ULWC READER

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LIETUVOS KULTŪROS TARYBA

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Foreword

We have stayed up all night again plotting in the shadows of an electric sun. Sheltered in the margins of a darkness in retreat, we whisper into the evening sky: ‘the night should be a haven for lovers, revolutionaries, idlers, fugitives and revelers.’

A great mixing ground – the swamp as dancefloor – a social apparatus that disorients, erodes, and corrupts the daylights transparencies, its accounts, its totalising reification of social roles.

The dancing and feasting has already begun
Be only your face,
do not remain the subjects of your properties or faculties,
do not stay beneath them;
rather, go with them, through them and beyond them.

Finding ourselves in an era of neo-feudal disaster capitalism, an era scarred by unprecedented class divisions, state oppressions, and basic resource depletions; calls for the articulation of compelling, mass, exodus strategies.

Meanwhile, the pandemic has brought about a radical decomposition of traditional organising approaches; resulting in both new compositions and a speculative, horizonal, politics that has fed into many different conversations on what is to come.

The Ultimate Leisure Workers’ Club, founded in 2020, is very much a child of these circumstances. The unusual format of our nightclub is in part an outcome of this situation and on the other hand, an active effort on our part to radically problematise what, in fact, constitutes a club – its politics, economies, cultures.

Skirting the lines between a nightclub and social club; entertainment and politics; the party and the Party; restoration and insurgent regeneration, the Club is a spot for groups and individuals involved in the struggle to open new terrains for social liberation and communal joy in the night and beyond it.

Drawing our initial inspiration from the 19th century Parisian workers’ clubs that laid the social foundations for the rise of the Paris Commune, the ULWC is a school of nightly conspiracy against the world of work, a militant research collective, a launching pad for driftage and a shelter for uncouth revellers of the night. And like the workers clubs of Paris, so many years ago, which spread as a result of politically motivated closures of the theatres, the ULWC’s network very much approaches the current moment as an opening for the appearance of an insurgent leisure culture that could very well play a significant role in delivering our exit from the dungeons of the capitalist dystopia within which we currently reside.

The ULWC’s core questions are then: how do we radically channel these energies, assemblies, encounters and drifts of the night into revolutionary compositions? What can the history of the night, as an organising terrain, offer us in terms of contemporary imaginaries? In turn, the question must be asked: how do we direct ‘political’ milieus, which have a tendency towards rationalism, objectivity and even a certain puritanical pessimism in relation to the passions, towards an anti-work politics that is very much based upon them?

The **ULWC Reader**, prompted by our recent Assembly (28 Nov–13 Dec, 2020), comes together as a broad effort to reflect on these questions and as a celebration of the Club’s first year of activity. In the Reader you will find contributions by Club members alongside texts from other sources that we found particularly resonant with the Club’s politics.

The Reader begins with a sort of editorial by the Leisure Communism Group (a militant research branch of the ULWC), offering an abridged history of struggles against the capitalist orderings of time as well as a first attempt at formulating a theory of Leisure Communism. In **Conversations** you will find an assortment of dialogues extending from discussions that took place at the recent Club Assembly. In **Clubstories**, a few inspiring accounts of historical nightclubs that supported radical political formations. In **Drifts**, partisan subversions of the daylight’s encroachment on the opacities, mysteries, and uncouth refusals of the night. Finally, **Conspiracy**, where you will encounter some strategic analysis and critical intervention.

Introduction to Leisure Communism

by Leisure Communism Group

Throughout the first year of the ULWC a branch of the Club, the Leisure Communism Group, has dedicated itself to the theoretical exploration of the potentials of the leisure sphere for the building of worlds free from work. Such explorations have taken form in a series of readings, discussions and a publication *Viskas bendra* (All is Common). In the following Introduction to Leisure Communism, you will find an early effort by the LCG to sketch out some of the core ideas that were cultivated over the year.

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> To arrive at the realisation of its strength the proletariat must trample under foot the prejudices of Christian ethics, economic ethics and free-thought ethics [...] It must accustom itself to working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting.
> *- Paul Lafargue, Right to be Lazy, 1888*

In Lithuania we rightfully hold negative associations about the idea of communism. Yet, as Guy Debord said, even words may be taken prisoner and put to use against themselves. Communism is very much one of those words – appearing in the late 1800s to account for new social formations that rejected the state, the emerging capitalist regime of work, as well as all forms of gender, race, and nationalist oppression. Embracing this little known and actively marginalised history of Communism, the ULWC seeks to support ant-authoritarian communist social movements by tapping into the anti-work imaginaries we find prospering in the capitalist leisure sphere. And while it may be easy to discard the popular desires energised by such environments as mere escapist retreats from a real left unscathed, we propose a political embrace of these zones by considering, what we believe to be, their ultimate fantasy: a world without work, founded on principles of free association and communal luxury – or what we have begun to call Leisure Communism. Therewith, taking our lessons, we behind us a communism oriented towards the affirmation of work and production (the needs of value-as-subject) instead embracing a communism that takes communal desire and the body seriously (the needs of the proletarians).

In the following introduction you will find an abridged history of the struggle against the working day and the working night. Within this history, you will find numerous instances of, as well as formulations and strategies for Leisure Communism. The text can be approached as an invitation to join us in conversation, insurgent revelry and conspiracy against class society.

I

For Kristin Ross, the essential question posed by the working class in our historical struggle against capitalism is: ‘When does my day begin and when does it end?’[1] Whilst, the struggle over the length of the working day had long been seen as something firmly behind us – indeed one of the key victories of powerful workers movements in the 19th century – paradoxically over the course of the 21st century we have seen the working day extend in every direction: extensively as capital has scoured the globe, integrating ever more resources and bodies into its production lines and intensively, as capital has saturated not only our waking hours, but also our dreaming, our sex, our forays into nature, our holidays, our friendships, our dancing and our rest with invasive extractive technologies, far-reaching consumerism

[1] Kristin Ross, Communal Luxury: the Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune, New York: Verso, 20—. 80

and unbridled rent-seeking. The point being that if capital's expansion is not only extensive but intensive, not only quantitative but qualitative, class struggle is not only about the 8 hour day (or more like 12 for most at this point) but the undivided day. In this sense, we are interested in freedom as a more integral question of: autonomy over the duration of days and the associations and activities that make and break them. Leisure Communism therefore proposes a radical vision of freedom wherein the very division of the day into work, reproduction, leisure is abolished and replaced by autonomous communal practice and expression.

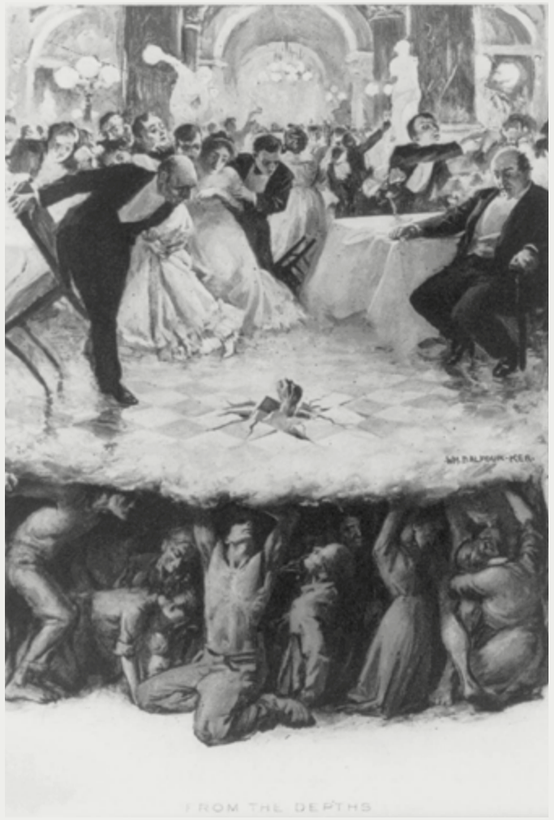
II

Let us bear no illusions, left to their own devices, capitalists would apply their insatiable desire for profit, as driven by the logic of capital accumulation, to extend the working day over the entirety of our existence. And in fact, throughout most of the history of capitalism, their appetites were left unchecked. As Marx deftly observed, the very notion of day and night would be radically mutated by their appetites:

> Every boundary set by morality and nature, age and sex, day and night, was broken down. Even the ideas of day and night, which in the old statues were of peasant simplicity, became so confused that an English judge, as late as 1860, needed the penetration of an interpreter of the Talmud to explain 'judicially' what was day and what was night. Capital was celebrating its orgies.[2]

Already by the 1780s the lights of Manchester mills and Haitian sugar cane factories burned brightly night and day. With the introduction of modern city lighting, days became nights and nights became days – the resistance of darkness to the orders of production, to the world of the clock and the whip was to be overcome.

