this sea of shit*

With the materialization of Gilman as an institution, comes a creeping entrepreneurial ethic, an urge to codify and market the punk convergence of art and life. As one of the many who came of age at Gilman, Mike Stand lived this ambivalence. He was a high school kid in Berkeley in 1986, at the birth of Gilman, and

7 Edge. p157.

clung to its "all ages" ethos, which defied the strange age segregation of the suburbs. Before he went to the club, Mike hadn't met anyone between the ages of eighteen and thirty five. This age segregation belies the myth that a wholesome suburban life is the proper path to maturity. Suburban life actually prevented teenagers from meeting young adults, carefully cordoning them off from any adults who hadn't already settled into the suburban norm. Slipping into the role of Gilman's coordinator and manager, Mike matured quickly, but this led to his tacit disavowal of the youthful spontaneity that is the core of the punk aesthetic. Mike framed himself as the resident "pragmatist" who learned skills that would help him in the business world. He kept Gilman afloat, calling for membership fees and making it fiscally sustainable, but, as Erick Lyle points out in his account of the punk role in the San Francisco Mission District's gentrification, contrary to urban development boosterism, a rising tide does not lift all boats.[8]

> Chris Appelgreen also "matured" quickly in the nurturing countersphere of Gilman, inheriting Lookout! Records from Larry Livermore at the age of twenty-three. Drawn to punk for its social space more than its musical qualities, he describes coming from a small town and immediately becoming absorbed in the club and Lookout!

I couldn't really differentiate what made punk rock better than say Depeche Mode or other mainstream bands that were on the radio. Then I started seeing this humanity and personality and connection you just couldn't have if you were a fan of Tina Turner or Bruce Springsteen, for instance, also the band members were

8 Erick Lyle, *On the Lower Frequencies: A Secret History of the City Brooklyn*, Soft Skull Press, 2008.

people my age. I felt really empowered.[9]

He notes that this was a first step in taking himself more seriously and led to his quick ascension to heading Lookout! At the same time he recognizes that his involvement with Lookout! complicates his relationship to Gilman:

> it was also a difficult place to come into things from, since I had to maintain somewhat of a business relationship with the people in the bands on the label, people who I was friends with. It was different than I think most people's experiences were with Gilman.[10]

This paradox of the punk entrepreneur or manager is not a stark problem of choice. Rather, it's a necessary consequence of what Guy Debord called the culture industry's "rigged game," there is no possible autonomy from entrenched systems of production and private property. The punk anti-corporate myth faced new challenges in the late eighties when this independence moved from the realm of the aesthetic to the realm of commerce. Independent labels were never as pure as their mythic status. For instance, the Bay Area band Dead Kennedys has been held up as a pure signifier of this form of delinking, but in 1980 the DKs signed to IRS records which had a distribution deal with the major label A and M, the third largest label in the US.[11] It was not the DKs who rejected this label but A and M, who dismissed the DKs because of their offensive name, precipitating the advent of the

9 Edge. p152.

10 Edge. p153-4.

11 Alan O'Connor, *Punk Record Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy: the emergence of DIY*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008, p3.

DKs label, Alternative Tentacles. It was only well into the eighties that punks began to distribute and produce most of their own records. This coincided with punk becoming more niche oriented. For example, in 1980 the DKs could sell 150,000 copies of the album *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, but by the mid-eighties it was rarely heard of for even the most popular punk band to sell 40,000 albums.[12]

The widely published punk music zine *Maximum Rocknroll* was central to what can be called punk's "economic turn." At the same time the zine was widely distributed, its editors and writers, especially central editor Tim Yohannan, were deeply committed to notions of authenticity and independence.[13] *Maximum Rocknroll* is at the hub of many of the debates about the management and goals of Bay Area punk institutions. It began in the 1980s and went on to become a central site of punk scene interaction nationally and internationally, facilitating growth through its ever expanding letters column and involvement in many areas of Bay Area punk music, venues, and labels. It was also an ideological hub of punk, featuring debates and manifestos about the meaning, politics, and goals of punk music along with interviews with bands and global scene reports. Although the zine was profitable, it donated these profits to DIY projects such as Gilman. *MRR* was passionately committed to the ethos of autonomy and would only carry ads and review records from independent labels. This was important, because *MRR* was a central source of information about bands.

Maximum Rocknroll functioned as a global centre of punk, that

12 O'Connor. p3.

13 O'Connor. p4.

launched punk culture into small towns and other countries, serving as what Andy Asp of the Oakland punk band The Pattern calls the "internet of its times," allowing punks to connect to Mexico City, Croatia and other global punk communities.[14] *MRR*'s power and influence, along with the strong opinions about politics and culture in its pages, made it a global hub, but also launched debates about whether the zine's centrality served to standardize punk. Tim Yo was seen by many to be morally rigid and authoritarian, a complaint voiced by Tim Tonooka:

> He was deeply concerned that kids might think incorrect thoughts unless they were provided with carefully selected correct info ... Because left to their own those people might come to the wrong conclusions. The mentality is elitist and condescending.[15]

To the annoyance of many Tim Yo served as the superego in the Bay Area quest for punk authenticity. He attempted to run *MRR* as a prefigurative anti-capitalist project. It was produced in the house where the staff lived and everyone worked for free. Even though the zine was about hardcore music and passionately defended it, in private Yohannan expressed less interest in the music than the hope that it would provide youth with collective revolutionary identity.

DIY's incursion into the economic everyday required great organization and collaboration. *Maximum Rocknroll*'s powerful place

14 Jack Boulware, Silke Tudor, *Gimme Something Better: the profound, progressive and occasionally pointless history of Bay Area punk from Dead Kennedys to Green Day*, New York: Penguin, 2009.

15 Boulware. p188.

in the Bay Area punk scene was based on reciprocity with other institutions, such as the distributor Mordam records, which was dependent on the business brought in through *MRR*'s wide distribution and therefore also upon the involvement of Tim Yohannan and other *MRR* editors.[16] Because of Mordam's scale and ambiguous place as an autonomous/profit-driven punk institution, the label makes clear the tensions between punk aspirations and material realities. Mordam attempted to remain autonomous by refusing to sell through major labels or to distribute any zine that accepted major label advertising.[17] Paradoxically, they were largely able to maintain this independence because of the great success and commercialization of the Bay Area band Green Day.[18] When Green Day signed onto a major label, their earlier releases became popular, eventually selling over a million copies through Mordam.

16 O'Connor. p37. Another notable example is *MRR* funding one of the first queer punk zines, *Outpunk*, giving the editor half price ads and lending him copiers.—"Outpunk" *Zines!* Vol. 2 . Ed. V. Vale. San Francisco: Re/Search, p117.

17 O, Connor. p39. Dave Harker points out that most music writers ignore the economic structure of the leisure industry and the central role of the profit motive but notes that there is a structural homology in the music industry to other multinational sectors of the economy. He describes record label EMI's corporate centralization as "tech tentacles," that market dozens of other forms of technology including weapons and computers, monopolizing a wide range of forms of electronic transmission and notes the ways centralized, monopolized companies such as this played roles in Chile's authoritarian coup.—David Harker, *One for the Money: Politics and Popular Song*. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

18 Green Day was an underground Bay Area band from 1988-1993 based at 924 Gilman St. and releasing records through Bay Area label Lookout! In 1994 they signed onto Reprise Records, owned by major label Warner, and went on to sell over 65 million records and win five Grammys. They are at the centre of intense criticism and debates in the punk community surrounding issues of authenticity and selling out.

While Mordam grew and expanded due to this boom, the intransigent nature of real estate in the Bay Area simultaneously curtailed this expansion. With the dot com boom, real estate prices soared and Mordam could no longer afford their large warehouse once their lease expired.[19] These vicissitudes cannot be explained through a reductive binary that pits authenticity against selling out. Rather, the context of a post-Fordist economy must be taken into account. This can be seen in the class position of DIY entrepreneurs, which reflected the emerging occupational structure of the US, the shift to services and the importance of what Bourdieu calls cultural capital.[20] Punk culture participants, musicians and workers are emblematic of a new kind of precarity. They often come from middle class homes, but do not inherit stability from their parents. In some senses, then, these institutions present a limit case of neoliberal entrepreneurialism.

These experimental forms of DIY institutions and collectivities are impassioned but equivocal responses to a period dominated by precarity and impasse. Lauren Berlant argues that the fantasy of the good life characterized by economic success has been disrupted by contemporary crisis and the "fraying" of fantasies such as meritocracy, upward mobility, job security, intimacy, political and social equality. In place of these hopes, individuals and groups form optimistic stances in relation to jerry-rigged, DIY, forms of habituation and precarious public spheres, acting as "an intimate public of subjects who circulate scenarios of economic and intimate contingency."[21] Impasse is for Berlant both a temporal crisis and opportunity:

19 O'Connor. p57.

20 O'Connor. p58.

21 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, p3.

> a stretch of time in which one moves around with a sense that the world is at once intensely present and enigmatic, such that the activity of living demands both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance that collects material that might help to clarify things, maintain one's sea legs, and coordinate the standard melodramatic desires.[22]

Punk's teetering and inquisitive dialectical position betweeen active resistance and passive style embodies this experience of crisis.

In this precarious and crisis-ridden era, punk arguably ceases to be a genre, transforming into a more nebulous modality. Fredric Jameson sees the postmodern as a post-genre moment marked by pastiche and the death of referentiality. However, punk's aesthetic can be seen as the flip side of pastiche. It has no pretention to originality, but rather takes up the detritus of meaning and referentiality, cutting and pasting these shards to negate their original meanings in an intentional way, a process formulated by Guy Debord as detournement. As Dick Hebdige argues, punk's cut 'n' paste aesthetic can allow a critical incursion "through perturbation and deformation to disrupt and reorganize meaning."[23] This counters what Benjamin Noys sees as an "affirmationist" trend in contemporary literary and theoretical formations, which imagine an autonomous aesthetic "site of creativity and play detached from the forms of capitalist economy and value."[24] I have previ-

22 Berlant. p4.

23 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style*. London; New York; Routledge, 2011, p106.

24 Benjamin Noys, "The Recirculation of Negativity: Theory, Literature, and the Failures of Affirmation" *Stasis Journal*, May 2012.

ously referred to this ambiguous aspect of punk's aesthetic wager as "expressive negation."[25]

Lauren Berlant's notion of cruel optimism can help with the investigation of punk's role in spheres outside of the purview of subcultural theory. Berlant's formation of "cruel optimism" develops the critique of affirmationism and positive representation, by bringing it into the field of everyday life, extending an analysis of detournement and hacking, as analysed by McKenzie Wark, into the arena of jerry-rigged counterpublic spheres.[26] The optimism in these moments of the "crisis ordinary" can be seen in the vibrancy of these social experiments, but the "cruelty" of this situation is that the attachment it allows is to a problematic and precarious object or situation.[27]

Within this "crisis ordinary," DIY projects like Mordam, *Maximum Rocknroll*, Lookout Records and Fat Wreck Chords optimistically create new forms of social and spatial practice. However, because of the "cruel" circumstances of these formations, these desires end in what I want to call, following Stacy Thompson, productive failure, with "failure" operating as a troubled category.[28] This is echoed in a lyric from Echonochrist's song "Bled Dry": "What you call success I call failure." Jameson points to failure or impasse as a possible means to "cognitive mapping" in

25 Johanna Isaacson, "From Riot Grrrl to CrimethInc: A Lineage of Expressive Negation in Feminist Punk and Queercore." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Dec. 2011.

26 McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

27 Berlant. p24.

28 Stacy Thompson, *Punk Productions: Unfinished Business*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004, p147.

which "a narrative of defeat" can cause "the whole architectonic of postmodern global space to rise up in ghostly profile behind itself, as some ultimate dialectical barrier or invisible limit."[29] The trajectory of Bay Area label Lookout!, headed by Larry Livermore and later Chris Appelgreen, maps this contradictory form of failure.[30] One of the early utopian stances that the label took was that it initially did not sign contracts with its bands, which allowed bands to come and go as they pleased without tying them down to requirements to tour or sell a quota. They also gave bands a significantly higher percentage of profits, sixty percent as opposed to the average of twelve to fifteen percent in commercial labels. In 1998 Livermore sold Lookout! to Appelgreen, who changed these policies to be more commercial. As Stacy Thompson narrates it, this transformation was not simply a selling out, but a productive failure that highlights larger structural contradictions:

> My attention to Lookout! ... should not be understood as a testimonial to the radical nature of independent punk bands and labels ... it is the labels and the bands failings by commercial standards and by DIY standards that constitute punk's highlighting of the problem of establishing an independently run sphere of exchange qualitatively different from the commercial sphere.[31]

By "failure" Thompson means several things. First, he sees punk

29 Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg ed., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984, p352-353.

30 In addition to Lookout! Livermore wrote for punk publications *MRR*, *Absolutely Zippo*, *Punk Planet*, *Homocore* and *Verbicide* as well as playing in several bands.

31 Thompson. p150.

productions as failing in selling on a scale that would register in the commercial sphere. The DIY approach doesn't pose any significant economic threat to the music industry, representing only a tiny sector of the indie market. This failure, however, is a success in that it allows these labels to avoid being controlled by economic logic.[32] A second productive failure that Thompson points to is the inability of punk to supply a living income to musicians, condemning them to supplement their income by working in the commercial sphere. This, however, is "an inverted form of success," prohibiting music from becoming merely a means to an economic end. In zines such as *MRR* the volunteer aspect is philosophically central; each issue notes that all the work is donated and all proceeds are invested in non-profit projects. The smaller scale of Lookout! is a "partial failure that renders visible the problem inherent in punks' attempt to free itself from the sphere of commodity exchange."[33] Punk records cannot fully escape the need to make capital available and to purchase the means of music production, and bands themselves must do some alienated labour, such as touring and repeating sets.[34] However the work

32 The intolerability of being accepted to a major labour is expressed by Lance Hahn, a musician in the Bay Area punk band J Church. "When the time came to talk to these labels it's like you're going to commit yourself to these labels and this is your life. It's not just a job or a hobby, it's your entire life. So you're going to be working with these people on a regular basis. We've met with lawyers and a management company, a lot of people. There was no one I could imagine spending more than an hour or so with. They're all friendly and that's their job to be nice to us, but the idea of having to spend a week with some of these people would just like destroy us."—Flipside Iss. 103, Aug/Sept 1996.

33 Thompson. p151.

34 Bertolt Brecht shows the nature of culture in this age and its relationship to production, something that DIY's explicit relationship to production points to and resists. All new forms of art are affected by new forms of technology; literature is

done is considered less alienated than other forms and much of it is unwaged. The implicit logic of the ongoing passionate argument about selling out in the punk world is an interpretation of winning as the true loss:

> It seems that punk's non-commercial, independent economic resistance to the big five[35] is starting to resemble commercial success too closely, in short, this financial success is beginning to look like punk failure.[36]

MRR becomes the arbiter of this failure, refusing to review, interview, write articles, or allow advertisements by bands that appear

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not an alternative to film, but rather enters the logic of film. "The technification of literary production can no longer be undone". In this age leisure is not a freedom, but a space in which mental labour becomes a key form of production. This is a moment where no work can exclude itself from this status of production in a world ruled by commodity circulation. As far as art being separate from work, in the sphere of "relaxation," this is clearly imbricated in the social. Relaxation must serve to reproduce labour and is dedicated to non-production in only this sense. Art is "intended to create an island of non-production" and yet art is completely part of production. Thus the consumer is subjecting oneself to the process of production, a victim of "imploitation."—Bertolt Brecht, 1931, "From The Three-Penny Trial: A Sociological Experiment" in Richard W. McCormick and Alison Guenther-Pal Ed. *German Essays on Film*. New York London: Continuum, 2004. p126.—This understanding of imploitation is a counterbalance to a neoliberal boosterism of entrepreneurialism, famously by Hernando de Soto. In the case of mircroloans, this seemingly progressive solution has served to "not only move the problem around but actually strengthen while simultaneously lengthening the golden chain that imprisons vulnerable and marginalized populations within orbits of capital circulation and accumulation."—David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution*. New York: Verso, 2012, p20.

35 EMI, CBS/SONY, BMG, WEA AND MCA

36 Thompson. p153.

on major labels or that appear on indie labels but are distributed by major labels or their affiliates. In the face of the impossibility of creating a totally new community, punk's idealistic failures "preserve the possibility of a potential social organization that did not yet exist." Unable to overturn the current system it "rendered its logic visible and suspect." [37] Thompson sees this failure as a movement toward imagining non-alienated labour:

> through its double failure, which is really an ongoing process of failing and never a final failure, the punk project testifies to the need for something beyond itself, for some sort of resolution to the commodity form that allows labour to be experienced as qualitative rather than quantitative, for some social structure that does not yet exist. Punks refuse to abandon the possibility of creating such a structure.[38]

This "failure," is often framed as "the death of punk," but can be seen as rather the mark of punk's deepened incursion into the everyday, in a period that coincides with the Bay Area replacing New York as the capital of DIY. Dylan Clark sees the post-seventies phase of DIY culture as self-reflexive, bringing its own founda-

37 Thompson. p156.

38 Thompson. p157. Semi successful zines often do not celebrate their popularity and have some scepticism and humour about the prospects of success. Says Matt Wobensmith, editor of the queer zine *Outpunk*: "Actually, I have gotten some publicity. Billboard did a front page article titled. 'Queercore punk rock, ready to face the market.' I couldn't have conceived of a funnier caption. So any time somebody asks me how *Outpunk* is doing I say, it's getting ready to face the market. There's been a lot of attention paid to queers in music recently and some people think I'm getting rich, but they don't realize that it's still too ahead of its time. I always feel like it's too cool to really be popular—too brainy, too smart, too out there."—"Outpunk" *Zines!* Vol. 2. Ed. V. Vale. San Francisco, CA: Re/Search, p122.

tions and discursive assumptions into question and developing a more sophisticated critique of the culture industry as "a skilled predator on the prowl for fresh young subcultures."[39] Punks saw that the general speed-up in absorption of stylistic innovation in modernity meant that grassroots culture can become commercialized in a matter of months. An aesthetically fragmented punk could partially evade this co-optation of "market democracy."[40] This phase of punk is already post-punk in that early punk relied on shocking a confused mainstream. As Fredric Jameson often notes, the postmodern mainstream becomes more and more adaptive to experimental forms. Because of this, late punk's strategy had to be an evasion of spectacle and a deepened critical anarchism. This phase draws on the stripped down ideology of earlier punk and its dedication to experience in place of symbolic encounters. Punks refer to the scene in which they hang out rather than calling themselves punk, and evade concrete descriptions of themselves but rather participate in political projects such as anti-corporate movements, Earth First!, and Reclaim the Streets.[41] In this way, Clark argues, "punk faked its own death," decentralizing and losing its markings, becoming instead "a loose assemblage of guerilla militias."[42] As it enters this phase, the punk aesthetic becomes inextricable from anarchism. Jeff Ferrell notes that while some participants may draw their practice from an overt understanding of anarchism:

39 Clark, Dylan "The Death and Life of Punk: the last subculture" in David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl Ed., *The Post-Subcultures Reader,* Oxford: New York: Berg, 2003, p232

40 Clark. p233.

41 Clark. p234.

42 Clark. p234.

> this isn't a necessary prerequisite, appropriately enough for an orientation founded on direct action, many seem to find their anarchist politics right there in the experience of everyday life.[43]

Bay Area institutions such as 924 Gilman and Lookout! point to what John Charles Goshert refers to as the "pervasive economic and social attitude in the Bay Area punk scene" with Gilman providing a political meeting space, local collectivity, and creativity.[44] San Francisco becomes the capital of punk modernity as these institutions become the models for other labels, bands, and venues throughout the country.[45] With the rise of punk as an economic and institutional force and the gathering of political and other communities around these institutions, punk had the opportunity to become more diverse. So in the early 90s, Gilman hosted diverse genres such as performance art, funk, jazz, heavy metal, and country alongside the predominant punk shows. The explicit anarchism and collective running of Gilman allowed for this col-

43 Ferrell. p88.

44 John Charles Goshert, "Punk after the pistols: American music, economics, and politics in the 1980s and 1990s". *Popular Music and Society.* Vol. 24.1. 2000, p98.

45 Rebecca Solnit calls San Francisco the "global capital of the internet economy," arguing that SF models a "new future," replacing the dystopic imagery of Los Angeles, which featured urban decay, open warfare, segregation, despair, injustice, and corruption. Instead, San Francisco promises a world of financial speculation, covert coersions, novelty restaurants, technology fads, incessant work hours, destabilized jobs, homes and neighbourhoods, expensive housing in which service workers cannot afford to live, a two tiered society defined by technology and financed by venture capital. Although this vision turned out to be temporary as the internet economy bust, San Francisco still serves as a model and remnant of this potential direction for capitalist dystopia.—Rebecca Solnit, *Hollow City: the Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism.* London; New York: Verso, 2000.

laboration, and freed punk from rigid aesthetic requirements:

> The generic breakdown of the performances was simply the outcome of a deeper logic of the scene's coming realization of its survival being based on constant mutation and unrecognisability. Again like earlier avant-garde artistic and political movements, the project became the locus of a new syntax that will shake up and transform old habits of thought and old ways of seeing, which would be formed through a radical notion of individualism, rather than a subcultural homogeneity. [46]

Larry Livermore describes this phenomenon in the zine *Absolutely Zippo*, in a discussion of the play of a high school student (although she is not named, it turns out that it's Miranda July who went on to be a well-known performance artist and film maker) at Gilman as embodying the spirit of punk by avoiding punk clichés and avoiding reification, rather stressing what he sees as innovation and independence. His description of July gets at the dialectical identity of punk anti-punk:

> I also have to tell you that even though I've never seen her at a show and she doesn't have any piercings or tattoos (not that I saw, anyway) she's more punk than 95 percent of you reading

46 Goshert. p99. Iain Chambers makes a historical argument for this sort of innovation as inherent in the punk aesthetics of the everyday. He suggests that because of the complexity, diversity and centrality of the contemporary city, the everyday merges with high, experimental art, "the avant-garde project of purposefully mismatching perception and the taken-for granted in order to release perspectives from the fetish of common sense tends to find a contemporary realization in the daily culture of the metropolis."—Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg Eds., "Contamination, coincidence and Collusion: Pop Music, Urban Culture, and the Avant Garde" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

> this mag. Why? Because she does something, she takes her vision and makes it your reality, she takes imagination and shapes it into something we all must contend with ... Because she's not waiting for the next edition of the punk handbook to tell her the appropriate ways to rebel and be creative.[47]

Simon Frith sees this process of "cultural revolution" from below as a mode of recreating the self with others, creating potential, building imagination of "something more than resistance." This understanding of the relationship of subcultural music to a transformed everyday, helps to explain the difficulty and inaccessibility of the "low" or "popular" punk music form, and its reliance on negation to advance its utopian politics.

> The utopian impulse, the negation of everyday life, the aesthetic impulse that Adorno recognized in high art, must be part of low art too.[48]

And yet fantasies of punk authenticity are belied by the fact that markets themselves are parasitic on grassroots taste. This push and pull of discrimination against and absorption by market forces forms the core contradiction of the punk approach to everyday life.

These marginal phenomena: DIY musical, entrepreneurial and everyday projects, thus navigate success and failure, high and low, inside and outside, rebellion from and absorption in everyday

47 Lawrence Livermore, *Absolutely Zippo Anthology of a Fanzine 1988-1998,* Benny & Son., p35

48 Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: on the value of popular music*, London; New York: Verso, 1996, p35.

life. This relationship to capitalist temporality, ratiocination and ambition does not constitute a clear political program nor a full utopian transformation. Instead, Bay Area DIY is a flexible form of utopian negation that necessarily fails, and in doing so succeeds in mapping the impasses that must be known in order to one day be surmounted.

MATTEO PASQUINELLI

THE SABOTAGE OF RENT

Coming of age in the heyday of punk, it was clear we were living at the end of something—of modernism, of the American dream, of the industrial economy, of a certain kind of urbanism. The evidence was all around us in the ruins of the cities. [...] Urban ruins were the emblematic places for this era, the places that gave punk part of its aesthetic, and like most aesthetics this one contained an ethic, a world-view with a mandate on how to act, how to live. [...]

A city is built to resemble a conscious mind, a network that can calculate, administrate, manufacture. Ruins become the unconscious of a city, its memory, unknown, darkness, lost lands, and in this truly bring it to life. [...] An urban ruin is a place that has fallen outside the economic life of the city, and it is in some way an ideal home for the art that also falls outside the ordinary production and consumption of the city.

Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*

WELCOMING THE RUINS OF A KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Rebecca Solnit's words resound today like an enduring lament out of time, not because punk is gone for good with all its vinyl memories and suburban ruins—no! Punk and, more generally, art are very alive today, though in their petit bourgeois caricature they have turned into the current mode of production. It is untimely to romanticize punk and underground art as the drive toward a space "outside the economic life of the city." Quite the opposite: growing on the ruins of the Fordist regime, they anticipated from within the spectacular, biopolitical, cognitive turn of today's economy. Punk accelerated the tendency of cognitive capitalism like an ischemic spasm.

Indeed, faster than any other form of art, music incarnates the unconscious of technology and dominant means of production, and in particular their crises, the shift from paradigm to paradigm. Repeating the history of experimental music is a useful exercise of political economy. Whereas Futurism, for example, welcomed the age of machines for the masses, punk and postindustrial music, in contrast, paid tribute to the disintegration of Fordism. Beyond the surface of their industrial fetish, Throbbing Gristle, the most experimental and filthy of UK punk bands, declared as early as 1976 their drive for "information war,"[1] while in Germany computer-made music was already becoming popular, influenced by Kraftwerk (literally, "power station"). In the late '80s, techno music appeared in Detroit: the traditional soundtrack of Motor City started to incorporate the synthetic presentiment of coming digital machines. The term "techno" was in fact inspired by Juan Atkins's reading of Alvin Toffler's book *The Third Wave*, in which the first "techno-rebels" were described as the pioneers of information age.[2] These few examples show how art avant-gardes look against, precisely because they grow within the ontology of the present, and never outside. Punk music started to play information, right when information started to become value. It is in the same years, coincidently, that Paolo Virno marks the rise of post-Fordism and the subject of the multitude in Italy, "with the social unrest which is generally remembered as the movement of 1977", which was centred around the rise of the so-called "Crea-

1 V. Vale, Ed., "Throbbing Gristle" *Industrial Culture Handbook*, RE/Search 6-7, 1983, p.9.

2 Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*. New York: Bantam Books, 1980. "The techno-rebels are, whether they recognize it or not, agents of the Third Wave. They will not vanish but multiply in the years ahead."

tive Autonomy" in Bologna.[3]

Today, we find ourselves at the very end of the parable of the information age: we are witness to the sunset of the political paradigm of knowledge society, the policies of cultural industries, and the easy dreams of "creative cities." In 2012, the financial crisis had become a global hurricane hitting all the cities in Europe, the destruction of which included arts funding. These are the very ruins of post-Fordism on which the art world is called to work and which a contemporary punk wave would be asked to "occupy." Here, the old political coordinates and artistic concepts no longer function. Indeed, the nostalgic notion of underground belongs to the age of industrialism—when society had a sharp class division and was not yet atomized into a multitude of precarious workers and freelancers.[4] What, then, is the form of resistance specific to the current age of financial capitalism?

If punk and the political movements of 1977 anticipated cognitive capitalism, where is today's movement that crosses the very crisis of cognitive capitalism and projects itself beyond the financial crisis? In which innervations can new artistic and political avant-gardes be found at work? In this text, I will sound the "ruins" that a knowledge society and financial capitalism are leaving behind. Not surprisingly, the economy of ruins—inaugurated by punk—will be found introjected within the general gears of cognitive capitalism, and exploited by a general process of financial speculation.

3 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004, p.98.

4 See Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground: An Essay on Technology, Society, and Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

1
THE INVISIBLE SKYLINE OF THE POSTINDUSTRIAL METROPOLIS

There is a red line connecting the art colonization of urban spaces, the mode of production specific to knowledge society, and the financial tricks of speculative capitalism. This text tries to connect these three interactions experimentally: art and metropolis, art and mode of production, art and financial crisis.

The relation between the spaces of the metropolis and artistic and cultural production is today an obvious one. The city of Berlin could be taken as the most notorious example within Europe. Especially in East Berlin: the art colonization of urban and industrial relics of Fordism is still an ongoing affair—not only the vestiges of previous totalitarian regimes, but also the stratification of failed urban plans form the geology and humus of the cultural world. This stratification includes a thick immaterial layer of cultural and symbolic capital, which has catalysed the "creative city" buzz and well-known processes of gentrification. There is an immaterial architecture that was fed unconsciously by Berlin's art world and underground subcultures until a few years ago. Today, this mechanism is debated politically and within local media, and is openly recognized by inhabitants of certain districts undergoing heavy gentrification (such as Prenzlauer Berg, Kreuzberg, and Neukölln). The capitalism of speculative rent, which started with the first pension funds on the New York stock market at the end of the '70s, had to intervene in rent prices of Berlin to be finally understood and discussed in plain words by the art scene. It is common sense nowadays to recognize that the art underground has become one of the main engines of real estate business, as our lives have been completely incorporated within biopolitical production (that is, the whole of our social life being put to work

to produce value).

The relation between cultural production and real estate speculation was less obvious when the discourse on creative economy was booming. Time has passed, and the literature that pushed the hype of "creative cities" (such as Richard Florida),[5] or denounced their hidden neoliberal agendas and social costs, has become extensive. Usually both radical critics and liberal partisans of "creative economies" were used to employ a symmetrical paradigm, where material and immaterial domains were defended in their autonomy and hegemony against each other. Therefore, the metropolis was described in terms of urbanism or symbolic capital, material economy or the supposedly virtuous economy of creativity. Opposing this, a new link between material and immaterial domains became manifest in the processes of gentrification. The processes of gentrification show new forms of conflicts, frictions, and value asymmetries that can no longer be described with the grammar of the industrial political economy, and not even with the cheap political economy of the supporters of the new creative commons.

2
THE ARTISTIC MODE OF PRODUCTION AND THE NEW TOPOLOGY OF RENT

The paradigm shift from Fordism to post-Fordism has been described by Carlo Vercellone as the passage from the regime

5 Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books, 2002; and: *The Flight of the Creative Class*, New York: Harper Collins, 2005.

of profit to the regime of economic rent.[6] He penned a slogan: "Rent is the new profit." Indeed, economic rent is the only model to describe the form of valorisation behind gentrification, as real estate business exploits the common resources of land and cultural capital without producing anything in exchange—this is the typical position of a rentier. Economic rent is the paradigm of the so-called FIRE economy (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate), not to mention the global oligarchies of oil and natural resources. However, dynamic forms of economic rent can also be defined as the monopolies over software patents, communication protocols, and network infrastructures, as they exploit a dominant position (Microsoft's operative system, Google's datacenters, and Facebook's social network are examples from the digital sphere). If profits and wages were the main vectors of capitalist accumulation under industrialism, monopoly rent and expropriation of the common appear to be the business models specific to the age of cognitive capitalism.[7] But once again, it is only thanks to the more recent phenomena of gentrification that this link between speculative rent and immaterial production became materially clearer.