Yet, with the emergence of the modern metropole came not only these new managerial sciences/technologies of population control, but also rebellious compositions of nightly festivity – hitherto unknown, unpredictable and 'unnatural' subjectivities, 'creatures of the night' were spawned, along with new spaces of association, communication and community.



Mark Fisher developed the concept of 'commercial purification' to describe the battle of the bourgeois against these depraved, decadent, excessive, cultures of leisurely congregation[3]. Fisher saw these early festive rebellions against capitalism's incessant organising of time, as residues of the pre-capitalist festival. Prior to the 19th century, ritual festivity and commerce were inextricably linked through the seasonal fair. The capitalist reorganisation of agriculture, the invention of the police and the establishment of factories worked to break the ties between land, festivity, market, work, and rest – inserting division in their place. As James C. Scott extrapolates, the particular threat of carnival was because it was: '[V]irtually the only time during the year when the lower classes were permitted to assemble in unprecedented numbers behind masks and make threatening gestures toward those who ruled in daily life.' In the 20th century, 'One of the first pieces of legislation passed during the Spanish Civil War by General Francisco Franco's government was an act outlawing carnival. For the remainder of the war, anyone caught in non-Republican-held areas wearing a mask was liable to harsh penalties, and carnival was much abated, but not eliminated."[4]

The resistance of darkness to the orders of production, to the world of the clock and the whip was to be overcome

Night, in turn, would eventually become that space through which those activities banished from the day found sanctuary. And considering that, until towards the end of the 19th century, 'free time', leisure industries – or broadly put: the institutional integration of non-work into the cycles of production – was relatively nonexistent, these nightly gatherings came to directly clash with the capitalist ordering of days.

The figure of the idler manifests in this 19th century landscape as the ultimate nemesis for the capitalist. The idler breaches the exclusive, privileged economies of leisure sanctioned by the bourgeois.[5] In ethically contesting and socially refusing the sale of their labor as the basis of their reproduction, they robbed the capitalists and became the living slogans for a popular culture of robbery. The self-declared holiday 'Saint Mondays,' said to have been practiced until the late 19th century in the UK, but also in Mexico, France, Prussia, Sweden, and Belgium, offers a striking instance of an organised rebellion of idlers against capital's organisation of time.[6]

A political form of depravity, of organised proletarian excitation, was directed against the sterility and thrift of the boss, their clocks and their morality

It was no coincidence that an oppositional and organised English working class identity emerged in the public house (or pub). Nor should it come as a surprise that the political principles and organisational forms of the Paris Commune were cultivated in the Parisian workers clubs – what some critics called the 'college de France of Insurrection'.[7] In Chicago's roaring 20s sex workers, anarchists and hobos inflated their homespun 'free thought' through a circuit of soap box debating circles, nightclubs and bars, an 'open forum' and 'hobo college' took shape.[8] Neither should we disregard the fact that first manifestations of organised queer revolt in the US popped off in seedy night taverns as well. In these insti-

[2] Karl Marx, *Capital Vol.I*, New York: Vintage, 1977. 390

[3] Mark Fisher, 'Baroque Sunbursts', in *Rave: Rave and its Influences on Art and Culture* (ed. Nav Haq), UK: Black Dog Publishing, 2016

[4] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990. 179

[5] For a vivid account of the social threat of the idler, see Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the College De France 1972–1973*, Palgrave, 2015. 189

[6] E. P. Thompson 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present, No. 38*. (Dec., 1967), 56-97

[7] *Communal Luxury* 14

[8] Rosemont, *The Rise and Fall of the Dil Pickle Club*, 2004. 25–26

tutions a political form of depravity, of organised proletarian excitation, was directed against the sterility and thrift of the boss, their clocks and their morality. The night was seized as an 'oppositional resource of the everyday' through which 'political value was given to living free.'[9]. 'The invention of the night club represented a kind of proletarian response to the private hoarding of celebration.'[10]

III

The idea of free time as a significant phenomenon for political-economy, arrived much later. As Adorno observed in the early 20th century, 'free time' or 'spare time', 'originated only recently – its precursor, the term "leisure" denoted the privilege of an unconstrained, comfortable life-style', while free time, 'indicates a specific difference, that of time which is neither free nor spare, which is occupied by work' [...] '[f]ree time depends on the totality of social conditions, which continues to hold people under its spell.[11]

The free time Adorno speaks of, appears as part of a post-WII concession offered by fearful ruling classes to a powerful movement of red masked communists who threateningly encroached upon their heavenly fortresses of accumulated misery and colonial plunder. Capitalist political-economies were in turn transformed, taking varied forms as welfare state, state socialism and quasi-decolonised independent nation state.

Although the productive forces of capital made a partial alliance with the working class, this transformatory restructuring of political-economy was not its abolition – a new regime of capitalist domination, of days and nights, took root. Workers were given an incentive to identify with the higher forms of wage slavery, as put on offer by the unions and political parties that spoke in their name. Free time arrived with weekends, labour regulations and pensions. Work remained suffo-

Martha Reeves & The Vandellas - 'Nowhere to Run', still from music video shot inside the Ford Mustang Factory, Detroit, 1965

cating, but free time together with a sacrificial politics that promised an eventual automation of drudgery and luxury for all, hegemonically maintained this fragile partnership – at least in the most ideal of circumstances.[12] Reeves and the Vandellas lucidly captured the convolutions of this 'love affair' in their 1965 release 'Nowhere to Run' wherein they sing, amidst a dance through the Ford Mustang factory:

How can I fight a love, that shouldn't be? When it's so deep, so deep, deep inside of me.

Adorno nicely echoes the Vandellas question, directing our attention to a contradiction at the heart of this agreement between capital and labour: 'what becomes of free time, where productivity of labour continues to rise, under persisting conditions of unfreedom, that is, under relations of production into which people are born, and which prescribe the rules of human existence today just as they always have done?'[13]

[9] Kristin Ross, as expressed in our discussion 'Building Leisure Communism. Imagining a World without Work', ULWC Assembly, 2020. The talk is available here: http://luna6.lt/ultimate-leisure-workers-club.html#building-leisure-communism
[10] Laurent De Sutter, *Narcocapitalism: Life in the Age of Anaesthesia*, 2017. 55
[11] Theodor Adorno, 'Free Time', *in The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, London: Routledge, 1990. 187

[12] Seidman's Workers Against Work and his follow up, Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War, are interesting on how this played out with the affirmation of work by Popular Front governments in Spain and France. 'Workers against Work attempted to show that none of these theories could explain workers' continuing resistance against work. Ironically, these refusals of wage labor continued or even increased during the Popular Fronts of the late 1930s in France and Spain, more precisely from 1936 to 1938 in Barcelona and Paris when the left held political power.'
[13] Adorno, 'Free Time'. 188

The leisure-sphere was thus devised to profitably contain these new energies and capacities for association in the working class. After all, unregulated convergences of bodies and minds in the forms of crowds, gatherings, and nightly festivals, once again threatened to upend capital's, now compromised, ordering of time – 'if the orgy was to be permitted, it had to be contained.'[14] As Adorno elaborates, '[T]he prevalent ethos is suspicious of anything which is miscellaneous, or heterogeneous, of anything which has not clearly and unambiguously been assigned to its place. The rigorous bifurcation of life enjoins the same reification, which has now almost completely subjugated free time.'[15]

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care and
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Furthermore, the capitalist leisure-sphere, composed of sterilised consumer goods and services, was built by a racialised and gendered low-wage labour force. Thus, the very idea of free time assumes that the working day ends with the wage, erasing the entire world of reproductive (paid/ nonpaid) care and leisure labour. In Anne Boyer's Reader contribution, 'The Fall of Night', we find a meditation on these asymmetries as they appear at the level of sleep. Whereas Walt Whitman postulates sleep as a democracy shared across social category, Boyer hesitates and asks us to consider what such a claim could mean for the lives of those deprived of it, namely the night-worker. Access to what could properly be called free time, to a time of escape emptied of worldly commitments, was synonymous with the social position of the white middle class man and his wife, given she could afford to purchase a housekeeper.