In his seminal book *The New Urban Frontier*, Neil Smith introduced gentrification as the new fault line between social classes

6 Carlo Vercellone, ed. Tarì M, "La nuova articolazione salario, rendita, profitto nel capitalismo cognitive" *Posse: Potere Precario*, Rome: Manifestolibri, 2006; trans. Arianna Bove: "The new articulation of wages, rent and profit in cognitive capitalism," http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/26/55/84/PDF/The_new_articulation_of_wagesHall1.pdf.

7 See Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009.

within the contemporary metropolis.[8] In his model, the gentrification of New York City is described through the notion of a rent gap: the circulation of a differential of ground value across the city triggers gentrification when such a value gap is profitable enough in a specific area.[9] David Harvey further expanded such a theory of rent to include the collective production of culture as an asset that the market exploits to find new "marks of distinction" for its urban territories. In his essay about the gentrification of Barcelona, "The Art of Rent," Harvey introduces the notion of collective symbolic capital: real estate business works by exploiting old and new cultural capital, which has gradually sedimented in a given city (as forms of sociality, quality of life, art production, gastronomic tradition, and so on).[10] Harvey's essay is one of the few analyses which unveils the political asymmetries that can be found within the much-celebrated cultural commons. Harvey links intangible production and money accumulation not via the regime of intellectual property but along a parasitic exploitation of the immaterial domain by the material one. Collective symbolic capital is but another name for the expropriation of the common—a form of exploitation that in these cases completely skips the regime of intellectual property and its battles.

The notion of collective symbolic capital is crucial to reveal the

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

9 Ibid., p67: "The rent gap is the disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use. […] Once the rent gap is wide enough, gentrification may be initiated in a given neighbourhood by any of the several different actors in the land and housing market."

10 David Harvey, "The Art of Rent: Globalisation and the Commodification of Culture," in *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, London: Routledge, 2001.

intimate link between cultural production and less obvious parasitic economies. Collective symbolic capital can be accumulated in different ways: in a traditional way, by exploiting the historical and social memory of a given locale, like in the case of Barcelona covered by Harvey; in a contemporary way, by exploiting new urban subcultures and art scenes, like in the case of Berlin; or, in an artificial way, by engineering a city marketing campaign, like in the case of Amsterdam and its new brand "I-am-sterdam". Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan explained similar techniques of urban regeneration in their essay "The Fine Art of Gentrification," which described the renovation of the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the early '80s, where artistic development was fundamental in attracting business developers.[11] It was Sharon Zukin who, in 1982, named this specific artistic mode of production, and connected it directly to the financial sphere: "By an adroit manipulation of urban forms, the AMP [Artistic Mode of Production] transfers urban space from the "old" world of industry to the "new" world of finance, or from the realm of productive economy to that of non-productive economic activity."[12]

Today, the "AMP" has become an extended immaterial factory. The trick is now very well known, and the real estate business has established a perverse machinery in an explicit alliance with the art world. For decades it was known that counterculture fed culture industries with fresh ideas, now, for the first time, the current generation of artists have to face the immediate ambivalence of their symbolic labour or biopolitical production. The am-

11 Rosalyn Deutsche, Cara Gendel Ryan, "The Fine Art of Gentrification," *October* 31, Winter, 1984.

12 Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, p178.

bivalence of contemporary art and culture toward these forms of speculation is never discussed properly because of silent opportunism—but also because of a lack of a new political grammar.

The concept of AMP should be further articulated and opposed to neoliberal notions such creative industries and creative cities.[13] In this sense, a new conceptualization of the "culture factory" should include those forms of antagonism and crisis that other models overlook. The old idea of subculture, for instance, was developed within early Cultural Studies as a conflictive alternative to the paradigm of dominant culture. Postmodernism then intervened to destroy the reassuring dialectics between highbrow and lowbrow culture, but failed at developing a new value theory. Contrary to the most recent interpretation of the free culture movement by apostles like Lawrence Lessig and Yochai Benkler, the commons of culture are not an independent domain of pure freedom, cooperation, and autonomy, but they are constantly subjected to the force field of capitalism.[14]

3
THE SABOTAGE OF DEBT

Financial capitalism emerged from the ruins of knowledge soci-

13 These two notions have different genealogies: the definition of creative industries was introduced by the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with a focus on intellectual property; creative cities is a concept invented by Richard Florida that focuses on cultural capital.

14 See Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture*, New York: Penguin Books, 2004; Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

ety, because the business models of knowledge society reached the limit of accumulation too quickly, and the process of valorisation fatally stopped. Right after the dot-com crash in the United States, investors went desperately back to real estate speculation and the new derivative market was established "artificially" on subprime mortgages. The following subprime bubble then came to affect major national banks, and a private credit crisis turned into a public debt collapse. Two coincidences are found here: the history of financial speculation starts with the first pension funds on the New York Stock Exchange in the late '70s, in exactly the same city and time of the first case studies of gentrification; today, Berlin, as political capital, is the centre of the new financial governance of Europe (based on the exploitation of national public debts by "virtuous" countries), and it hosts some of the most turbulent debates and cases of gentrification.

A purely imaginary fabrication of value is a key component of both financial games and gentrification processes. Since the "creative destruction" of value characteristic of stock markets has become the political issue of current times, a political re-composition of the cultural commons and artistic agency in this direction is needed too. What might occur if the urban multitudes and the art world enter this valorisation game and recover a common power over the—apparently fragile—chain of value production in which they are completely absorbed? From students in the United States and Canada protesting university debt to the multitude dissenting around the Greek parliament's austerity measures, the new vector of conflict is debt. As Maurizio Lazzarato put it: "the class struggle is today unfolding and intensifying in Europe around the issue of debt."[15]

15 Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, trans. Joshua David Jordan.

Stock markets were the first to teach everybody the sabotage of value: no wonder in Berlin and all over Europe urban activism is targeting gentrification with symbolic and less symbolic attacks against the expropriation of that collective symbolic capital described by Harvey. The new regime of economic rent, from digital networks' monopolies to real estate monopolies, is pushing toward a polarized and neo-feudal society. The new coordinates of the art underground in the age of financial capitalism can then be only found along the new vectors of debt that are growing on the "ruins" of the previous knowledge society. As much as the new political forms surrounding it, the sabotage of debt is the general form of the art of the multitude in late capitalism.

Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) p7, 2012.

MARTIN GLABERMAN

FACTORY SONGS OF MR TOAD*

DRUM

boom

That's a helluva way
to welcome a buddy

Boom

who's just a few minutes
late

BOOM

trying to sneak by the foreman
to avoid an argument

BOOM

banging on a steel skid
with a steel hammer lead hammer copper hammer

B O O M

rhythmically, louder and louder
all work stopped to escort me to my machinery

B O O M

and when I get there
it just as suddenly

S T O P S

all except the memory of the foreman
standing around looking stupid
at something they can't control.

WILDCAT 1

A most practical cat

Walking silently on padded feet
Unseen, unheard
Power concentrated
    In a compact body.

Lean, lithe, less
    in appearance
Than the explosive leap,
    periodic culmination
    of growing power
    of growing hunger.

Amber, black, mottled, gold.
All colours help to hide
    it's invisible path.

Slowly it climbs and waits
    on limb
    on cliff
    on overhang.

All right, Buddy,

Let's not get romatic.

Shut her down and lets go.

A most practical cat.

EMMA ROBERTSON, MICHAEL PICKERING
& MAREK KORCZYNSKI

AND SOMETIMES THE WHOLE ROOM WOULD BE SINGING:

MUSIC, GENDER AND FACTORY LABOUR UNDER INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM

> *She [a young girl] was making links for chain-harrows, and as she worked the heavy Oliver she sang a song. And I also saw her owner approach with a clenched fist and heard him say, "I'll give you some golden hair was hanging down her back! Why don't you get on with your work?"*
>
> Robert Sherard, *White Slaves of England*, 1897[1]

Before industrialisation, singing at work was well-nigh ubiquitous. Men and women sang, individually and collectively, as they engaged in different tasks: ploughing, sewing, milking, weaving. Singing did not happen in parallel realms of "work" or "play" but instead infused all elements of daily life. After industrialisation, this all changed. As workers were organised into factory settings from the late eighteenth century with the introduction of machinery and mass-production methods and the imposition of management-led worker discipline in a wage-based economy, worker-centred singing cultures fell into decline. Introducing broadcast music into factories in the twentieth century, as an employer—and state-sponsored tactic, could only partially recreate rich song cultures from before the industrial era. Nevertheless, workers, especially women workers, managed to re-appropriate broadcast music and in doing so both accommodated themselves to and resisted modes of factory labour.

In this article we explore how the workplace has been an important, if not *the* most important, arena for creating and listening to music. The factory is a particularly contested site for the performance and consumption of music at work. Discussing the role

1 In P. Keating, ed., *Into Unknown England, 1866-1913: Selections from the Social Explorers*, London: Fontana, 1976, p183.

of music in people's working lives, through the optic of gender relations, offers crucial insights into the changing nature of both labour and music in the context of the structures of industrial capitalism, and especially offers insights into the agency of workers in the factory. While much has been written on certain forms of work song (the shanty and chain-gang song in particular), the great majority of songs historically sung in the workplace in Britain were not functionally oriented to labour, as in the work song, but served other purposes, feeding other values. Equally significantly, *practices* of singing and listening to music in the workplace, especially since industrialisation, have been sorely neglected. This neglect hampers our understanding of the continued relevance of music to working lives.

With the onset of industrialisation in Britain, the nature of work changed forever. Although it was a fragmented and piecemeal process across time and place, those workers who moved from agricultural to factory labour saw their workplace culture radically change with industrial conditions and work discipline. The textile industry led the way, with spinning—followed by weaving—the first sectors to be revolutionised by new technologies. The concentration of machines and workers into factory buildings and the intensification of production created noisy, dirty, dangerous workplaces on an unprecedented scale. Contemporary accounts often set up a romanticised contrast with a pastoral idyll of pre— or non-industrial labour. William Gardiner, who lived through the transition from hand to mechanised spinning at the turn of the nineteenth century, contrasted "girls spinning under the shade of the walnut trees, combining with their love songs the whizzing of their wheels" and the young workers in the factories, "too early pent up in spinning mills, amidst stunning noise." Robert Blincoe, apprenticed to a Nottingham mill in 1799, was recorded as being "much terrified by the whirring motion and noise of

the machinery, and not a little affected by the dust and flue with which he was half suffocated."[2] Such an environment was hardly conducive to singing, let alone singing's enhancement of work.

On top of the noisy machinery, the first generation of factory workers faced new kinds of discipline imposed by factory masters. This discipline included bans on singing, whistling and even talking whilst working, in an attempt to focus workers' minds on labour, destroying older working practices. Samuel Bamford (1788-1872), growing up in a handloom weaving family, saw song and hard work as hand-in-hand: "whole nights would be spent at the loom, the weavers occasionally striking up a hymn ... Before Christmas we frequently sung to keep ourselves from sleep."[3] But irregular working practices did not suit employers who needed to run their machines at regular hours, extracting maximum effort from employees during these hours, and keeping watch over their expensive capital investments. In the 1830s, one young boy recounted the dramatic changes in his life to a middle-class observer. From tending pigs, he came to be employed in a textile factory: "With them I could shout and whistle, and do what I liked. Now, I am obliged to be silent."[4] Fines were issued for breaking rules, such as a shilling penalty for spinners caught whistling at Tyldesley near Manchester in 1823, or the six-pence fine for

2 W. Gardiner, *Music and Friends; or, Pleasant Recollections of a Dilettante*, Vol. III, London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1976; Leicester: Crossley and Clarke; Blincoe reprinted in J. R. Simmons Jnr (ed.), *Factory Lives: Four Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiographies*, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007.

3 S. Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, vol. I, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893, p.120.

4 Cited in C. Wing, *Evils of the Factory System Demonstrated by Parliamentary Evidence*, London: Frank Cass, 1967 [1837], p.liii.

"talking to another, whistling, or singing" in a list of factory rules quoted by Engels in 1844.[5] In some cases, employers imposed a particular moral order (especially on girl and women workers) by controlling the soundscape of the workplace. *The Children's Employment Commission* of 1843 recorded that in one pin-making factory, a "fine of 3d is inflicted on any female who uses bad language, or sings a profane song: they sing a great deal, but are permitted only hymn tunes, of which they have a great variety". The employment of women in industrial settings was clearly a source of anxiety to the Victorian middle classes.[6] It was women workers who were to be targeted by employer-sponsored broadcast music in the twentieth-century factory.

Before we paint the era of industrialisation too heavy-handedly as a period of belligerent silencing of workers by heartless employers, we should acknowledge those factory masters who appreciated (or simply tolerated) the musical expression of their workforce. One mill-hand remembered his master from the 1820s as listening "with evident pleasure from the factory yard to the singing of hymns or religious pieces in the rooms".[7] For some of the more enlightened managers, music and productivity were not antithetical but could exist in harmony. There is evidence of management-sanctioned singing in the Quaker confectionery factories of

5 *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 30 August 1823; F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, London: Penguin, 1968 [1845], p.202. For more on policies of prohibition, see M. Korczynski, M. Pickering and E. Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 147-56.

6 See Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, pp.162-5.

7 B. T. Barton, *Historical Gleanings of Bolton and District*, Bolton, 1881-3, as quoted in R. Elbourne, *Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire*, 1780-1840, Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer/ Rowman and Littlefield, 1980, pp. 60-1.

the early twentieth century. Rowntree and Cadbury adopted short periods of singing for their female workers engaged in tasks such as chocolate packing. Rowntree even employed a violinist in 1905 to accompany the hymn singing at eleven o'clock each morning. These employers were concerned, even prior to Fordist rationalisation, that the nature of work was becoming increasingly repetitive and monotonous. They intended music to be beneficial in helping girls and women to cope with their work tasks, adjust to the factory system and work more effectively—indeed the revivalist hymns chosen often conveniently emphasised a deferred reward for earthly labours. The anonymous author of a piece in the 1905 Rowntree in-house journal, *Cocoa Works Magazine*, was convinced of the positive effect of singing: "we find that work goes on all the better when we are telling ourselves to 'Work for the night is coming,' and to 'do with our might what our hands find to do.'"[8] These officially-endorsed musical moments in the factory are nonetheless marked by their scarcity in the historical record. The overwhelming trend of industrialisation from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries was a silencing of the workforce.

This silencing is overwhelming certainly, but workers' singing cultures were nevertheless remarkably resilient. Despite very real threats to singing at work in manufacturing industries, there is evidence of the survival of song produced by workers—if we only listen hard enough. Handloom weavers—who were predominantly men—previously had a strong musical tradition that persisted in the industrial setting. William Thom, the weaver poet, though

8 For full details see E. Robertson, M. Pickering and M. Korczynski, "Harmonious Relations? Music at work in the Rowntree and Cadbury factories", *Business History*, 49 (2), 2007: pp.211-34.

prone to imaginative exaggeration, suggests the continuing power of song in an Aberdeen factory between 1814 and 1831: "'Braes o' Balquidder,' and 'Yon Burnside,' ... O! how they did ring above the rattling of a hundred shuttles! Let me again proclaim the debt we owe those Song Spirits, as they walked in melody from loom to loom, ministering to the low-hearted".[9] If such ministering was mainly directed towards male weavers, it is more generally women workers who dominate the historical record. This is partly related to the gendered spaces and hierarchies of factory work, in which women were often placed in single-sex groups completing the lowest-paid tasks, usually with the expectation that work would be temporary before marriage. Men had more to gain from acquiescence in the industrial system and could be more dispersed in the factory, employed in different kinds of labour (for example, as machine tenders, for whom listening to the sound of the machine for any indication of faults was crucial). In addition to these points it seems that, as new occupational identities were constructed, workplace music became increasingly associated with femininity. In the 1860s, one observer noted, "It is not uncommon in the rooms which are principally occupied by females to find ... the noise of the machinery overpowered by the singing of a favourite hymn or a popular ballad".[10] Whilst such observations often serve to romanticise women's factory labour, and their ability to cope with its demands, the evidence they provide of song surviving against the odds is supported elsewhere. Indeed, in both these examples, popular voices are powerful enough to defy the racket of industrial work.