Photo:
Ian Alan Paul, 2020

Forms of proletarian festivity and excitation that fell out of this narrow category of free time therefore remained unacceptable expenditures of labour power. Take for instance the world of 60s Mod clubbing, which as Sacha Kahir accounts for in his Reader contribution 'The Crowd and its Double', offered the otherwise depleted northern English industrial workforce an amphetamine propelled, all night, dance frenzy – a big fuck you to the 'reserve your energy for the productive work week ahead' morality of the boss.

An entire history of class struggle, an entire history of struggle over who decides the endings and beginnings of our days, was fought and plotted in the dark.

[14] Sutter, *Narco Capitalism*. 56
[15] Adorno, 'Free Time'. 190

IV

The delicate and partial compromise between capital and labour did not last long. Five decades of plunder, extraction and war against our class power characterise the present as an era of neo-feudal disaster capitalism. All pretensions of capital's previous social guarantees of leisure, security and health have long since been withdrawn – the covid-19 pandemic has only made this simple fact all the more clear. Yet, the present we now encounter is not only the product of a continuum of defeats – let us not forget we are also the inheritors of a continuum of rebellions, of new and ever changing compositions of struggle against capital-time.

Communising a place means abolishing the divisions of labour, the segregations of roles, the prescription of identities, that formerly constituted it as an object of power

Responding to the beginnings of capital's war on organised labour and the socialist/welfare states in the late 60s and 70s, autonomist movements gained popularity by splitting with the exhausted compromised strategies of the trade unions and political parties. These culturally oriented autonomist tendencies, following the self-activity of workers themselves, attempted the radicalisation of free time, as a 'freedom proper', through the building of a social counter power that could defend against both the compulsion to labour and the misery of unemployment. Collective self-reductions in transportation, entertainment and utility fees, along with the large-scale seizures of private property, in Italy, laid an infrastructure for a mode of self-reproduction that clashed with the sale of labour power, with submission to capital-time.

Techno and rave cultures, although coming into the scene later, carried the tradition of autonomism into a context more familiar with where we are at now. The children of Ford union families, living through the 1967 Detroit Rebellion, witnessed the explosive collapse of the previous eras' partial securities; entering adulthood in a city marked by the ruins of their aftermath. Techno culture can be seen as a response to the mass expulsion of labour from post-war industries and the abandonment, divestment, and privatisation of the urban landscapes that provided social infrastructures for them.

Seizing territories – urban housing, warehouses, vacant land, factories, logistics infrastructures, and technologies – from the vulnerable and abandoned infrastructures produced by the class war, autonomists attempted their radical repurposing for communistic ends. Take, for instance, that fateful summer night in 1977 New York where a citywide power outage, caused by a fuse break in the radically under-resourced subway system, offered black communities an opportunity to seize electronic equipment – such as turntables, microphones, mixers, speakers, and extension cords – directly enabling the proliferation of underground dj crews.[16]

The first wave of raves in the 90s, too, appeared as an autonomist response to a vicious wave of neoliberal enclosures of space and resources. As Fisher observed in the UK, the rave scene

[16] Dana Scott, '40 Years Ago A New York City Blackout Turned Up The Power On Hip-Hop, available here: https://ambrosiaforheads.com/2017/07/40-years-ago-a-new-york-city-blackout-turned-up-the-power-on-hip-hop-video/

opposed the social sterility and cult of individualism ushered in by these enclosures and the new consumer communication technologies that came with them. Such an opposition vividly appeared during the Reclaim the Streets movement, which introduced new strategies for the occupation of urban space through, for instance, the deployment of mobile speaker systems; redirecting urban flows from the apparatus of commerce towards a politics of the commons.

While the raves commoning of urban infrastructure cannot simply be equated with the insurrectionary scope of its communisation, the line between them is far from clear. Communising a place means abolishing the divisions of labour, the segregations of roles, the prescription of identities, that formerly constituted it as an object of power; it in turn means opening ourselves to the exploration of new, refined, intensified, and unknown possibilities of: assembly, care, festivity and mutual aid.

Although the communist festivity of rave politics can hardly be codified, it tends to emerge in those moments when the otherwise tenacious techno-political governance of populations has been suspended. For instance, the occupied Place de la republique *Nuit debout* in Paris, wherein electronic dance and hiphop parties took form as both a political expression of the new communal joys made available by the movement and as a strategic means of amassing urban flows and holding space through the night. In Colombia, raves followed the seizure of a police station in 2020. In 2018 a rave in Warsaw drew and sustained the crowds that gathered in the opposition demo to the far-right coordinated independence day. As for a Lithuanian example, it was through a rave that the Žalias Namas squat in Kaunas was taken and a Left political movement would take root.

V

Even by 1995, the first wave of the UK autonomist rave movement had been more or less disarmed by the Criminal Justice Act; and its residual energies channelled into the club scene as well as the myriad rave and post-rave tendencies already mentioned. Notably, it is in this moment that a bifurcation appears between a genealogy of the underground club scene and a whitewashed, Elon Musk branded, business techno apparatus that has since come to saturate all too many electronic dance culture milieus. The underground club, as you will find detailed in Neil Transpontine's account of 121 Centre in Brixton, markedly differs from the business techno infrastructure in its dynamic connections with

[17] The permission for a weekend, or in the above case lunch break, of 'savagery' within the labor process is nicely picked up in the reader conversation with Annie Goh and Anthony Iles' 'Lights Out at the White Supremacist Theory Disco'.

social movements – flirting with the lines between a nightclub and social club; entertainment and politics; the party and the Party; restoration and insurgent regeneration. Meanwhile, the business techno industry has seamlessly integrated electronic dance culture into the contemporary labour process – an exemplary case being the phenomenon of Brooklyn 'day raves' wherein office workers are permitted to 'let loose' in a sober, lunch break long escape from the work day, only to return hours later all the more productive.[17]

Reacting to the phenomenon of contemporary business techno and the more general historical precedent of the culture industry's integration of anti-work and non-work praxis into the productive process; we encounter a popular, even commonsensical, critique of leisure as a social safety-valve that sublimates revolutionary energy into codified, profitable, authorised sites of 'entertainment'. Although these critiques are not entirely false, they are gravely misleading in their violent erasure of the dynamic histories of class struggle that shape leisure relations, in favour of vacuous categorisations of what counts as 'true' politics. In the Reader conversation 'Caring Labour and Mutual Aid in Queer and POC Club Communities' the Polish Collective Oramics shares some thoughts on the club as a public sphere, an exploitative industry, and possible infrastructure for the building of anti-Fascist Left movements. Their point is that the club cannot be theorised as some static abstraction – political histories and struggles shape its forms and potentials.

While the politics that takes root through and around nightly leisure doesn't conform to conventional political forms, let us not forget, the history of 'true' Politics, and this includes aspects of socialist politics, is also a history of class, race and gender domination. All too often a deeply misogynist, racist and even classist worldview is conveniently smuggled in to what may at first appear as merely constructive condemnations of the false application of the passions. The effort to purge political forms that do not conform to the monolithic history of the Political, can be taken as nothing other than an attempt to bleach, bury, or simply erase these powerful political genealogies and their subjects, from current political imaginaries.

Interestingly enough, even Adorno, a figure who many have turned to in their efforts for such a bleaching of politics, came to sharply distance himself from his earlier formulations with Horkheimer on the cultural industries total domination of popular consciousness.[18] While sharply criticising the atrophy of the imagination and reduction of peoples free activity to the inanity of a consumer hobby, Adorno finds in free time a standpoint for the revolutionary constitution of properly free activity:

> Wherever behaviour in spare time is truly autonomous, determined by free people for themselves, boredom [the powerlessness of objective desperation] rarely figures; it need not figure in activities which cater merely for the desire for pleasure, any more than it does in those free time activities which are reasonable and meaningful in themselves. Even fooling about need not be crass, and can be enjoyed as a blessed release from the throes of self-control.[19]

Nonetheless, rave, club and other leisure formats are clearly lacking as self-sufficient political standpoints – i.e. as substitutes for communist politics – we rather see their relevance only to the extent that they dynamically grow within the complex, multifaceted compositions of communist movements – movements that must necessarily confront the totality of needs and desires that make up our days and nights.