9 W. Thom, *Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom Weaver*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1847, pp.14-15.

10 J. Watts, *The Facts of the Cotton Famine*, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968 [1866], p.49.

Music was so important that workers would overcome the challenges of their environment and defy the rules—sometimes openly, sometimes covertly beyond the hearing of their employer—to sing out during their labour. Gracie Fields recalled in her autobiography how her fellow workers would cover for her so that she could entertain them with her singing in the interwar period:

> the girls would be saying, "C'mon, Grace, give us a song and we'll mind your frames." Into the din and clatter of the machinery I'd bellow out every song I knew while the others would keep a look-out for the boss and give me the signal to pretend I was working as soon as he appeared.

She was fired for her performance when on one occasion her boss returned unexpectedly.[11] The persistence into the twentieth century of explicit rules against whistling and singing suggest that self-made music had not been entirely eradicated. Even in the male-dominated sector of the railways, one Welsh company decreed that "Not an instance of intoxication, singing, whistling or hilarity while on duty will be overlooked, and besides being dismissed, the offender will be liable to punishment".[12]

If the industrialisation of labour had not quite killed song controlled and produced by workers themselves in the workplace, the industrialisation of music itself threatened to finish the job. Scholars of musicology, most famously Theodor Adorno, have

11 G. Fields, *Sing As We Go*, London: Frederick Muller, 1960, p.28. For more on such fragments of singing in the factory, see Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, chapter 8.

12 Cited in D. Craig, *The Real Foundations: Literature and Social Change*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1973, pp. 89-90.

mourned the creation of a passive listener rather than active musical performer in an era of mass-produced commercial music. So was the alienated producer of the factory system now doomed to be alienated from the production of song? Studying the history of music in the workplace demands a more nuanced perspective, which enhances our understanding of changing relationships to both labour and singing.

Some employers introduced broadcast commercial music into their factories in a deliberate attempt to improve (or at least maintain) productivity and to negate some of the worst effects of an increasingly monotonous Taylorist and Fordist organisation of labour. One of the earliest examples dates from 1911:

> Sir Robert Davies, Managing Director of Siebe, Gorman and Co. Ltd., claims to be one of the first employers to have music in his works. His employees used to have to march up and down at four miles an hour for two hours at a time testing breathing apparatus. In order to break the monotony he introduced a gramophone and played such stirring marches as "Soldiers of the King."[13]

The Industrial Welfare movement of the 1930s reported on the efforts of its members, including the Bachelor's Peas Company in 1938, to use gramophone records in their factories. These experiments with broadcast music were, however, relatively few and far between in the interwar period, remaining the preserve of a select group of more "enlightened" employers. These employers debated the merits of certain kinds of music to increase productivity, as did industrial psychologists, but the results were inconclusive

13 *Industrial Welfare*, 1941.

and, certainly, instrumentalist in motivation.[14] They missed the whole point of music at work from the worker's perspective. The concern from that perspective was not with productivity but with the quality of labour, or at least the wresting of some small degree of pleasure to leaven the hours of mind-numbing toil. We shall come back to this issue later.

It was the experience of the Second World War that really brought the practice of broadcasting music in factories into widespread use. Governmental organisations, especially the Ministry of Production, brought their influence to bear on the BBC in the early stages of the war, in the belief that music might stimulate wartime production. Thus, in June 1940, the BBC launched the *Music While You Work* programme, which was specially designed for the industrial context and intended primarily for those workers employed in crucial war manufacturing such as munitions. It would be hard to overestimate the influence of this programme: the theme tune, "Calling All Workers," became probably the most heard piece of music in the British Isles. Informed (if that is not too generous a word) by the research of the Industrial Welfare Society, the National Institute of Labour Management, and the Institute of Industrial Psychology, music was delivered in half-hour doses, scheduled at 10.30am and 3pm (with a third night-shift broadcast from 1942). Programme content was strictly regulated to conform to the following criteria: "a) rhythmical music b) non vocal (familiar vocals now accepted) c) no interruptions by announcements and d) maintain volume to overcome factory workshop noises" (BBC Memo, 1940). Musicians recording for the programme were instructed to "try to make the period one of un-

14 On these early employer experiments, see Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, pp.206-9.

relieved BRIGHTNESS and CHEERINESS" (BBC Report July 1940). Crucial from the employers' perspective was that workers should not be distracted from their work by engaging too actively with the music (hence the fears around vocal music or the complicated rhythms in "hot jazz"). Although the objective of raising wartime output was certainly intertwined with a concern to humanise the workplace, it was ultimately productivity that came to the fore. A Ministry of Supply memo from 1942 summarised the position of the Ministry of Labour: "The avowed object of music-at-work is to stimulate production." [15]

Music While You Work continued to be broadcast until 1967, accessible to both workplace and domestic listeners. During and after the war, some employers supplemented or replaced BBC broadcasts by playing gramophone records, which sometimes included Decca releases of specially selected music for factories. The United Biscuits Company went one step further, investing in their very own radio station, which went live in 1970. United Biscuits managers hoped to provide a "satisfaction substitute" to compensate for the monotonous work they blamed for a high turnover of staff. [16] By the 1960s, however, there is an overall increased level of workers' control over the form and type of music being broadcast. Transistor radios were brought into factory settings and tuned into the latest pop music, whether from the new pirate stations or, from 1967, BBC Radio One.

Music, then, persisted in factory settings, despite numerous chal-

15 For a full discussion and further details of sources, see Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, pp.210-27.

16 For a brief history of the United Biscuits Network see Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, p.229.

lenges—from antagonistic employers through the sheer trials of the environment to the wider decline in self-made song. The actions of workers and employers contributed to the survival of forms of singing at work cultures, even if these were very much altered from the widespread pre-industrial patterns of song and singing. Indeed, managers came to adopt broadcast music in an attempt to stimulate production and to maintain worker morale in an increasingly alienated factory context. In the face of these developments, let us return to the question of what music meant to the workers.

Music in the workplace could still be experienced by some in functional ways—as giving a kind of rhythm to industrial tasks. Lillian Rawcliffe, a former confectionery worker, suggested that productivity was enhanced by broadcast music in the Rowntree factory: "You could work like billy-o with it, you know."[17] Nevertheless, music in the workplace had become divorced from some of the earlier pacing functions served by shanties or waulking songs. Indeed for some workers, especially male workers, music was a distraction (however pleasant) from the serious tasks at hand and could interfere with their preferred construction of the industrial soundscape: "it made it a lot pleasanter, and you know, you certainly couldn't sing along to the songs, you certainly couldn't. As I say your mind had to be focused on the biscuits" (Tommy Combe, retired United Biscuits worker); "I never saw spinners singing or whistling, they would be careful not to do so because it could sound like a hot bearing to one of the other workers. Remember these men (and me as engineer) were always listening for changes in the note of the machinery" (Stanley Gra-

17 Mrs Lillian Rawcliffe interviewed by Emma Robertson, 2000.

ham, retired textile worker).[18] For these male workers, active engagement with music was deeply problematic and antithetical to their occupational role and identity.

For pre-industrial singing at work cultures, the "function" of music did not preclude imaginative engagement with the song text; music served the purposes of both "fancy" and "function". Taking British singing at work cultures as a whole, fancy even exceeded function in most cases.[19] For Harry Cox (1885-1981), a farmworker who became renowned for his singing, music infused his everyday working life, no matter what the task: "You got a nice job, you used to sing all day long. ... Anything that come to mind, like this here Blackberry Fold ... Anything that come into my mind. ... Oh yeah, I had all manner of fancies."[20] Even in the shanties that directly paced sailors' labour, or in the rhythmic waulking songs performed by women pounding tweed in Scotland, there was room for creative embellishment that might simultaneously take the singers out of their immediate work task and allow them to complete it successfully. The "Rolling Home" shanty, for example, combined specific task-related instructions with deep emotion:

Call all hands to man the caps'n,

See the cable flaked down clear,
Now we're sailing homeward bound, boys,
For the channel we will steer.

18 Tommy Combe interviewed by Emma Robertson, 2005; Stanley Graham, email to authors, August 2004.

19 Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, especially chapter 4.

20 Harry Cox, *The Bonny Labouring Boy* (Topic TSCD512D, 2000), liner notes by Paul Marsh, pp.26-7.

Chorus:
Rollin' home, rollin' home,
Rollin' home across the sea,
Rollin' home to dear old England,
Rollin' home, fair land, to thee.[21]

Through song, work and play co-existed and were inextricably connected.

By the later industrial period, however, there is clear evidence that both the functional and imaginative engagement with song narratives had been reduced. Music (whether as self-produced song, or as broadcast commercial music) had become a survival mechanism for those engaged in monotonous, unfulfilling tasks, valued as much for being a distraction from the alienating hubbub of the factory as for its positive aesthetic qualities. Oral history interviews with current and retired factory workers frequently recall the power of music to get them through the shift: "we had *Music While You Work* to listen to, and you needed that to keep you going" (Margaret Kippin, munitions factory worker); "I think where you've got repetitive jobs doing t'same thing all t'time you would go mad if you didn't have something. We loved it, t'music" (Jean Tutill, Rowntree worker).[22] The monotonous, alienating work provided a context in which music played a crucial function in surviving a shift but it also limited the potential for workers to engage deeply with the music itself.

21 See Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour*, pp.78-82 for this and more on shanties.

22 Margaret Kippin quoted in P. Schweitzer, L. Hilton and J. Moss (eds), *What Did You Do in the War, Mum?* London: Age Exchange Theatre Company, 1985, p.62; Mrs Jean Tutill interviewed by Emma Robertson, March 2005.

Whilst the above suggests how music could serve the purposes of industrial capitalism in accommodating workers to Taylorised work tasks, even forming a kind of "culture of consolation" for workers (to borrow Gareth Stedman Jones' term), we must not curtail our analysis there. Music in industrial contexts could at times provide a means of expressing the voice of the workers—sometimes a resistant, even radical voice. In the 1940s, workers at the Cammell Laird shipyard adapted an old Irish song:

Oh Mary, Cammell Lairds
Is a wonderful place
But the wages they pay there
Is a bloody disgrace
They go in for the money
They come out at night
All they're allowed is
3 minutes to ...

The worker relaying this song to Henry Mooney, for his study of the shipyards, continued, "You know the word. It's another true thing, too, is that. You're only allowed 3 minutes to go to the toilet."[23] Listening and singing along to broadcast commercial music may have provided fewer opportunities for such creative adaptations. Yet we have numerous examples of workers giving new meanings to song lyrics in order to voice a critique of their employers and working conditions. In a contemporary ethnographic study of the "MacTells" firm (a window blind manufacturer), the following episode was noted in which workers appropriated song lyrics to communicate their dissatisfaction:

23 National Sound Archive, c900/10036 C1.

> Angela and Shirley discussing numbers and Paula, a senior supervisor, calling them in again [to discipline them]. Angela is pissed off … Soon after this discussion … Angela sings [along] with some venom, the first few lines of "Another Brick in the Wall", and then with extra emphasis, "We don't need no thought control". [24]

Given that commercialised broadcast music provides limited potential for creating new kinds of meanings (and barely alludes to the sphere of work), it is even more remarkable that workers continue to re-imagine and re-appropriate the lyrics of songs to make their voices heard.

Workers might also unite their voices in song to express resistance to their employers, or to their immediate supervisors, through the very act of singing itself. In 1912, in response to an attempt to ban singing and talking, women textile workers in Ireland asserted themselves through singing collectively. They challenged their employers to sack them all for breaking the ban. [25] At Rowntree after the Second World War, women workers broke into song despite attempts at prohibition:

> they'd about 12 or 14 women sat decorating [chocolates] … on each of these machines. And sometimes the whole room would be singing. And I have known the overlookers come out and tell them "be quiet" because they can't concentrate in t'office …

24 For full details of this study, see M. Korczynski, "Stayin' alive on the factory floor: an ethnography of the dialectics of music use in the workplace", *Poetics*, 39 (2), 2011, pp.87-106.

25 N. O'Brien, James Connolly: *Portrait of a Rebel Father*, Dublin: Four Masters, 1935, p.136.

> They'll stop for a while and then they'll start again. You know, and when *Music While You Work* came on, they'd just ignored what she said and they'd all sing.
>
> Brian Sollitt, retired Rowntree worker[26]

Both these examples demonstrate the gendered nature of workplace culture. Male workers sometimes enjoyed listening to or occasionally participating in singing by women colleagues, but evidence of male collective singing in factory contexts is notably absent, particularly in contrast to other contexts of male labour (such as quarrying, or seafaring). This may be due to complex factors, including the more dispersed nature of men's work in certain types of factories, the heavier machinery and other environmental conditions, as well as their construction of different kinds of occupational identities with more to gain from conforming to established factory discipline.

Workers sang together to give voice to a sense of community and in doing so enacted processes both of inclusion and exclusion through song. In contexts where there was still a good deal of worker-created music, as in the case of wartime munitions work, or in some of the factories in the first half of the twentieth century where music was permitted, this was particularly the case. Betty Messenger captured the singing culture of women in the spinning mills of Northern Ireland in the early twentieth century, where songs were framed to express relationships between both individual workers and the collective "we":

> *Hi, Mary Dougherty, will you lay me up an end*

26 Oral history recorded by Emma Robertson, 2005.

Lay me up an end
Lay me up an end?
Hi, Mary Dougherty, will you lay me up an end,
For we are all behind.

Songs could also distinguish between distinct groups of workers within one factory—groups generally demarcated along gender lines. Women spinners performed the following song to tease the male band-tiers in the spinning room:

A for apple
P for pear,
She is the girl with the long yellow hair.
All the world will never, never know,
The love I have for the band tier-o. [27]

The act of singing could be intimately connected to the expression, indeed to the creation, of a happy, friendly working community: "And we used to sing, and all that, you know, it was jolly. ... It was noisy, but get used to the noise ... I remember we all used to be singing in harmony" (worker in the Macclesfield silk industry). [28] A worker from the Aycliffe munitions factory during the Second World War remarked, "We were sort of the same, all our husbands and sweethearts away. We used to read each others' letters ... we liked all that sort of thing, and we sang all day and everything ... sort of all togetherness—there was big tables that you worked

27 B. Messenger, *Picking Up the Linen Threads: A Study in Industrial Folklore*, Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1980, pp.45, 76.

28 J. Norris, "'Well fitted for females': women in the Macclesfield silk industry', in J. A. Jowitt and A. J. McIvor (eds.), *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries*, 1850-1939, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 193.

on—it was really nice."[29] These forms of sung-communities could overcome differences of social class and background that affected workers brought together under wartime conditions. However, they tended to be highly localised and small-scale within the factory. A Mass Observation researcher, author of the *War Factory* study, recorded: "Now and then sporadic bursts of singing start in some part of the room or other and continue for a few minutes. It is usually a purely local affair, confined to the occupants of a few square yards of bench—nothing approaching community singing through the room ever develops."[30]

Some workers found themselves at the margins of, or excluded by, these musical communities, which often reinforced an existing form of isolation due to a particular work task or status. During the Second World War, Amy Brooke wrote to her friend lamenting her exclusion from the singing culture she had enjoyed in her previous department: "all the girls in the next department are singing away like nightingales. Oh to be back at Welding Rods!" Similarly Jean Wynne found herself beyond the reach of tannoy music in a wartime munitions factory and found that this reinforced a sense of social isolation:

> In the shell shop, you couldn't hear anything because it was next to what we called the stamp shop, where the big hammers went boom, boom, boom all the time. You certainly couldn't hear the music while you worked … I was actually lonely when I was in the works. I felt isolated.[31]

29 Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Aycliffe, interview number 19695.

30 Mass Observation, *War Factory*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1943.

31 Letter from Amy Brooke in M. Jolly, *Dear Laughing Motorbyke: Letters from Women Welders of the Second World War*, London: Scarlet, 1997, p.111; Wynne quoted in M.

Such tales of musical/social exclusion starkly illustrate the power of music to enhance, even create, feelings of belonging to a community of workers. At the Rowntree factory, men employed in the noisy chocolate moulding section would deliberately reposition themselves so that they could hear broadcast music, if only for a short period. As Brian Sollitt remembered, "they always used to try and get to other end when it was music time."

What can we learn from studying the history of music at work in Britain? First, we have demonstrated the damage industrial capitalism inflicted on singing at work practices—damage that lives on today. Looking closely at pre- and non-industrial workplaces reveals a culture of music in which play could infuse and enrich serious labour. No matter how resilient the workers, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the silencing effects of industrialisation impoverished working life. How did this happen? In part, the noisy, dirty conditions of the factory environment were to blame. Employer prohibition of music in an effort to gain control of the work sphere was also crucial. In the twentieth century, the development of Taylorism and Fordism—whereby labour became increasingly fragmented, repetitive and regimented—militated against an active song culture of imaginative fancy. The silencing of the workers, and their accompanying sense of alienation from their work tasks, is indeed a tragedy of industrialisation.

We might then read the reintroduction of music into factory contexts from the mid-twentieth century as a victory for the workers. However, initially at least, this was a top-down process geared to the needs of the employers rather than the employees. *Music While You Work* was another, if softer, method of managing work-

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Nicholson (ed.), *What Did You Do in the War, Mummy?* London: Pimlico, 1995, p.204.

ers and was not intended to allow them to recapture a sense of imaginative engagement with their labour, or even to provide a moment of fanciful escape. The music was not to be too engaging or distracting. The story of music in factory contexts teaches us much about the deadening effects of industrial capitalism, and industrialised music, on workplace cultures.

Yet what it teaches does not end there, for it tells us much about worker resistance and creativity, while also revealing the latent power of music. Even as music became increasingly professionalised and commercialised, we have heard people (especially women) singing out during their labour (accompanied and unaccompanied), and re-writing commercial song lyrics for their own purposes. We have heard the expression of dissatisfaction, protest, and humour in the factory through song. Music has been, and should continue to be, a powerful resource not only in coping with, but also in challenging, the demands of industrial capitalism. If we listen sympathetically to the songs of industrial labourers in the past, if we attend imaginatively to how these songs informed the experience of workers at their tasks, we may learn lessons for the future of work and for a workable, more life-enhancing future.

Acknowledgements:
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LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN

AURAL CONTRACT:

FORENSIC LISTENING AND THE REORGANIZATION OF THE SPEAKING-SUBJECT*

* This version, 2014, edited by Cesura//Acceso with permission of the Author.

In "Mengele's Skull," Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman suggest that unlike the seminal 1961 trial in Jerusalem of Adolf Eichmann, which was archetypal of an era defined by eyewitness testimony, in the mid-eighties international justice became a stage for a different type of narrative; "a second narrative, not the story of the witness but that of the thing in the context of war crimes investigation and human rights."[1] The authors claim that what catalysed this new era into existence was the exhumed remains of the German SS officer and Nazi physician Joseph Mengele.

One year before the forensic examination of Mengele's remains, a piece of legislation was passed in British criminal law which unknowingly also marked a crucial and forensic shift in the conventions of testimony. The 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) ordered all police interview rooms to be equipped with audio recording machines, so that all interrogations from then on would be audio-recorded instead of transcribed into text. The passing of this law unintentionally catalysed the birth of a radical form of listening that would over the next twenty-eight years transform the speaking-subject in the process of law. This legislation fundamentally stretched the role of the juridical ear from simply hearing words spoken aloud to actively listening to the process of speaking, as a new form of forensic evidence. This essay is dedicated to understanding the type of listening that this moment in 1984 inaugurated; I seek to amplify both its origins and its role in the contemporary juridical and political forums, in which we see the fragile balance of fundamental human and civil rights predicated on listening and the voice tipping into an uncertain future which calls into question the very means through

1 Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, "Mengele's Skull", *Cabinet*, issue 43, Fall 2011, pp.61–67, p.62.

which we can negotiate politics and the law.

NINETEEN EIGHTY–FOUR

Code E of PACE was seen as a solution to claims that the police were falsifying confessions and altering statements made during interviews, as prior to this point all statements were simply written down "verbatim" by the police officers and then signed off by the suspect.

Were it not for a handful of linguists practicing a rare strand of forensic phonetic analysis, PACE would have remained a simple and transparent article of legal reform. Instead, the act exponentially increased the use of speaker profiling, voice identification, and voice prints in order to, among other things, determine regional and ethnic identity as well as to facilitate so-called voice line-ups.

Prior to PACE, if it was suspected that someone's voice was on an incriminating recording—for example a bugged telephone conversation, or a CCTV surveillance tape—that person was asked to come to the police station and give a voluntary voice sample. After PACE, doing so was no longer voluntary, and all such recordings were added to a growing audio archive of cassette tapes. This archive quickly became accessed by the little known scientific field of forensic linguistics; this unexpected convergence thereby added the voice as a new medium through which to conduct legal investigations. Soon the forensic listener was required not only to identify voices, but to investigate background sounds in order to determine where, with what machine, and at what time of day a recording had been made—thus enabling a wide range of sonic frequencies to testify.

Legislation similar to PACE was adopted by many other countries in the mid-1980s, resulting in the permanent installation of audio recording machines in police interview rooms around the world. As in Britain, these policies resulted in the establishment of independent forensic audio labs, and today there are even postgraduate university programs devoted to the field.

The advent of PACE is representative of an epistemic and technological shift which gave rise to new forms of testimony based on the analysis of objects rather than witness accounts. In the case of forensic listening there is no clean shift from witness account to the expert analysis of objects because the witness account and the object under investigation become the same thing. The voice is at once the means of testimony and the object of forensic analysis.

JP French Associates, the UK's most prominent independent forensic audio laboratory, has worked on over 5,000 cases since 1984. Its founder, Peter French, told me in reference to PACE that "whereas up to that point [...] I had a trickle of work coming in, all of a sudden it was as though there had been a thunderstorm and it started raining cassette tapes[2]."[3] However, this overnight transformation of the voice as a legal object of investigation must be seen in the greater context of the role of the voice in law at large. Would this thunderstorm have happened if the voice was not already such a complex article of evidence central to the formation, mediation, and practice of the law? The PACE legislation formalizes a regime of listening that was always present within law: that the initiation of audio recording machines in police interview rooms drew upon, brought to the surface, and professionalized a

2 Peter French in interview with author, 2010.

3 Ibid.

way of listening to the voice specific to political and legal forums.

JUST VOICES

For the law to acquire its performative might, it must be delegated to the voice. For the law to come into effect it must be announced and it must be heard. As a site where speech acts, the trial allows us to understand how the voice serves to activate certain forms of governance and control, and how the ways in which we are heard.

In the United States Supreme Court there is a vocal tradition that I find quite revealing: when the clerk enters the courtroom at the beginning of the day they inaugurate the proceedings by striking the gavel onto the woodblock then waiting for silence, before announcing, "the Honourable, the Chief Justice, and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States"—and then, for four seconds, they interrupt their own speech and sing out "OYEZ OYEZ OYEZ"—before returning to the declaration that the court is now sitting and that God is now blessing the honourable court. Then with a second strike of the gavel the clerk sits down.

These announcements, in combination with other oaths and speech acts, function as a juridical amplifier, the switch that makes legally inaudible speech audible. These acts operate through the voice in order to transform words from the normal conditions of communication to the extraordinary conditions of testimony. And yet something more than the speaking of words is found in the clerk's call. In those four seconds when his annunciation shifts from a prescribed set of spoken words to the ineffability of non-verbal sounds—"OYEZ OYEZ OYEZ"—we see that it is not simply language that legislates but also the extra-linguistic elements of the voice itself.

The legal action habeas corpus offers us some insight into the use of the voice as both a verbal and a non-verbal instrument. This ancient writ, which translates to "may you have the body," stipulates that a person under arrest must be physically brought before a judge. The judge must see and hear the suspect live. The voice is a corporeal product that contains its own excess, with this corporeal excess announcing to the court the absolute presence of the witness. This bodily excess of the voice resides not in its linguistic functions, but in its non-verbal affects; such as its pitch, accent, glottal stops, intonations, inflections, and impediments. As by-products of the event of language, these affects reveal other kinds of evidence, evidence that may evade the written documentation of legal proceedings but does not escape the ears of the judge and of those listening to a trial in the space of the courtroom.

These paralinguistic elements of testimony produce a division of the voice, which in turn establishes two witnesses within one voice: one witness speaks on behalf of language and the other on behalf of the body. Often the testimony provided by each of these two witnesses is corroborated by the other, but they can also betray one another—an internal betrayal between language and body, between subject and object, fiction and fact, truth and lie. This betrayal exists in a single human utterance in which the self gives itself away. This splitting of the voice into two selves, or into two witnesses, can also be seen as an extension of the well-established legal principle of "testis unis, testis nullus", which translates to "one witness, no witness," and which means that testimony provided by any one person in court is to be disregarded unless corroborated by the testimony of at least one other. The law, it seems, requires a certain doubling of testimony, and this doubling even extends to the single witness. In the eyes of the law, the testimony of the single witness, whether the suspect or the survivor, has to be split into language and its bodily conduit for it

to be considered testimony at all.

This doubling of testimony marks the terrain which became occupied by forensic linguists and acousticians within the field of law after 1984. In the cases of forensic listening these professional listeners became the expert witnesses speaking on behalf of the paralinguistic attributes of a person's testimony. After 1984 these were the people called in to corroborate and resolve the inherent division of the legal voice, formalizing an acoustic practice inherent to jurisprudence.

AUSCULTATION

The audio cassette recorders at the centre of the PACE policy show how technology is also inextricably linked to what I claim is an historical audio event. The invention of the stethoscope by Rene Laennec in 1816 formally inaugurated the practice of auscultation (listening to the inner sounds of the body).[4] The stethoscope communicates medicine as a terrain of care and a space where the concerns of the patient can be heard. It symbolizes the human communication between doctor and patient. Yet its material legacy is quite different. What the stethoscope actually did was to allow the doctor to bypass the subjective testimony of patients and instead communicate directly with their bodies. Understanding how to interpret sounds from hearts, stomachs, and lungs meant that the doctor could communicate with the objective truth of the body, as this emerging acoustic lexicon was

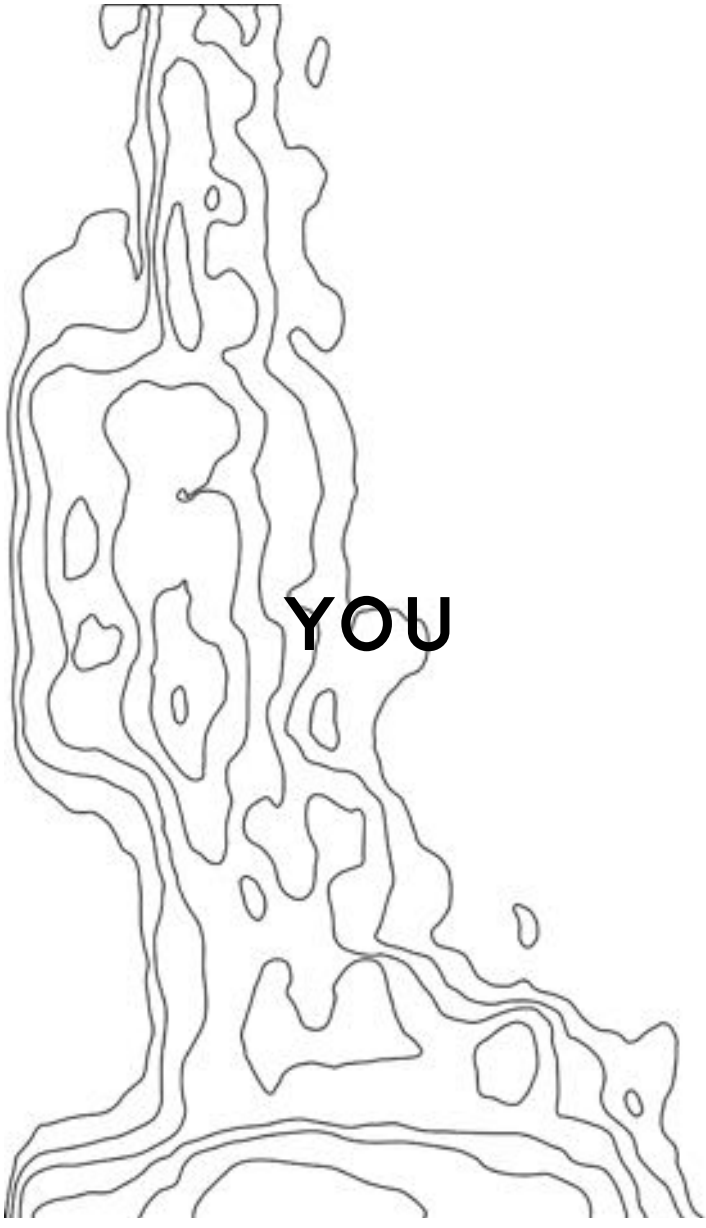
4 Laennec's work to classify the sounds of the body is a major contribution to medical diagnosis and the image of the stethoscope is now a symbol of the medical profession at large.