Leisure Communism then is a standpoint that begins from the contradictory, at times reactionary, class struggles within metropolitan leisure economies and urban flows. We do not take free time for granted as some empty allotment of hours where we can freely associate, but as an anomalous and contradictory space within capitalist societies from which to leverage movement in the struggle against working-time: against the capitalist ordering of the beginnings and endings of our lives. Leisure is to be approached as a material standpoint within capitalism through which we may strategise its abolition.

While Leisure Communism's festive class struggle may not be 'revolutionary' or 'political' in any pure sense – i.e. it does not offer any programmatic strategy for the abolition of capitalism or speak in the representative language of the societal – what our formation seems to offer is a kind of anticapitalist romanticism that proposes alternatives to the organisation of days and nights without fully being able to implement these visions as prefigurative acts. One could think of leisure communist formations as schools for the unlearning of capital-time, platforms for driftage, as organs for unthinkable conspiracy, and as ecologies for the oppositional cultivation of communist modes of life.

[18] Adorno, 'Free Time'. 195
[19] Adorno, 'Free Time'. 195

Conversations:

Performative Alienation Against Ideological Escapology

by Mattin & Noah

A conversation with Mattin prompted by questions raised at the ULWC Assembly event 'Between Subjectless Crowds and Experienceless Subjects....A discussion on the place of rave in Leftist politics today', 13 December, 2020. Documentation available here.

Rave culture introduced ludic engagements with the socially sterilised urban spaces of neoliberal capitalism – the radical connectivity they proposed raged against a new regime of personalisation and alienated technological interdependency. Notably, Fisher and his comrades announced the death of rave or the death of its political potentials at a talk at Berghain in 2013. Applying Fisher's well known thesis on capitalist realism, they claimed that the insurgent potential of rave culture was hollowed out and incorporated into the advanced capitalist culture industry, merely repeating the ghostly memory of its past forms and energies. Raves have also been criticised for their failure to cultivate and sustain the new collectivities they produce, as they are found to be lacking in the language, reason and interpersonal complexity that would constitute true political subjectivity. Yet, on the other hand, we find a Leftist politics lured by the antithetical fantasy of an affectless subject of reason that simply doesn't deal with bodies and sensations; forgoing the practical, compromised potential of everyday conditions of life as grounds for political subjectivisation. It is clear that the Left has not been able to deal with bodies, with the psychosomatic consequences of neoliberalism. How, then, to build a Left movement that neither fetishises the experiential nor the rational, but rather introduces a critical mode of reason based on anti-patriarchal and anti-colonial principles. Could raves and other insurgent dance cultures have a place in building an emancipatory communist movement today?

The noise artist and Communist theorist Mattin approaches these questions through the concept of performative alienation, proposing we critically engage with estrangement in order to question metaphysical understandings of experience, religion and selfhood as enforced by capitalism.

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Noah Brehmer: As voiced by Fisher in 'Baroque Sunbursts', a good portion of electronic dance culture is driven by an effort to collectively heal from the commercially sterilised, digitally isolated, violently competitive narcissisms that capitalism promotes and enforces. In the dance scene, it is suggested, all the separations endured in daily life are momentarily abolished in this world of immediacy, augmented sensation, a kind of embodied togetherness. Here, for example, I also think of the Vitalist International and the raves some of the group is connected to in Atlanta Georgia called No Lite, as they state: 'It is telling that anesthesiology – the long-standing science of numbing – has no opposing counterpart. Vitalism is that counterpart: an aesthesiology. Vitalism does not mean enhancing one's experiences, but rather choosing to align oneself with the creative forces captured by the present organization of the world. Vitalists are commonly found in the woods, at punk shows, at the beach, in dance parties, in the black bloc, wherever screens do not loom so large.'

Mattin: What does immediacy mean in this context? The thought that one can, in a collective dance situation, break from the different forms of mediation that we are embedded in seems to

me ideological escapology. From the start we are mediated by our own bodies, which often have different physical and mental abilities, then the ability to lose ourselves in the music, which inevitably is mediated by taste and furthermore by our own cultivated belief that we may actually momentarily cut through capitalist forms of mediation. What No Lite is doing is amazing and this is not to undermine the power of collective dancing in squatted spaces, but I think we should always be wary of immediacy. Precisely because I come from noise and improvisation where notions such as augmented sensation and immediacy are praised, I came to realise that it is crucial to understand the different layers that make possible these notions, as a way to understand the complex interrelationship between dominating capitalist reality models and what we take to be emancipatory social strategies.

N: So your practice and writing affirms alienation as an enabling condition. How is the alienation you're interested in different from the alienation we face in capitalist social relations?

M: The type of alienation that I am interested in generating as part of my practice tries to show in experience that which constitutes experience and the distorting processes behind these constitutions. This form of alienation cuts at the joints in the meditations occurring between living and dead labour: it basically tries to expose their reificatory effects in practice.

Hopefully this would help us to concretely understand how capitalist relations determine our consciousness, our self-conception and what we understand to be our experience. Ray Brassier has described this as an estrangement of estrangement, which is not just the experience of estrangement but the estrangement of experience: it points out how capitalism structures what we take experience to be.[1] So we can say that I am all about producing alienation in the aesthetic realm as a way to explore structural alienation. This is what I mean by performative alienation.

Performative alienation can help us to understand the relationship between very local and embodied forms of interaction and forms of determination made at the global level through the exchange relation: the instances in which subject and object become atomised as instances of commensurated, empty, homogeneous time. This relationship is complex but necessary to engage with if we don't want to fall into the fetishisation of experience. This is the difference between aestheticising alienation and using alienation in the aesthetic realm for strategic purposes, I am certainly involved in the latter.

Performative alienation can help us to understand the relationship between very local and embodied forms of interaction and forms of determination made at the global level

Yet, saying that I want to produce performative alienation can lead to some misunderstandings that are worth explaining. I don't think we will ever overcome having to deal with alienation: the seed of modernity as a question of radical doubt about what we are is here to stay as long as we intend to avoid theological tutelage. However, different forms of alienation historically arise and they need to be differentiated in order to not lapse into an ahistorical understanding of alienation, as xenofeminism did.

[1] Ray Brassier, 'Scoring Contradiction' preface for Mattin's book, *Social Dissonance* (upcoming 2021, Urbanomic)

The concept of the subject is a modern one and as we have seen, it has not fully been able to fulfill its promises, i.e. to provide us with the capacity to act and achieve self-determination. This is because capital is completely embedded in our self-reproduction, which produces a specific form of capitalist alienation. This is obviously despairing. It is therefore not surprising that we can see more and more tendencies trying to avoid the question of alienation, which I find crucial for understanding the disenchantment arising from modernity. In the face of increased capitalist fragmentation, these tendencies search for holistic and spiritual forms of harmony that can only accentuate fragmentation; precisely because they understand that justice and its preconditions are not solely socially produced. If one bases the foundations of justice – understood here as fair and equal treatment for everybody – on spiritual and religious notions, then we lose the possibility for a collective understanding of justice which is not ruled by particular theological beliefs and world views. In result, we get particular forms of justice for some which might be injustices for others.

Yet, in calling for an embrace of modernity, I do not mean to neglect the particular forms of injustice that have been done in the name of universality. I think the opposite, we need to account for historical and current forms of oppression in order to not reproduce them. However, we cannot forget that the mediating factor of oppression today is value production, which at the material level universalises inequality and uneven domination. At the same time, at the level of consciousness, these mediations produce further fragmentation through specialisation, division of labour, technology and what I call social dissonance: a structural form of cognitive dissonance that emerges from the discrepancy that exists between the social imperative to portray yourself as an individual – endowed with agency and power – and a structural reality that negates the possibility of this agency. We could say that social dissonance is the mental noise produced by the interrelationship between capitalist structural alienation and existential alienation. This produces further frustration. In order to overcome this we need some bases for collectivity that are big and broad enough to challenge the huge and unifying force that is capital. The problem is that we don't seem to have the tools to really confront capitalist alienation because there is no internationalist communist horizon in sight.

So given that capitalist alienation comes from specific historical mediations of social relations: value-form, wage relation, money, division of labour and the state to name a few; it's possible we could abolish all these mediations. Yet this will not bring us to a pre-modern mode of production nor to some organic form of interaction. In fact, a more complex and mediated form of interaction might be necessary in order to ensure justice and properly equal distribution. Perhaps it will bring a more developed form of language in which technology could take a stronger role. We might also discover new sides of our unconscious that we did not yet know. These are in themselves other forms of alienation. As Samo Tomšič argues 'communism will be the collective management of alienation.'[2]

NB: While some tendencies of electronic dance culture, such as psytrance, are certainly driven by new age fantasies of recovering the lost organic oneness of humanity – with all the problematic assumptions of what authentic relations, genders, and experiences may look like – another tendency romantically embraces technology as a source of liberation. The techno-positivist spectrum found in electronic dance music scenes ranges from the cringey and reactionary fantasies of Land's machinic disintegration: "rave is human extinction made available as a dancefloor" to more re-

[2] Samo Tomšič, in a q&a at Historical Materialism in Beirut, 10th March, 2017, AUB, Beirut.

latable projects of the Left, found in Xenofeminism and Fully Automated Luxury Communism. Yet, critics such as Annie Goh, have importantly emphasised how even the Left spectrum of this scene 'lacks consideration of the historic whiteness of humanist and post-humanist discourses', in turn emphasising the urgent need for critical feminist and decolonial enagement with technology and modern philosophical projects. What, for you, is then a critical form of 'reason', which would both distance itself from the festish of experiential immediacy without getting lost in the muck of a patriarchal and colonial modernism?

M: I fully agree with Annie Goh that we need to be more attentive to how imperialism and colonialism have used the so called universal values of humanism and enlightenment to justify brutal structural racism and slavery. And I also think it is crucial to take into consideration the uneven qualities of different forms of alienation, the inequalities and marginalisations they produce.

However, I still think alienation is a helpful concept and shouldn't be easily dismissed. In fact, some of these dismissals have gone in very problematic directions. It is interesting to see that Nick Land in the 90s was already laughing at terms such as praxis, reification, alienation and autonomy, calling them theological sentimentalities of a Hegelian socialist heritage. It is not only spiritual and religious movements that avoid dealing with alienation: from New Materialism to Nick Land's recent belief in cosmic disintegration, there is a problematic tendency to see deterritorialisation as a form of liberation, which disregards the dialectical relation between interiority and exteriority. In these types of thought, the subject or agent of liberation does not need to be constructed but can already occur in specific and particular processes. This can lead to problematic positions where difference is fetishished at the cost of understanding the relationship between determination and contingency. What I mean is that one might think that a specific material process of deterritorialisation is not determined, but this does not mean that our understanding of these processes is outside of determination. Pure contingency does not mean freedom. I understand freedom as a cultural achievement, a form of self-determination enabled by a freedom from contingency. There is no freedom in a normative vacuum.

Notably, right-wing Accelerationism was never interested in reason. However, Left Accelerationism was. The problem is that in order to promote reason in actual social conditions, one needs to give an account of how reason is determined by the exchange relation and how it distorts and limits our general social capacity for reasoning. So while I think it is absolutely necessary to give an account of the brutal forms of oppression that have occurred and still occur in the name of reason and enlightenment, we also need to take into account that even the critical categories we have at our disposal are tainted by mystifications. This is not to say that the act of reason itself is the problem. Sure reason, the way it has been used, has been part of the problem but also of the solution. As far I am concerned, reason is the greatest tool for socialisation and for achieving freedom or at least realising our lack of freedom. Under today's conditions we cannot take for granted our power for reasoning and it therefore needs to be complemented by other means. It is necessary to wage struggle in a political, economical, historical and even grammatical way, but also to constantly question the categories we form within these struggles. In other words, we cannot simply consolidate these categories as if they were transhistorical. While replying to this question I am listening at full volume to this mix of psytrance music on Youtube. My neighbours are loving it so much that they have thrown a brick through my window to hear it better.

Anti-Copyright

Links

Mark Fisher, Alex Williams, Steve Goodman, Lee Gamble & Lisa Blanning, Death of Rave UK, CTM Festival 2013. https://soundcloud.com/ctm-festival/ctm13-death-of-rave-1-uk

No Lite, 'Rebels Wanna Rebel', Mask Magazine. http://www.maskmagazine.com/the-refuse-issue/struggle/no-lite

Vitalist International, 'Life Finds a Way', Commune Magazine. https://communemag.com/life-finds-a-way/

Amongst the many important critiques of Left rationalism, see O'Sullivan's critique of Left Accelerationism for ignoring the politics of affect in favor of abstraction and universalism. 'The Missing Subject of Accelerationism' https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/missing-subject

Conversations:
Caring Labour and Mutual Aid in Queer and POC Club Communities

Oramics, Community Bread, Vaida & Noah

Edited excerpts from a conversation with Oramics (PL) and Community Bread (US) that took place within the recent Virtual Assembly (28 Nov – 13 Dec, 2020). Video documentation of the conversation is available here.

Club communities all over the world have been hit hard by the pandemic: artists and promoters as well as bartenders and bouncers have encountered a massive depletion of income and loss of work. The pandemic has only made problems of exploitation, racism and patriarchy all the more pronounced in the leisure industry. Often working informally, the same communities also confront particular difficulties in accessing state support for health, housing and financial security. While some countries have financially assisted the nightlife sector, the dominant pattern has been support of business interests over workforces. Facing up to this situation, some club communities have taken to devising their own means of mutual support, giving needed focus to those disproportionately damaged by the current situation.

Oramics and Community Bread share their thoughts on these issues as well as some practical strategies for organising political struggles in and beyond nightlife scenes, in these times. Oramics is a DJ and producer collective made up of women, non-binary and queer people that has actively participated in resistance against enduring LGBTQI+, women, and ethnic minority oppressions by the far Right movement in Poland. New York based Community Bread is a global resource platform initiated to offset economic hardship for queer and POC club artists and their communities.

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Vaida Stepanovaitė & Noah Brehmer (ULWC): In the ULWC we have been looking at the politics of nightlife: its economies, the forms of togetherness and separation they facilitate; the emancipatory as well as toxic trajectories of these sonic fantasy worlds. We see the current Assembly as a context for different groupings that share our interest in navigating the potentials of nightly leisure to come together for critical reflection, strategising and conspiracy. Moreover, the Assembly, taking place amidst the second wave of an earth shaking pandemic, hopes to address questions particular to our moment –– a moment that has clarified, for many, the need to abolish a system, a political-economy, that enforces radical inequalities in our access to health, housing, leisure, joy and just about everything else. We are keen to know more about the multiplicity of ways we can confront this misalignment, as well as how to keep engaging and gathering in this time. What particular issues have you faced as collectives and what might be left unnoticed? In the ULWC, we use the notion of community a lot, and all of you are working with queer and marginalised club communities, in Poland or all over the world. What answers does a community centred club politics offer for this situation? For example, Oramics, in your recent discussion at Unsound Festival, 'Zone-Free Zone: Poland's Lgbtq+ Community In Arts & Activism' one of your members questioned using the term LGBTQI+ community abstractly, i.e. without the particular social, regional, historical contexts in mind. What do you consider to be your community in Poland and what are its connections with electronic dance culture, clubs, raves, etc.

Paulina (Oramics): I think that when you talk about the LGBT community, and more broadly

the communities of the marginalised, the Polish context is completely different from what is happening in the USA. We all come from different backgrounds and experiences. I don't know how familiar you are with the political situation in Poland, but the government and even our Polish president is openly right-wing. He says very harmful words towards the LGBT community. There are nazi groups or really conservative communities because the government in power is openly supporting them.

Zosia (Oramics): I also think it is important to point out the history of electronic music in Poland. It came from Berlin and already at that point it was white-washed. In the nineties it was this folk countryside leisure and only recently, a decade or two decades ago, it became more connected to the big city culture and struggles. I definitely think that there's not one queer community and not one electronic music community. But because of the current political situation we see more and more connections in the context of protest between the queer community and even between people who have nothing to do with electronic music, and with the electronic music initiatives that – until two or three years ago, have not been so openly political. Now we see feminist protests that are supported by taxi drivers, techno platforms involved in anti-government LGBT protests, and more regular people engaging in protest actions. Community politics is a broad and complicated dynamic process that goes beyond questions of what is queer and what is electronic music, because of this very urgent situation in Poland.