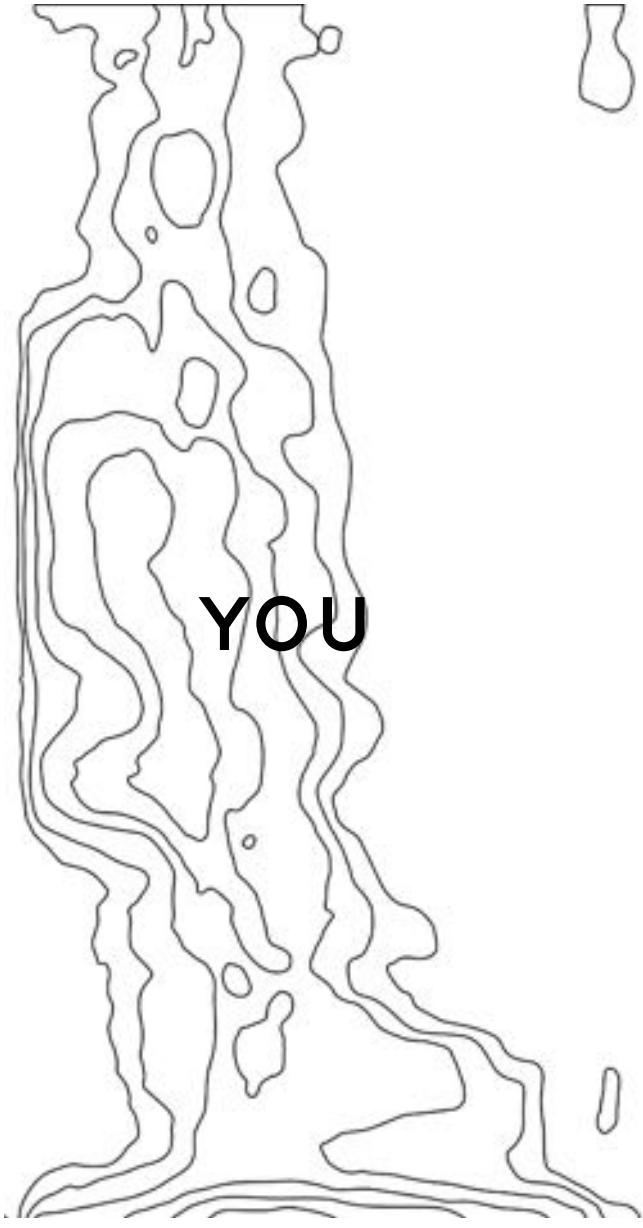
thought of as a collection of voices which, unlike the speech of the patient, didn't lie. The stethoscope shifted the medical ear from listening to the patient's self-diagnosis to listening to the sounds of the body.

Like forensic listening, the stethoscope pits the subject against itself as simultaneous testimonies can be emitted from the body and from the speaking voice. In auscultation there exists a very literal example of this doubling of the voice. While listening to the lungs with a stethoscope, the patient is asked to say the letter "e". If the lungs are clear, the doctor will detect the spoken "e" ("ee") as sounding like an "ee". Adversely, if the lungs contain fluid or a tumour, the patient's spoken "e" will sound like a phonetic "a" ("ay"). The "e" sound gets transmuted to an "a" sound through the body. This "e" to "a" transmutation shows us the ways in which the voice becomes doubled in the medical ear and how one voice can produce multiple accounts of itself. The example becomes increasingly literal if we examine the name for this auditory event, egophony.[5] Literally ego "the self" and phone speech sound. Yet this self-identifying speech-sound (ego-phony) could also be understood as ego-phony the fraudulent self. And when we combine all these definitions we arrive at a name for a form of listening that almost perfectly describes the intentions of auscul-

5 When we consider the contemporary spelling of Egophony.

▷ Image over page: *Two You:*
The image documents voiceprints (voice fingerprints) of two different voices saying the word "you." The horizontal axis is time and the vertical axis is frequency. The contour lines then illustrate the amplitude of a specific frequency at a specific time in the pronunciation of the word "you." In the use of cartographic techniques to produce voiceprints we can see clearly the interrelation of the control over both voice and territory. Image source: Ira Freeman, *Sound and Ultrasonics.*


YOU


YOU

tation, i.e. detecting a fraudulent (phony) speech-sound (phone) which betrays the self (ego).

The paradox of the stethoscope is that it simultaneously produces an objective distance from the patient and a deeper proximity to their body. As a non-electronic device it simply connects a material path through which vibrations can be channelled from the inner body of the patient directly to the eardrums of the doctor. This distanced yet deep material form of human contact is also characteristic of forensic listening, whereby one listens not to the semantics of language but to the molecular constitution of individual phonemes. This shared practice of listening which re-orientates subject into object reveals a direct lineage from auscultation to forensic phonetics. Auscultation offers the law, as it offered medical practice, the promise of amplifying the objective aspects of an otherwise deeply subjective account of an event. Yet in such cases one can adequately listen to only one aspect of the voice at a time; the qualities of the voice as object mute the subjective and semantic enunciations or vice versa. The shift from one form of listening to another can happen insidiously and invisibly and yet, its political impact and effect on the listened-to populace can be radical.

During my 2010 interview with the forensic linguist Peter French he told me: "Last week, a colleague and I spent three working days listening to one word from a police interview tape."[6] This exemplified French's radical approach to both listening and the theoretical paradigms that surround sound production. Unlike many sound theorists who focus on sound's ephemeral and immaterial qualities, French's approach is markedly material. The contem-

6 Peter French in interview with author, 2010.

porary dominant school of audio culture is heavily influenced by Don Ihde's 1976 text *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound*, which puts forward the impossibility of fundamentally grasping sound.[7] French's formulation however, renders sound dissectible, replicable, physical and corporeal in its qualities as object. What allows French's radical approach to sound is the forensic intensity at which he listens, which allows the audio object to reveal a large amount of information as to its production and its form: the space in which it was recorded, the machine that recorded it, geographical origin of the accent, as well as details of the age, health, and ethnicity of a voice.

Yet as with all cases of legal, social, and ethnic profiling, French walks a thin ethical line. Ironically, what allows French to maintain his credibility in a time in which law enforcement increasingly reaches out to forensic linguistics in odious forms of surveillance and profiling that target huge swathes of the population, is his ability to listen better. French understands the limits of what can be detected through the voice and therefore avoids exploiting the law's generally increasing demand for the empty promises of forensic science and its ignorance regarding their practical capacity.

Right now forensic listening is being applied more than ever before. Its application is primarily on two fronts: speaker profiling

7 Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976. The continuing prevalence of this school of thought is demonstrated in the 2009 book *Sounding New Media* by Frances Dyson, who states in the introduction: "As Don Ihde pointed out decades ago 'a sound is always multiple, always heterogeneous, being neither visible or tangible, sound is never quite an object, never a full guarantor of knowledge.'"

of asylum seekers and developing voice-activated algorithms for the security industry. Today it is applied on such a scale that law enforcement agencies and security services cannot often afford the expert listening of people like Dr. French. Hence, frighteningly, we are entering a time in which there is both an over-capacity demand for the governance of the voice, and an inadequacy of authentic means of producing such a governance. In other words, we have now entered a sorry phase where bad listening (and therefore bad evidence) is flooding the forum.

JURIS–DICTION

It is not simply governance of the voice that has been made more pervasive but also the employment of these modes of listening in the control of territory and the production of space. Their use as agents of spatial control is made clear if we take a closer look at legal terminology and practice, in order to see how forensic listening becomes a technically instantiated and formalized process of fundamental legal concepts. If we divide the term "jurisdiction," which connotes a territorial range over which a legal authority extends, we see that "juris" refers to a legal authority or right and "diction" refers to speech. "Diction" in linguistics is also defined as the manner of enunciating and uttering sounds and words, indicating not simply speech but the process of enunciation and amplification of words. By understanding the etymology of the term jurisdiction, we see that the law itself operates as a speech-space in which those within its range of audibility are subject to its authority. As a fundamental principle of legal governance jurisdiction reveals to us the power of sound in the construction of the space and time of the law. Much like the radio in the workplace, the audio medium affords the law a means of controlling space and interpolating its subjects while remaining predominantly out

of sight.

By 2003, the United States and the United Kingdom were entrenched on two fronts in the war on terror. These wars forced mass migrations that became the catalyst for immigration authorities around the world to turn to forensic speech analysis to determine if the accents of asylum seekers correlated with their claimed national origins to determine legitimacy of asylum entitlement. On a scale similar to the 1984 PACE act, this produced a huge proliferation of forensic listening, this time employed to help determine the validity of asylum claims made by thousands of people without identity documents, particularly in Australia, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

In most of the countries listed above the protocol is as follows: a telephone interview is organized between the asylum seeker and a private company run by forensic phoneticians based in Sweden, Sprakab. Using anonymised analysts (which many claim are actually former refugees with no linguistic training) the claimant's voice is elicited, recorded, and analysed and subsequently a report is produced and given to the immigration authorities. The confidence in, and the rapidly increasing predominance of, this kind of investigation within immigration law is troubling, given that its accuracy has been called into question by many forensic linguists, phoneticians, and other practitioners around the world[8]. One of their criticisms is that citizenship is a bureaucratic distinction and that the voice is a socially and culturally produced artifact that cannot be tidily assimilated into the nation-state.

8 Diana Eades, "Applied Linguistics and Language Analyses in Asylum Seeker Cases" *Applied Linguistics* 26/4, 2005, pp.503-526.

In undertaking extensive research into this politically potent form of listening I heard many shocking accounts of vocal discrimination and wrongful deportations—none more so than that of Mohamed, a Palestinian asylum seeker who, after having the immigration authorities lose his Palestinian identity card, was forced to undergo an accent analysis to prove his origins. Subsequently he was told he was lying about his identity because of the way he pronounced the word for tomato. Instead of "bandora" he said "banadora." This tiny "a" syllable is the sound that provides the UK border agency with the apparent certainty of Mohamed's Syrian origin: a country only 22 kilometres away from his hometown of Jenin in Palestine. Therefore, in designating this syllable as a marker of Syrian nationality, the Border Agency implies that this vowel, used in the word tomato, is coterminous with Syria's borders. The fact that this syllable designates citizenship above an identity card that contradicts it forces us to rethink how borders are being made perceptible and how configurations of vowels and consonants are made legally accountable.

Locating this Syrian vowel in the speech of a Palestinian surely proves nothing more than the displacement of the Palestinians themselves. In other words, the instability of an accent, its borrowed and hybridized phonetic form, is testament not to someone's origins but only to an unstable and migratory lifestyle, which is of course common among those fleeing from conflict and seeking asylum, often spending years getting to the target country and living in diversely populated camps along the way. Moreover, it should be remembered that in such camps one may want to conceal the origin of one's voice because of the continual fear of persecution.

When calling for ways in which to implement better practice in cases of language analysis for the determination of origin of

undocumented and illegal migrants (LADO), forensic linguist Helen Fraser says that we "need to clearly separate linguistic data from potentially biasing background on the applicant's 'story'."[9] Clearly in this expression of objectivity we see how linguists want to auscultate the accent and go beyond the potentially traumatic and pathetic "story" of a person's flight; preferring to find in their speech another type of testimony. However, for adept forensic listeners this accent object (linguistic data) should also be heard as a "story" in itself, one that could reveal an account just as traumatic. For listeners who are not content with drawing a border around a single phonetic article, the accent should be understood as a biography of migration, as an irregular and itinerant concoction of contagiously accumulated voices, rather than an immediately distinguishable sound that avows its unshakable roots neatly within the confines of a nation state. In the clear distinction between biographical data and linguistic data, we see how this policy is used as a practice which does not seek to excavate the life of an accent, only the virtual impossibility of locating its place of birth.

Like all practices of auscultation, the forensic analysts can be understood as operating in the excess of the speaker. In the case of Mohamed, his rejected status is owed to an interviewee who Mohamed claims was an Iraqi Kurd and whose Arabic dialect was so different to his that he had to shift his way of speaking simply to be understood and to understand. Listening is never simply a passive, objective and receptive process, but rather an act that plays a fundamental role in the construction and facilitation of

9 Helen Fraser, "The role of linguistics and native speakers in language analysis for the determination of speaker origin. A response to Tina Cambier-Langeveld" *The International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*, 18.1, 2011, pp.121-130

the speech of the interlocutor (whether subject or object). Therefore what becomes amplified in such investigations is not the true identity of the sonic object under investigation but the political potency of the listening itself and the agency of the listener. The results of this forensic listening tell us little about Mohamed's accent but a great deal about the contemporary political context in which this audio investigation participates.

In the form of listening that is presented in the case of Mohamed the forensic listening paradox is perfectly performed: in an attempt to hear objectively, the listener's own subjectivity emerges and is made distinctly audible. This then allows one to ask the question: as an inter-subjective process can listening ever be objective? Will listening always be tainted by the subjectivity of that which listens? In attempting to answer these questions we quickly reach the fundamental paradox and the empty promise of forensic listening. Perhaps the only way to detach oneself from any given situation is to listen, as Dr. French does, to a single syllable for three days; until the sound becomes completely abstracted from humanity and the culturally pre-programmed prejudice of the ear.

THE RIGHT TO SILENCE

In attempting to establish a correlation between voice and citizenship we encounter another vocal legal paradox. In criminal charges against a citizen of the United Kingdom, the criminal is afforded the right to protection from self-incrimination; commonly known as the right to silence.[10] This is a fundamental le-

10 Known as Miranda rights in the United States.

gal right not to speak if you feel that your speech would in some way incriminate you. With speech profiling becoming a more and more widespread form of investigation, it is not only our words that can incriminate us but the phonological content of our voices as well. Just as our speech is being mutated by the legal system we must fight to rephrase the legal diction so that the ways in which our voices are placed under custody and investigated remains transparent.

My proposal for altering the way the law speaks to us entails changes from the moment of one's arrest onwards, and therefore entails amending the right to silence. In the United Kingdom, the revised version might read:

> You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say, [including the way you say it] may be given in evidence against you.

This fundamental legal right is only afforded to the citizen; the asylum seeker, for example, has no recourse to silence, as the burden of proof lies not with the prosecutor in such cases but with the claimant themselves: in other words, if they don't speak they will be deported. Without the right to silence, the asylum seeker is forced to speak to the law; they must make themselves audible to the system and yet they remain without control over the conditions of how they are being heard. What they do retain, however, is the human right to freedom of expression and it is my argument that this policy of listening contravenes this fundamental right.

These forensic speech analyses force us to redefine our right to freedom of speech, a concept that must now be extended to en-

compass not only the words we speak, but also the sonic quality of our speech itself. The voice has long been understood as the very means by which one can secure and advocate one's political and legal interests, but these recent shifts in the way the law listens affirm that the stakes and conditions of speech have altered in a non-transparent way. This seemingly minute shift can have a dramatic impact on people's lives. The more radical the practices of listening at the core of legal investigations become, the more they herald the advent of a moment to redefine and reshape the political conventions of speech and sound in society. It seems that the battle for free speech is no longer about fighting to speak freely, but fighting the control over the very conditions under which we are being heard.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

The latest development in forensic linguistics is the product of the combined labour of mathematicians and speech-scientists to produce computer algorithms that allow users to automatically profile voices for a variety of different applications. The most prominent of these applications is "voice stress analysis," the premise of which is that, through a frequency analysis, the physiological conditions of stress are made audible by the non-verbal elements of a voice. This technology is said to be able to determine all sorts of psychological verdicts based on jittering frequencies, glottal tension and vocal intensity, all regardless of language.

At Delft University in Holland a team of linguists and computer scientists are developing a kind of "trauma-ometer" application for emergency calls whereby the algorithmic listening software would determine the priority of a call depending on the level of stress detected in the caller's voice. The idea behind this is that

the tension of the vocal chords produce "jitter," which in linguistics relates to fluctuations in pitch, and that the level of stress a person is undergoing can be observed in the intensity at which these minute fluctuations occur. Therefore the scale of the emergency is legible as affect on the body that witnessed it. Regardless of what is being said, the first response to the event will then be a response to the body of its witness. In building a hierarchy of trauma this machine also produces a chain of command that situates the paralinguistic aspects of the voice as an authority over the words that the caller wishes to relay. The stress the body undergoes here is considered the objective truth of the event; yet in my next example these same physiological attributes are taken to reveal the opposite—a lie.