Paul (Community Bread): I have watched the Unsound panel, it is quite interesting to see the different roots of the activism that you guys [Oramics] are doing. Obviously the government is very conservative and anti-LGBTQI+. How do you navigate in these very conservative environments?

Zosia: It definitely takes a toll on you. We've had situations when members of our collective were very viciously attacked and slandered all over the internet for raising a voice. Historically queer clubs have been a very important refuge, although the types of parties they organised were quite different than what we see in the electronic music clubs today. I remember some clubs from 15 years ago in Warsaw where you could go and make out and there would be a party but now the types of clubs that we have in Poland are completely different. As promoters or producers and DJs we have to navigate between the commercial club infrastructure, which has its own priorities, and this very vibrant scene of activist collectives and promoters. There used to be a distinction between music and politics. But because of the new generation of musicians and promoters it is clear that this is one and the same thing, and we are observing this process of negotiating and building new connections. It is not always a given that the queer community is going to come to a political electronic music night even when we call it a safe night as it takes time to build this connection and create a safer atmosphere; it is more than putting up a poster on a club wall. I think that the radicalisation of discourse in electronic music has spread almost exponentially.

I'm a big fan of shouting curse words in public with older ladies

If someone told me a year ago that I would be standing in front of the Polish Embassy in Vienna with 50 year old ladies shouting the worst curse words in Polish, saying 'get the fuck out,' I would have told them that this probably wouldn't happen for another ten years. These young people, young fresh blood that have entered the political scene and the club scene are taking no prisoners, saying 'get the fuck out of here', 'queer is now - get used to it.' A year ago, a club would change their picture on Facebook to a rainbow and you could not imagine the shit storm that followed. It is amazing. I'm a big fan of shouting curse words in public with older ladies.

Paul: So impressive what you are doing. Thinking about the word community, it is a quite loaded word and means something different to everyone. From my personal perspective, what we count as community is a very distinct queer underground music community in New York. We are looking for more safe spaces for marginalised people because just going out to the super clubs with very white straight cis heteronormative DJs playing and your girlfriend on the dancefloor getting groped all the time was not a good vibe. You have to really search for this underground community in New York. When we found it, it did feel like a family of music lovers that share similar values that are very much rooted in equality and opportunity and carving out more space for marginalised voices. Because people sometimes forget that techno was a Black protest sound in Detroit, and even house music was a queer sound in warehouses in Chicago and New York. We are really trying to give a platform or shine a light on these voices that are so integral for those communities that we have today. Obviously very different experiences to what is happening in Poland.

Arthur (Community Bread): It's important to emphasise that our community, in NYC, does not simply revolve around the underground rave scene – it is a lot deeper than that. Ultimately the dancefloor is where we are reunited, but we are all entering it from different backgrounds, we all do different types of stuff, especially in the creative realms. We have a diverse sense of community especially being in NYC where everyone comes together from everywhere. And their efforts in what they do outside of the dancefloor is showcased not in just what they do for a living but also in their involvement in local politics, in the local social engagement. This brings me to the question of how community has played a role in shifting political and social dynamics, which I think is such a critical part of both the pre-pandemic and pandemic situation. This year in the Black Lives Matter movement we encountered a monumental rebellion that deeply impacted our community, on a scale that extended far beyond the dancefloor. For us, one of the most pivotal gatherings for the movement was a solidarity action for Black Trans Lives Matter, which was spearheaded by a radiant figure in our own community, local drag performer West Dakota. Seeing people assemble on this scale during a period of forced isolation, was simply astonishing.

Paulina: It is really nice you brought up the question of being in a movement, in a community, under pandemic conditions. When the pandemic happened, out of the blue we got completely cut out of all the physicality that comes with meeting together in a club, sweating together and having these very physical emotions. The meaning of community itself has changed from March. Now there is a lot of discussion about the local scenes and local artists, I see this a lot in the Polish scene. Before the pandemic happened what we were doing in Poland was mostly just importing artists from the Western countries; from Berlin, London, Amsterdam to play in Poland and we were paying huge fees to them. For the Polish context it was a lot of money to pay 700 or 800 euros for a gig in a club – it is more than the monthly minimum wage in Poland! Then you start questioning yourself, do we actually need to import so many artists from Western countries? We actually have a lot of good artists in our lo-

cal scene. It was a huge topic in our community, the music and club scene, but not only. Another point is about the minorities in Poland. We are not such a mixed society I would say, but recently there has been a strong wave of immigration from Ukraine and Belarus, including artists, and we think about how we can help them, because they have a lot of problems with visas. Opposing the Polish fascists and right-wing nationalists has been one way we've shown our solidarity. On the Polish national independence day in 2018 we helped coordinate an anti-Fascist street rave as part of the opposition protest.

Vaida & Noah: What you are all saying really resonates with many things we have been thinking about. While raves and clubs have be condemned by some of the Left in Lithuania as mere consumerist distractions from the 'true' political struggle, they can also play integral roles, as we see, in the building of movements. Yet, the point we all seem to agree on is that club politics needs to be thought both through and beyond the dancefloor – the difference between nightlife industries that run on the selling of cheap consumer escapes from the world and nightlife communities that form to radically transform it, is like night and day. Political clubbing, in this sense, is all about organising ourselves as a social force that could abolish the neo-liberal order that separates, instrumentalises and exploits us. And given that the club industry, like any industry, is built on the class, race and gender inequalities that surround it, changing the club means changing the broader social order and vice versa. On this subject, we recently had a very constructive conversation as part of a night school we are organising, Paths to Autonomy, with the cultural workers branch of the Polish syndicalist union 'Workers Initiative' and a London based cultural workers solidarity network, Art Workers Forum. For the unions, the question isn't only about changing conditions for artists but for the arts and culture sector as whole: maintenance, technical, bartending, door, etc. And finally, for the working class in all its diversity and global complexity as such. The question of what kinds of opportunities and limitations have opened for this kind of organising during the pandemic is crucial to address.

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Paul: That is a really interesting point. As with the collapse of the traditional institutions and club systems in America we have the opportunity to reimagine them. There is no club scene in New York right now, but there will be. Thus we have the chance to reimagine a more equitable future and industry where queer and POC people are not only just working in the clubs but also are in the positions of power. And this is not just about some symbolic gesture, tokenism, but about building a more level playing field where queer and POC folks would have the opportunity to curate the lineups and make big decisions, and become gatekeepers in the communities they have been so integral in building. As Arthur said, the pandemic in New York made everyone come together, and it is not only about hedonistic dancing and raving and taking drugs, but a lot more beyond all those things.

Zosia: I have also found that the pandemic and the crisis that followed opened some new possibilities and created a lot of new connections, but I have also seen a completely different side: the implosion of the electronic music scene. Just before the pandemic I had a feeling that shit was going to hit the fan really soon because we had more and more promoters and DJs. People were getting more and more hyped bringing headliners from Berlin and getting paid more than what my mom makes in a month, and it was really weighing on us. Then suddenly the pandemic happened and it turned out that a lot of people working in this industry are working illegally, getting money under the table because no one can even afford to start a one person company and get into this legal shit. We are not unionised and it is clear that clubs are just businesses. While many clubs made heartbreaking campaigns to collect money for rent and what not, by the summer, when the numbers went a bit down and you could organise parties, what did these clubs do? They tried to organise a huge festival with all the Berlin headliners. All this talk we had in March and April about building the community, building solidarity, starting the workers union, thinking about the Eastern European scene and connecting with Lithuania and Ukraine and what not. And all of this went out of the window the first moment these clubs had an opportunity to put up this huge business techno event that was really ridiculous to see. At the same time, when we talk about community I cannot help but think about solidarity and who is in solidarity with whom and why and how these connections are being created. Because, as Paulina said, in Poland we do have minorities and there were very big demonstrations in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. But we have our own problems more along the lines of xenophobia and discrimination based on where people are from, what passport do they carry, and this is something very difficult to get international attention for. Berlin is not that far away from Warsaw, yet we haven't seen that much solidarity when it comes to an absolutely drastic and barbaric situation for the queer community and women's rights here. Three hundred kilometres from Warsaw and you reach Belarus where people have been protesting for over 100 days, there are people being killed for protesting and we cannot do enough to raise awareness. And there is a techno scene there too, in case people cared, but it is very difficult to break this division between Western and Eastern Europe. This is one of the focuses of Oramics from this year on and it is going to continue for the next years. As much as the pandemic creates a community, lets not forget that communities also bear power dynamics, imperialist pasts and presents, all of which are connected to how solidarity works in practice. Recently we invited four mixers and producers from Belarus to demonstrate the creativity of their community on our show at the Polish community radio station Radio Kapitał. The series is supplemented by a reading list on the current political situation, prepared by Olia Sosnowska and Aleksiej Borisionok.

Vaida: Community Bread, you are building a very new thing, entering the world in 2020 as an electronic dance music platform could not have been easy. It would be interesting to hear about building a digital infrastructure, maybe some things came up you have not thought about beforehand?

Arthur: As cultures and communities do, they adapt with what they are given in the face of crisis. I had no experience in developing a digital platform, but this was our only option. I guess the advantage of not being attached to this or that club one train stop away anymore, is that we are pushed into contacts with artists around the world, in many scenes and communities. Our politics have circulated and our platform has been built through close contacts with queer and POC communities around the world. We share their stories, struggles and strategies; as well as

‘breaking the bread’, i.e. offering resources to these communities through our fundraiser parties, discussions and performances. So it is not only about taking a techno night out of a club and putting it online, but actually engaging in conversations that will help shape the future collectively around the world.

Zosia: I have a question for Community Bread. How do you balance self-care, sustainability and the question of content production? Because I had a feeling that when the pandemic hit everyone was suddenly forced to produce streamable, accessible, linkable content that was for free and we were very against this, as a platform. We did not want to force artists to suddenly become video directors, visual artists, social media pros. I suffer and cry when I need to do something on Instagram, I am really such a boomer when it comes to this. This is why the whole digital revolution of promoting a project internationally that is happening online terrified me. In order to collect donations I will have to probably produce ten times more content as opposed to if I showed up at the club, played a gig, then I’m done and just go home and sleep. So what are your thoughts on this, and how do you balance sustainability which is a bit of an issue now, being forced to promote and promote, produce and produce content.

Paul: Definitely a lot of artists are finding themselves challenged with having, like you said, not only to play a mix but also gather visuals to go along with it. We give them creative license, if they don’t have a visual collaborator we will pair them with one to produce visuals for them. We would never overstress the artists with something they are not comfortable with, there are a lot of people we have found who really embraced creating visuals for their sounds, yet some people just don’t have the resources or budget or equipment, which is when we would do it for them. There is no headliner, everyone gets paid the exact same amount and all the funds get split up evenly amongst everyone.

Vaida: Do you pay yourselves as well from the money that comes in?

Arthur: In fact, we actually work other jobs to pay for the platform, we do not take a single cent from the donations. We inform the artists that we cannot say what we will pay upfront, because it all comes from donations. So for instance, in our last event we raised over 4.000 dollars, which was split between ten artists and ORAM (Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration) which protects and empowers LGBTIQ asylum seekers.

Paulina: I think it is a very interesting question to ask. I have been with Oramics for two years I think, but I am also running other Polish collectives for a little bit longer, so must say that I am a little bit of a promoter but also an activist who has been doing this stuff for some time already. It is shit tons of work with the events, each time inviting artists, dealing with the agencies, buying flights, hospitality, dealing with the gear, being in the venue, replying to the emails, it is really like a second job. Of course, both collectives in a way are non-profits because we don’t have any profit from the stuff we are doing. Recently I started thinking about that we as people, our activities, our collectives or initiatives, they are shaping the culture, the society, the local context and everything; yet we still don’t get any recognition from the government, in the cultural field. Even if what we do is not just for the club but also enters performance, we don’t get any funding and don’t have this social status of being in the cultural sector, but we in fact very much are. I am getting older and have to work and have to do other stuff aside as well, and how much time I am going to invest in running this initiative is my own decision, but the time is really shrinking right now. Do I really have time to do this for free? It is frustrating,

you are putting these streams up for so long and then 5 people are watching this and then you are starting to ask yourself why do you do this, it does not make sense anymore. So I started thinking recently, we are also the curators, we should be also paid.

Paul: How do you sustain your activities without funding, is it through government grants? Obviously as your activities grow and take up more and more of your time, how do you make that sustainable? Because we are just a few months in with our platform but eventually we have to think how to make it sustainable as well.

Zosia: This year, for the first time, we got an artistic grant to deliver multimedia collages – before that we did not have any public funding. If we wanted to bring headliners we had to chip in from our personal money. We had some collaborations with a club in Poznan that helped us out with the budget and one time we also got a sponsor for a party which was an organic soft drink. We don’t have any money because we are not even a registered organisation, we are an independent collective. So our possibilities are very limited but we are trying to work on collaborations with established institutions. We do workshops at art galleries sometimes and they pay for it.

Paulina: As Zosia mentioned we do workshops across Poland and also online workshops, which we switched to during the pandemic. We were applying for grants and different funding but it’s not easy to get them. For instance there is one feminist grant in Poland and we have applied there already twice but we never got it because it is a matter of who would want to give us money for making DJ workshops in small towns. It is not the priority for some people in a way, so it was difficult to get this fund but now we are trying to make merch and sell some stuff such as badges but it is very difficult. What is interesting is that recently two people from Oramics were booked for a festival and this festival offered a collective fee, it was the first time we saw it, and I think it is a great practice in terms of helping to support communities and initiatives.

Conversations:

Lights Out at the White Supremacist Theory Disco

by Annie Goh & Anthony Iles

Reflections following the presentation and discussion 'From White Brothers with No Soul to Feminist Prometheans: Lights Out at the White Supremacist Theory Disco' at the Ultimate Leisure Workers Club, Sat 28 Nov 2020

Annie Goh: Sitting down to have an email conversation at the end of this year about the politics of 'discos', nightclubs and gigs seems slightly surreal, given that in 2020 few of such activities did or could take place because of the pandemic, which only seems to be getting worse with a new variant of Covid-19 spreading rapidly in the South East of the UK, causing London to make a U-turn on Christmas guidelines, with the EU among other countries in turn moving toward travel bans on the UK; meanwhile we're heading towards what could well be a no-deal Brexit.[1] But no less a reason than any, perhaps, to theorise the 'white supremacist theory disco,' as you helpfully coined for the event on 28 November. The global pandemic of this year has exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and although very little joy was had this year by most of us in the form of dancing and other communal musical experiences at gigs and/or nightclubs, discos and such spaces; the prospects of their eventual return remains a glint of light at the end of the tunnel for those of us so-inclined.

Anthony Iles:
Thanks Annie. That's a good emphasis to begin with. In retrospect, our approach to these topics may appear a little 'puritan,' given the context you raise of the common and practical interest we share in dance culture as an expression of rebellious collective joy directed against the externally constructed barriers of class, racism, sexism and the compulsion to work. In the past year the Ultimate Leisure Workers' Club has faced an excruciatingly barren terrain for the exploration of the transformative dancefloor. However, perhaps the distance between the dancefloor and us, was productive for this brief moment. For instance, the resources you shared ahead of our discussion, in combination with the distance from that familiar place of assembly, certainly allowed some fresh and critical perspectives to sink in… and it focussed my attention to the ways you have been connecting theories of the dancefloor, new political movements and a certain staleness, maleness and paleness of specific tendencies in dance culture for which this was an opportune moment to address.

AG: The conversation we had on 28 November online was an attempt to join the dots between the critique of Xenofeminism I wrote for Mute Magazine 'Appropriating the Alien: A Critique of Xenofeminism' and some of the work I had done as a curator within CTM Festival (formerly club transmediale) in Berlin circa 2013–2016, particularly as part of its discourse programme. Compiled into the reading list for this event (alongside the Mute Magazine piece) were: 'Tekknologic as Tekknowledge' QRT aka Markus Konradin Leiner (Merve Verlag Berlin 1999) an excerpt of which I translated in 2013; an interview I conducted with Alexander G. Weheliye based on his work entitled 'White Brothers With No Soul: UnTuning the Historiography of Berlin Techno' in 2015; Luis-Manuel Garcia's RA feature 'An alternate history of sexuality in club culture' from Jan 2014 (and the related unabridged interview with Terre Thaemlitz on Queer Nightlife with LMG (4 Feb 2014) and a short but poignant blogpost by Discwoman co-founder Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson, from August 2020 entitled 'Business Techno Matters: how those who have the most sacrifice the least'.