A piece of software called Layered Voice Analysis 6.50 (LVA 6.50), developed by Israeli company Nemeysesco Ltd, is the major application of this new form of forensic voice profiling; it is currently employed as a lie detection method by the Los Angeles Police Department, European, Russian and Israeli governments, and insurance companies all over the world. In the UK, Harrow council and many others are using it to measure the veracity of benefit claims made by disabled citizens[11]. Lynn Robbins, director of the company Voice Analysis Technologies LLC, the main retailer of the software, told me in an interview that based on analysis of the voice as it resonates through the body, LVA 6.50 can not only determine whether a person is lying, but is able to deliver a whole series of verdicts—detecting, for example, embarrassment, over-emphasis, inaccuracy, voice manipulation, anxiety, and whether or not the interviewee is attempting to outsmart his/her

11 Harrow council claims they have saved roughly £330,000 of benefit payouts in the first seven months of using this software. ITN News, February 2010.

interlocutor; in the future, I was told, it will even be able to hear sex offending tendencies.[12]

Commander Sid Hale is piloting the same software for the Los Angeles Police Department and explains that: "Unlike the polygraph we don't need to cooperate with the suspect, we don't need to wire them up with skin responses or respirators, it does it in real time." This idea of being able to access the body of the person who is the object of one's interest without touching it is very attractive to law enforcement agencies, just as it was to doctors who first used the stethoscope in 1816. Reports from that time say that one of the benefits of the stethoscope was that it meant doctors no longer needed to press an ear to the patient's body, and hence it provided them with a hygienic distance from the potentially diseased patient.

One key, politically sensitive effect of the fact that LVA 6.50 can operate without physical interaction—the voice analysis might be conducted during a telephone conversation, or using a pre-recorded sample—is that testing can be undertaken without the consent or knowledge of the subject.

In the context of borders and prisons, this hygienic distance allows the authorities to access the emotional and bodily content of the non-citizen (e.g. the prisoner or refugee) without needing them to formally enter the society of citizenship. At the border this test can be performed before a person formally enters the country, or even before they leave their country of origin—meaning that LVA 6.50, in making use of the distance of audibility, enables the extension of the border itself. This software simul-

12 Robbins, 2012.

taneously extends the range of the law's juris-diction while also designating those who must remain beyond its range of responsibility/audibility, differentiating between those to be afforded the rights of a citizen and those to be denied those rights, and distancing the possibility of claiming refugee status.

Although in the legal context there has never been a need for an ear to be pressed against the suspect's body, the principle of habeas corpus, as discussed above, requires that the subject be brought physically before the law (e.g. in an interrogation room or courtroom) in order to have a legal hearing. Yet we could easily imagine how LVA 6.50 would eradicate the necessity for the physical presence of the suspect, as it requires only a voice to access the corpus. In this sense, LVA 6.50 short circuits the process of habeas corpus,[13] using an algorithm and a visual interface to give the law access to what a person's body is "really" saying as they speak, even if that body is thousands of miles away.

Voice stress analysis is not only designed to distance the user from the subject of analysis; it also works to remove or minimize the presence and role of the user (the interrogator, insurance broker, or border guard, etc.). In an interview situation, the visual interface flashes up its verdicts as the interviewee speaks. This machine thus promises to listen on behalf of its operator, reducing or putting into question their interpretative and intuitive capacities. In this sense this technology not only mutes the words of the speaker, but also deafens the listener. And although a direct lineage can be traced from the stethoscope to voice stress analysis

13 "Short circuit" understood not in its everyday use to mean an electrical malfunction but in its original sense whereby a current travels along an unintended path, following the route of least resistance.

technologies, the removal of the necessity for the operator to listen articulates the fundamental break with auscultation as a practice. Unlike the work of forensic listeners like Dr. French, in the microscopic analysis of the frequencies of the human voice LVA 6.50 can hear beyond the range of human audibility and therefore excludes the possibility of building new auditory skills.

Not only does LVA 6.50 listen on behalf of its user, but in registering emotional content this software feels on behalf of its user as well. Using this software the interviewer no longer needs to be sensitive to the psychological condition of his subject. The machine thus produces apathetic operators who listen neither to words nor tone of voice, and therefore minimizes the extent to which the interviewer dirties themselves with the subjectivity of the interviewee. This machine is so attractive to law enforcers because it recognizes the fundamental flaw of previous modes of forensic listening; that the subjectivity of the speaker is replaced by that of the listener/interpreter/aural investigator. In order to produce the laboratory conditions for justice and a completely objectified realm of listening, law enforcement recognizes that listening must be relegated to the machine. Yet in voice stress analysis there still remains the glitch of the subject contaminating the legal laboratory, as these algorithms first have to be programmed by people who could have bigoted ears and economic agendas. To produce a verdict the algorithm needs to learn the logics of those verdicts—e.g., in order for it to profile the voice of a sex offender it first needs someone to teach it the vocal attributes of a sex offender.

In response to the astounding claims of LVA 6.50's highly sensitive and microscopic listening, a group of speech scientists and mathematicians in the department of phonetics at the University of Stockholm closely examined the product's technical patent

and reverse engineered the software in order to test its scientific credibility. The idea that the machine would work "regardless of language" was taken seriously by the group, who tested the software using only vowel speech sounds and single phonemes. Interested to see how the machine produced its wide range of judgments the group used the pure object of speech; de-subjectified voices speaking only vowels without thought or semantics. After months of testing the machine and collecting large amounts of data they understood that the software analysis was operating on the very basic level of amplitude and found that it simply had to do with a person's capacity to hold a steady pitch and volume. They also claim that the distinctions between the various verdicts (e.g. between embarrassment and out-smart or excitement and inaccuracy) are arbitrarily placed along this scale. According to their investigation, the claim that the technology functions as a lie detector is bogus; one of the mathematicians working on the reverse engineering project told me that its logic was akin to "a horoscope or a prophecy" in its pseudo-scientific nature.[14]

LVA 6.50 amplifies the dark phrenology of the voice which is operative today. Regardless of accuracy software which use the voice as biometric tool deeply confuse its role as a conduit for language and negotiation. Simply by virtue of the fact that insurance companies, government councils and police departments use these forms of listening offered by LVA 6.50, the software is weaponized, regardless of its credibility amongst the scientific community.

In the sites where speech acts it is our speech which is under attack. The promise (empty or not) of LVA 6.50 or of LADO (the accent analysis of asylum seekers) to reorient the speaking subjects

14 Takanen in interview with author, 2012, Stockholm.

contained within any given juris-diction is already underway. We arrive at an uncertain future of the voice and a moment to question its very legitimacy as both an object of legal investigation and the means through which the law becomes enacted. Assuming an increasing proliferation of these emergent and mutated strands of forensic listening forces us to ask more general questions about the role of the voice as a central legal infrastructure; will it still be a fair and just hearing when nobody is listening?

SIMON YUILL

475.* Now the problem of what the "meaning" of an intellectual concept is can only be solved by the study of the interpretants, or proper significate effects, of signs. These we find to be of three general classes with some important subdivisions. The first proper significate effect of a sign is a feeling produced by it. There is almost always a feeling which we come to interpret as evidence that we comprehend the proper effect of the sign, although the foundation of truth in this is frequently very slight. This "emotional interpretant," as I call it, may amount to much more than that feeling of recognition; and in some cases, it is the only proper significate effect that the sign produces. Thus, the performance of a piece of concerted music is a sign. It conveys, and is intended to convey, the composer's musical ideas; but these usually consist merely in a series of feelings. If a sign produces any further proper significate effect, it will do so through the mediation of the emotional interpretant, and such further effect will always involve an effort. I call it the energetic interpretant. The effort may be a muscular one, as it is in the case of the command to ground arms; but it is much more usually an exertion upon the Inner World, a mental effort. It never can be the meaning of an intellectual concept, since it is a single act, [while] such a concept is of a general nature. But what further kind of effect can there be?

476. In advance of ascertaining the nature of this effect, it will be convenient to adopt a designation for it, and I will call it the *logical interpretant*, without as yet determining whether this term shall extend to anything beside the meaning of a general concept, though certainly closely related to that, or not. Shall we say that this effect may be a thought, that is to say, a mental sign? No doubt, it may be so; only, if this sign be of an intellectual kind — as it would have to be — it must itself have a logical interpretant; so that it cannot be the *ultimate* logical interpretant of the concept. It can be proved that the only mental effect that can be so produced and that is not a sign but is of a general application is a *habit-change;* meaning by a habit-change a modification of a person's tendencies toward action, resulting from previous experiences or from previous exertions of his will or acts, or from a complexus of both kinds of cause.

Initially, methods should involve as much of the cortex as possible to assist the firing of cell assemblies over a wide area.

From 1 it follows that early training should be based on objects rather than symbols and that a multi-sensory approach should be used.

Attention should be given to the type, form and intensity of stimuli used. With young children large, well-designed, distinct, visual stimuli and clear, well-articulated sounds are necessary. Much experiment and research are still needed in this connection.

In order to establish interfacilitation between cell assemblies, systematic practice and drill are essential.

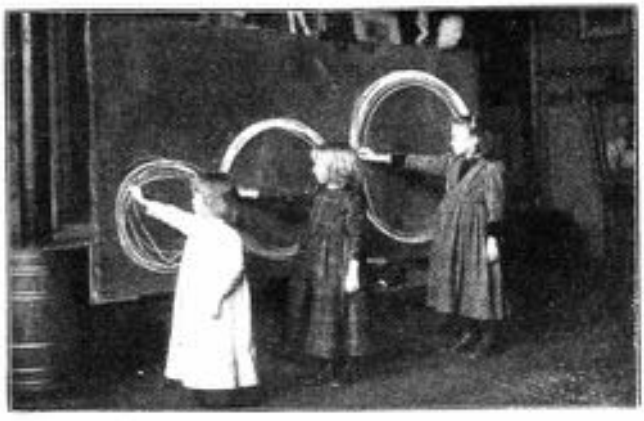
Developmental readiness is vital. Thus simpler cell structures must be built before more complex ones can arise.

Language will be important in exciting and inhibiting cell activity in the absence of direct receptor stimulation.

Programming of learning situations will be essential. Learning must be guided, controlled and made explicit in the early stages. This implies that training may be needed to clarify sensory experiences.

Neural pathways which are more easily established should be used to develop those which are difficult. Thus, remedial methods should make use of strong neural links to improve weak ones, and eventually result in compensation through new linkages in intact cells.

Movement, which involves the motor areas of the cortex, plays an important part in cell-assembly connections. Thus, in some instances, children may learn quicker by using stimuli which move, or appear to move, rather than static ones.



On one occasion in a school just opened in Milan, 1908, the children re-acted to the piano by jumping about in confusion, waving their arms, moving their shoulders and legs. This was really an attempt to represent by a sort of chaos the complexity of the rhythmic movements they were hearing. They were actually making, without any assistance from others, a spontaneous attempt at musical interpretation. They soon grew tired of this, saying that "the thing was ugly." They had, however, divined the possibilities of an orderly motory action; and when they had become quiet again, they began to listen to the music with great interest waiting for the revelation of its deep secret. Then suddenly they began to walk again, this time regularly and according to the real measure.

One of the children, whose graph was somewhat as follows:

(pauses, that is, on the line of quiescence, with frequent excursions into the negative field), took no part in these rhythmic exercises. On the contrary, he was always breaking them up by pushing the other children out of line or making a noise. Finally, however, he did learn not to disturb others; in other words, to stay *quiet*, something which he had never known how to do before. It is a great conquest for a disorderly child to gain the ability to become quite motionless, in a gently placid state of mind. From this point on Riziero (that was the child's name) entered on a higher plane of existence — one of order, labor and politeness.

IAIN BOAL

A LETTER TO THE EDITORS

This is, first of all, to wish you and *Cesura//Acceso* all the best. It is a courageous gesture to launch a new magazine in the deep twilight of a publishing world in full-blown crisis. The culture of print that flourished for more than four centuries around the office of *Cesura//Acceso* at 88 Fleet Street, in the shadow of St Bride's—aka the "journalists' church"—has all but vanished.

To be sure, there are memoirs and novels about the old Fleet Street of the 20th century. Evelyn Waugh's Scoop and Michael Frayn's *The Tin Men* and *Towards the End of the Morning* acquired cult status among the journos who laboured in the byways, courts and alleys between Aldwych and Ludgate Circus. Many reporters took *Scoop* to be a work of pitiless realism rather than wild comic invention. As a young medical student at St Thomas', I would purloin papers from the van drivers streaming away from the presses to catch the overnight trains with the first editions, and then would drink with the compositors and porters in favoured pubs around Smithfield with an off-hours license. In 2005, an English journalist in exile waxed nostalgic for the smell of printer's ink and the thunder of hot-metal Linotype machines, for "the lights blazing in the black-glass palace of the old Daily Express…the fog around Blackfriars … the suicidal imbibing in the King and Keys, or the Punch, or El Vino … the demented whims of the latest proprietor …"

Michael Moorcock wrote a poignant elegy for the *quartier* through the eyes of an eager young gopher in 50s London. Still, we are almost as much in the dark about the texture of an editor's shift at the Birmingham Post in 1900—in its London home at 88 Fleet St—as we are about the daily round of Wynkyn de Worde, Caxton's apprentice who in 1500 set up the first printing press in Fleet Street.

In St Bride's yard, where Kieran Tobin has set up his coffee stall with the permission of the archdeacon and fuels the old and new denizens of the neighbourhood—the organist and the verger, the trader and the quant, the poet and the archivist—lingers the shade of John Milton, son of a musician and scrivener. There, in a long-demolished house, the "acrimonious and surly" political pamphleteer (thus the Tory lexicographer Samuel Johnson) argued against state censorship. Milton ranked "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties". In 1667, in aftermath of the plague and the fire that razed London, and just as Christopher Wren began scheming a resurgent city and a new St Bride's, Milton published his coded epic in defence of tyrannicide and republicanism, living with the bitter knowledge that the revolution, the "good old cause", has been defeated.

You are working in the rubble of the old Fleet Street which was destroyed by Rupert Murdoch's union-busting manoeuvres during the '80s. Given the longer, slow quietus of the bohemian dissenting enclave of bookbinders, illuminators, cartoonists, pamphleteers, scriveners, tanners, stationers, papermakers, marblers, journalists and essayists, reviewers and editors who lived and worked in the garrets and alleys around Grub Street and the Fleet Ditch, what chance has a small, independent, printed periodical in an era of the emoticon and the viral meme?

I was intrigued to find out that you had chosen for the title of the magazine two terms taken from the specialized jargon of rhetoric and music, conjoined/separated by a typographical sign from the technical jargon of poetics, scansion and musical notation. *Cesura//Acceso*. By the sound of it, you have an interest in rupture. Rupture with élan. Fiery breaks. Or, at the least, an impassioned pause.

An aside on glyphs. Just as the octothorpe symbol (#), a shorthand scribal relic of the phrase *libre pondo* has been lately reinvigorated thanks to the designers at Twitter and the explosion of social messaging, so the c(a)esura, etymologically derived from Latin *caedere* ['cut'] and cognate with "caesarian" and "czar" (via "Caesar", the nickname of the dictator Gaius Julius and a nod to his mode of arrival in the world), has migrated from the arcane orbit of literary critics, poets and composers onto computer screens everywhere, in the form of the "pause" or "stop" sign (||). In a recent conversation with a Croatian programmer, we surmised that the cesura symbol probably first appeared in this context on the "pause" button of an early tape recorder, perhaps the choice of some sound engineer/musical technician familiar with its conventional meaning. Oddly, the term *acceso*, and its English cognate "access" [from Latin "*ad* + *cedere*", "go to"] has, in its dominant sense of "approach", also migrated into the central workings of the cybersphere, far beyond the boundary of musical stylistics, signifying "the right and opportunity to 'log on' to a computer system and to read and edit files that are held within in, often requiring the entry of a password" (*Chambers Concise Dictionary*, 2012). By this route, then, "access" comes to mean "no access"; it's a keyword in the new enclosures.

The other sense of *acceso* is the one I take to be salient in your title, coming from the world of music, with its siblings *presto, fortissimo, staccato, spiccato*, etc. Meaning: performed with passion and heat, and therefore resonating with the subordinate and archaic, even obsolete meaning of "access", recorded in *Harrap's Shorter French-English Dictionary*, thus: "access of rage etc.; often ironic (of enthusiasm, generosity)."

Back in the 1930s the American critic Kenneth Burke meditated—during the great emergency years for capitalism and the post-Ver-

sailles nation-state system—on the politics of vocabulary and forms of address. Why would a radical agitator, Burke wondered (speaking himself as a heterodox revolutionary), insist on "workers" as the compulsory, undeviating honorific used at mass public meetings by party orators, if one subscribed to Marx's theory of alienation and the degradation of life generally under the rule of capital? It's not that Burke had a answer to the problems of language in a society riven by divisions of gender, generation, class, race and so forth. He fully understood the possible objections to addressing a crowd of longshoremen as "citizens", for example. But he confessed later that simply raising this question at a conference of communists in Manhattan provoked such an abusive reaction that he dreamed of tasting "excrement on my tongue."

Burke specifically also pondered the importance of literary entitlement. A title, he said, may be viewed as a condensation, a summa, of the contents of a work or piece of writing. Retrospectively, so to speak. Or else it can be thought of as anticipatory, a form of convocation, of conjuring an audience or readership, and operating as a devise for focusing attention and attraction (or alternatively, repulsion). It sets the tone, providing a kind of fundamental frequency, which anyway is all one can do with a journal or magazine, which by definition cannot be summed up in advance.

In the mid 1980s, that bright springtime of neoliberalism and Reagan's Cold War, a Bay Area group of antinomians—writers, artists, scientists, poets, artisans, teachers—planned the launch of a journal of radical criticism. We had certain models in mind—I remember the inspiration we drew from the Rumanian surrealist Andrei Codrescu's *Exquisite Corpse* published out of Baton Rouge in an eccentrically stretched format. And then in our hometown of San Francisco there was the *City Lights Journal* edited by Nancy Peters. I also recall the moment, in the long defunct

second-hand Book Consortium just off Shattuck Avenue in North Berkeley, when I stumbled across a couple of old issues of Sheldon Wolin's *democracy* [lower case d] journal containing a fine piece by Michael Rogin, and another marvellous essay by Hanna Pitkin on representation and direct democracy, which for many years circulated among the non-academic staff on the Berkeley campus. And alongside the essays of Mike and Hanna appeared the late David Noble's enabling reinterpretation of the Luddites. So it was a disappointment, though hardly unexpected by those who have inhabited the world of small magazines—unsubsidized by advertising or powerful institutions—to discover that *democracy* had also to be filed under that poignant category, "short-lived journals". And so by this and other traces, I became aware gradually, as one must if a new-comer, of the history of the local membership, long scattered, of an "invisible college". And that is one of the gifts of small magazines.

Our San Francisco group especially admired an obscure non-sectarian journal entitled *Retort*, appearing between 1942 and 1951, edited and published from a cabin in Bearsville, a hamlet near Woodstock, New York, and we made plans to revive it in the late '80s. *Retort*'s printing press had belonged to the eloquent Wobbly agitator Carlo Tresca before he was assassinated on the streets of Manhattan, perhaps by agents of Mussolini. The journal was anti-statist, anti-militarist and published essays on art, politics and culture. Poetry too—the first issue contained the Kenneth Rexroth poem that begins "Now in Waldheim where the rain / Has fallen careless and unthinking / For all an evil century's youth, / Where now the banks of dark roses lie ..." Retort Press also published *Prison Etiquette: The Convict's Compendium of Useful Information*, compiled by war resisters, specifically those imprisoned for refusing to collaborate either with the state or with the Anabaptist "peace churches" who had agreed with the US government to

self-manage the rural work camps for conscientious objectors.

We also liked the name because we wanted to activate "retort" in the old sense of the alchemist's vessel that ferments, distills, transforms. It's fragile, it needs fire, there may be problems with the underlying theory, but there's occasional magic. We very much liked the resonances and the polysemy of the title.

The name *Retort* also, of course, acknowledges that we are engaged in a wider conversation whose terms and assumptions we reject, and that we stand on ground, rhetorical and otherwise, not of our own choosing. We are forced to spend much of our time—far too much—in rebuttals, demurrers, rejoinders. In a word, retorting. Anyway, we consulted the gentle urbanist and essayist Colin Ward, whose own editorial work, for *War Commentary* and *Anarchy* magazine, we greatly admired. We asked for his blessing; instead he argued quietly against a regular journal on account of the enormous amount of labour involved, advice based on long experience. He then suggested, given what he knew of our busy lives, that we publish only as the occasion demanded. And so we have: broadsides, pamphlets and books over about three decades. *Retort* is now an imprint of PM Press, with a pamphlet series and occasional books.

Of course, language does not just label things in the world; it helps constitute it. The naming of parts, the framing of questions, the choice of terms, the setting of agendas—these are at once the prerogative and the springs of power. Too often enemies of the present, standing on terrain not of our own choosing, respond in an idiom satisfactory to the sovereign. There are reasons for this. For one thing, we are all tossed into this world without asking; we begin by introjecting it uncritically. Toothlessly. And that includes the acquisition of the language of the tribe, and the terms

of engagement with others and with objects—siblings and family, peer-groups and elders, ancestors and the collective inheritance. Not to mention the commonsense of the epoch, the tacit and the unspoken, the "absolute presuppositions", in Collingwood's phrase.

The unique status of English in the early 21st century derives most recently from Ukania's imperial past, but above all our language has to be understood—in its roots, so to speak—as an Anglo-Norman creole. Gaining access to the full resources of English vocabulary historically involved a training in "classics" (no accident that "classics" is cognate with "class") and typically correlates with a formal education. The result is what linguists would call a form of diglossia. We have inherited a language with two distinct layers, an Anglo-Saxon substrate and a Norman/Central-French overlay, reflecting the conquest by invaders from the European mainland in the 11th century, feudal settlers from Normandy speaking a derivative of Latin.

In relation to your choice of *Cesura//Acceso* for a title, which I like very much, I am thinking of the Welsh critic Raymond Williams who grappled head-on with the problem of English as effectively a class-based diglossia. (He was looking in at English from the outside; he approached the language as a native Welsh speaker.) His *Keywords*, dubbed "a vocabulary of culture and society", was a study in historical semantics. Williams had no nostalgia for some pristine or Adamic form of speech; he despised pedantic schoolmasters and the various self-anointed guardians of diction and style, those linguistic mavens who patrol the perimeters of language, on the *qui vive* for deviations from the "true meaning". But he did see the problems produced by a language with class inscribed so deeply in the structure, and for that reason he suggested a regular column in the *Tribune* newspaper on "difficult"

words, especially those with polysyllabic Greek and Latin roots. The editors turned the proposal down, and so Williams never had the chance to take on, in the pages of *Tribune*, what he thought was the disastrous policy of George Orwell, who suggested that proletarians stick to simple Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, more honest and less liable to fall into Stalinist obscurantism and gobbledegook. Williams considered this strategy a bogus and condescending populism that was all too easy a recommendation coming from the dissident Etonian and classical scholar Eric Blair.

The enormous lexical resources of the language, and their invidious differentiae, therefore present writers—and speakers—of English with a problem that ought to be more consciously acknowledged, making matters more difficult than they are, say, in France, especially given the different outcomes of their revolutions. As to what might be entailed in the forging of a lexicon adequate to the matters now at hand, that is a complex question. The critic was right who observed that, although political writing is always instrumental, its time of instrumentality—its time as a weapon—sometimes lies a little in the future. That was perhaps true in some ways for Holley Cantine's original *Retort*; in other ways, the relations of the state to capital and war-making have been profoundly transformed, and with it the task of a new journal in a time of war.

I don't think it is contradictory to hope that one of the tasks of *Cesura*, which belongs to an older tradition of literary productions and periodic journalism is to understand and to *speak back* to the new conditions of spectacle. The state has been drawn into the web of modernity's new technics of image and sound production, and found itself vulnerable in novel ways. The events of September 11 were a most dramatic example of the state's vulnerability.

To be sure, the codex, the daily broadsheet and the tabloid, in certain respects, have been definitively surpassed, and the ubiquity of the phone-camera is causing headaches for states everywhere. Wikileaks was an interesting development that emerged out of the same contradictions identified in Retort's *Afflicted Powers* and immanent in the new apparatus of reproduction. It is a threat to the state and is recognized as such, partly because the baroque and ramified system of official secrecy cannot practically be sealed off; all electronically stored information is potentially just one click away from global dissemination. Talk of Wikileaks heralding a new model of journalism and publishing is muted for the moment but the question we posed in *Afflicted Powers* nevertheless remains: whether the new conditions of spectacle could lead to real destabilization. Even to frame such a question points to a new historical situation, and one which paradoxically demands slow reading, slow looking.

Edward Thompson argued that the antinomian publishing tradition that flourished for so long around St Bride's was in part a radical defence against the hegemonic "reason" of a ruling class, especially during the long generations when the revolutionary fires burned low. He took Ludovic Muggleton and John Milton in the 1660s and Blake after the counter-revolution of the 1790s as embodiments of a strategy of coping with their respective moments of defeat. There are moments for pause and rest, without loss of a sense of the rhythms and movement of history; then occasionally moments of rupture, when the fires burn bright, the slack line quickens, and focus grows intense. How to feel the *cesura* and to act *acceso*, that is the question. It may be no surprise that an archivist/ historian will recommend, with the Wobbly poet, Tom McGrath:

The Use of Books

What's there to praise
In that vast library of long-gone days
Bound in the failed and fading leather
Of ancient weather?

To free what's trapped or bound
Is my whole law and ground:
Since it's myself I find
Out on the rough roads // travelling blind

Yet, // for another's use
I bind what I let loose
So others may make free
Of those lost finds no longer use to me.

*

Valete, P and G. Ave, *Cesura//Acceso*.

Iain

Hammersmith

8 ix 2014


Relay towards Cesura // Access Screen
Indo-Hittite
diachrony
Neo-grammarians
Saussure
dichotomy of
[I·E·schwa]
Geneva
Prague
Moscow
modernism
disintegration
syndrome
(fetish)
structuralists
LANGUE (system)
abstraction
from
'parole'
"historical
semantics
&
politics of lige
M&E.
[Bernstein]
"upright, confronting, biped"
(ideology)
Cicero?
Agrippa?
knife-edge
Steel company
Dr John
Cicero
Otwell vs Raymond Williams
"#class question"
KEYWORDS
Norman-French
Anglo-Saxon
Caedĕre (Latin)
cut
gash (A-S)
cĕsure (F-)
contrast: cedere
cognate
PRINT-
CAPITALISM
(Plato?)
'the
Flesh'
Cæsura
(Resonance-word)
1666 (as verb)
polysemy
accès
clang
excess
ACCESS
accessūs
[ad+cedo]
access
'right to know'
"rage" "generosity"
REPORT
(often ironic)
Anderson
TYPOGRAPHY
NAVIGATION
engineer?
musician?
(musical
notation)
like!
bar
list of
(chambers
concise)
pause: ideogram
overtype recenter - 1960s?
"play" "go"
of pitch
& octave
formal break (rhetoric / TTOUYOTIS)
prosody
Τίτυρε / tū · pătŭ / lāe ‖ rĕcŭ / bārū ‖ sub...
Homer
Milton
Alice Oswald?
mnemonics/bard
stress-timed phonology
pulse / INTENSITY (politics of attention)
IB
3·IX·14

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Sean Bonney's books include *Happiness*, *The Commons* and *Document: Poems, Diagrams, Manifestos*. His work has been translated into several languages, and he has performed it at occupations, on demonstrations, in the back-rooms of pubs, in seminar rooms, on picket lines and at international poetry festivals. He lives in Walthamstow, East London.

ANNE BOYER

Anne Boyer is a poet who lives in Kansas.
Anne Boyers's "My Life" *has a very particular structure, based on Lyn Hejinian's* "my life (s)," *which means it must have 3 paragraphs of 40, 43, and 71 sentences (Anne Boyer's age, Mary J. Blige's, and Lyn Hejinian's). The ideal publication shape would be for the first seven lines of each of the three paragraphs indented.*

SEYMOUR WRIGHT

http://www.seymourwright.com

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Stevphen Shukaitis is a lecturer at the University of Essex, Centre for Work and Organization, and a member of the Autonomedia editorial collective. Since 2009 he has coordinated and edited Minor Compositions. minorcompositions.info.

HOWARD SLATER

Howard Slater is a volunteer play therapist and writer who lives in East London.

DHANVEER SINGH BRAR

Dhanveer is a member of Black Studies Group (London).

COMMUNE EDITIONS

Commune Editions is a collective project which writes, edits, debates, admires, and publishes poetry and other writings antagonistic to capital and the state. communeeditions.com @CommuneEditions

ALBERTO SAVINIO

Guillaume Apollinaire said of Savinio's piano playing: *I was surprised and beguiled; Savinio mistreated his instrument so much that after each piece the keyboard had to be cleared of chips and splinters. I foresee that within two years he will have gutted every piano in Paris. Savinio will then go on to destroy every piano in the universe, which may be a true liberation*.

KEV NICKELLS

Kev Nickells is a musician/writer/promoter based in Brighton. Increasingly, those ostentations traverse necklace—millstone in lieu (or shadow) of a culture of remuneration and his day-job in something opaque and IT-ish is no solace whatsoever. bangthebore.org fortprocess.co.uk soundcloud.com/hakarl

ANTHONY ILES & EVE LEAR

Anthony Iles is writer of fiction, theory and criticism. He is presently a contributing editor to Mute (metamute.org) and is a PhD candidate at Middlesex University, London. He is currently working on *Anguish Language*: a project about language, writing and social crisis, anguishlanguage.tumblr.com
Eve Lear is Darsavini. Me, *pro*. The objectionable case of I. The personal pronoun in English has three cases, the dominative, the objectionable and the oppressive. Each is all three. *A. Bierce.*

JOHANNA ISAACSON

Johanna Isaacson teaches literature and composition at UCSC and Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, California. Her research interests and writing projects include DIY culture, Marxism, feminism, and contemporary fiction and film.

MATTEO PASQUINELLI

Matteo Pasquinelli is a philosopher based in London. He wrote the book *Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons* (2008), curated the anthology *Gli algoritmi del capitale* (2014) and lectures frequently at the intersection of political philosophy, media theory and life sciences.

MARTIN GLABERMAN

Martin Glaberman (December 13, 1918 – December 17, 2001) was an influential American Marxist writer on labor, historian, academic, and autoworker.
*First Published in *Factory Songs Of Mr Toad*, Detroit: Berwick Press.

EMMA ROBERTSON, MICHAEL PICKERING & MAREK KORCZYNSKI

Dr Emma Robertson is Lecturer in History at La Trobe University, Australia. Professor Michael Pickering teaches in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University. Marek Korczynski is Professor of Sociology of Work at the University of Nottingham. Together they co-authored *Rhythms of Labour: The History of Music at Work in Britain*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN

Lawrence Abu Hamdan's work frequently deals with the relationship between listening and borders, human rights, testimony, truth and law, through the production of audio-visual installations, graphic design, sculpture, photography, workshops and performance.

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Quotes on page 1:
[1] Robin Kinross, *Unjustified texts*
[2] Duke Elington, in Howard Slater , "Listener as operator"
[3] Lisa Robertson, *Debbie: An Epic*