The QRT text was one I had almost completely forgotten about, but when we met to plan the

[1] In the end, a so-called 'no-deal Brexit' was avoided due to final-hour negotiations

event, something about the framing of the Ultimate Leisure Workers' Club reminded me of it. I had come across Markus Konradin Leiner's work when I was programming the Death of Rave events at CTM Festival in 2013-2014 and at the time I was quite drawn in by his theorisation of the techno dancefloor. QRT himself was seemingly quite an enigmatic character, who alongside writing worked as a comic illustrator, drug-dealer, musician and actor before dying of a heroin overdose aged 31 in 1996. I wasn't aware of many theories of techno at the time and the melange of 90s media theory (from which one can feel strong influences at different times from Virilio, Baudrillard, McLuhan, Flusser) appealed to me at the time, particularly somewhat cyberpunk romanticism around the 'disappearance of the organic body into speed' and the sensory overstimulation of sound and light on the techno dancefloor as a way to build physiological/psychological resistance to the so-called 'media-war'. I think I was reading a lot of Virilio et al at the time! Proposing the DJ as the 'officer' of the dancefloor and the idea of dancers, bouncers, bartenders, drug dealers all being part of a larger machinic techno-economy must have tickled me, given the superstar status of DJs now. Adorno's infamous tirade on 'popular music' had a section denouncing rhythmical/beat-driven music for bringing about rhythmic obedience and 'mechanical collectivity'. QRT was undoubtedly taking this to its extreme in his description of the techno dancefloor, as a big fuck you to Adorno. Re-reading the text now, I was appalled on several fronts: at its horrific ableism, kitschy recourse to problematic arch-imperialist anthropology tropes (the section on ritual, 'savage thought' and the techno dancefloor as the electrification of initiation rites), unabashed endorsement of militarism and its overall utopian-dystopian futurism, all of which leave it unfortunately dated. I think at the time I was looking for a textual anchor to the German context of post-reunification rave culture and this is what I found – made additionally attractive for its obscurity. The part on techno being 'anti-ideology' sticks out at me as being especially naive and wrong, given the Weheliye interview I conducted about a year after translating this text and in light of the other assembled texts by Luis Manuel-Garcia, Terre Thaemlitz and Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson. The whiteness of the dancefloor QRT writes of is quite glaring, seen in this context. The exclusions that Weheliye points to, both physical (and violent) and narrative, in the historicisation of Berlin techno are evident in the QRT text, which reifies a white cis-male able-bodied subject of the techno dancefloor.

AI: Reading the text you produced with Alexander G. Weheliye on race, music, technology and critical theory in the context of the Berlin techno scene after our extended discussions around Xenofeminism's false universalism(s), was really illuminating. For me it builds really interesting bridges between primarily US-centric discourses of Afro Pessimism and Black Optimism with anti-nationalist critique in the German context. This therefore brings together and develops the critique of the universality of whiteness with the critique of the false universalism of the state. It provides a framework for thinking through and criticising the 'whiteness' of Berlin techno, and situating the narratives that circulate around electronic music in Berlin as part of a continuum of national identity in Germany, by which 'Berlin techno, Germany and German-ness are continually being imagined as white.' Weheliye relates this continuum both to the ongoing myth-making and selective historiography around the Berlin scene, which specifically omits the significant history of 'Black music cultures in GI discos and other clubs that played Black music in West Berlin before the fall of the wall. In these narratives, there is definitely a move to disassociate Berlin techno from Black musical influences.' Equally, narratives which

thread together techno, the fall of the wall and reunification into an image of positive 'coming together' erase the violent racism of both the casual everyday violence directed to non-white Germans and organised pogroms (e.g. Rostock in 1992) in the immediate post-unification years. Notably, such criticisms resonate with events that transpired over the pandemic summer of 2020. For example the coincidence between a demo organised by Berlin clubbers to 'save the Berlin club scene' – who as reported by Peter Kernbe were behaving like anti-maskers – and a Black Lives Matter demo on the same day organised to highlight the twin danger to black lives of racist policing and the poor handling of the pandemic (Kernbe). This provides a present-day Berlin local instantiation of the inability for 'business techno' to respond substantially to the Black Lives Matter movement which joins up nicely with Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson's synthesis of examples from both Europe and the US. Beyond the German/Berlin context, Weheliye provides a conceptual structure for thinking through the currents of racism, heteronormativity and whiteness at work in business techno and in the remaking of dance music history more broadly. Electronic music culture in neoliberal capitalism is building clubs at which one can be apart rather than come together. In its centre is the lab-coated white master engineer, who produces a white smokescreen that acts to blur out non-white, non-hetero actors; burying the the mess of their historical contingency, particularity and difference as to make room for the bleached unity of metalised, white and almost identical dancing bodies.

AG: Weheliye's voice was a much-needed intervention at the time, especially as the historicisation of Berlin techno was happening around this time, such as in Sven Von Thülen and Felix Denk's Der Klang der Familie and the numerous documentaries recounting that era such as We *Call it Techno!*, in a manner which was seamless with an affirmative state narrative (celebrations of 25 years of the fall of the wall were omnipresent).There was a lot of pushback and negativity to Weheliye's presentations at the time, which further proves the point he makes about Germans' stubborn self-understanding as open and liberal; ugly fissures appear when brought face-to-face with the non-understanding of anything other than German-ness (and European-ness) equals whiteness.

I like the image you've conjured around there being historical, political, cultural messes buried underneath the dancefloor. Given the exclusivities of dancefloors, reinforced by selective door policies – notorious at clubs like Berghain but evident as long as there have been nightclubs – there's something insightful about theorising dancefloors as surfaces with long, complex stories of oppression brutally buried or submerged beneath them. However, I'd say that it's not so much that dancefloors are no longer a place to come together under neoliberal capitalism, but rather that the dynamics of 'togetherness' and 'apartness' play out wildly different depending on various class-based, racialised, sexualised, gendered and ability-based factors. This is what exasperates Thaemlitz when she says as DJ Sprinkles, 'House is not universal...House is hyper-specific' and scoffs at 'greeting card bullshit' which oppressively universalises euphoric escapism.

AI: On the topic of specificity, its important to emphasise that 'savage thought' in QRT's account has none. Indeed it is stripped of historicity, just as 'savages' have been stripped of possessing history through the projection of fetishism upon them by European colonists. This is a problem that the tradition of European ethnography, even in its anti-colonial guise, in fact continued to reproduce. Take Jean Baudrillard's hybrid Marxist/anti-Marxist text *The Mirror of Production* (1975). The fantasy incubated in the

text of a completely transposable and profoundly unhistorical theory of experience, is uncritically celebrated by QRT under the guise of Marxist anti-colonial/anti-capitalist credentials. However, this celebration extends only so far as 'savage thought', as embodied on the dancefloor as 'the neutral aesthetic of dance', is further 'purified' and not 'watered down'. This language belies conflicting metaphors, both indicating a desire for immunisation against particularity or embodiment and 'dilution', e.g. by specificity, linguistic claims, history or the wrong 'impure' bodies. Indeed, this pairing of purification and techno appears logical, but it is obviously a tendency that has been steered off course over and again. The drive towards this purity of experience gains a sinister resonance in light of Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson's analysis, that 'business techno [is a] community that fundamentally pretends that oppression doesn't exist', and that platitudes like, 'its just about the music', which were in the past mobilised to defend the culture against criminalisation are now mobilised to mask, 'the gross reality that business techno is merely a tangent of white supremacy and capitalism and not counter to it.' The whitening of techno via this purification imperative at first glance manifests as an organic movement, but in retrospect can be seen to be shaped by a sequence of power moves that worship the inorganic and denigrate the expressive, joyful and different.

QRT's approach repeats a move in Enlightenment philosophy, notably the work of Immanuel Kant, where the capacity for critical judgement is predicated on a freedom from hunger and other bodily needs. The savage in turn is expelled from the sensus communis, not capable of aesthetic experience and not capable of critical judgement, as they are bound by their sensuality. QRT inverts this for techno, encoding 'savage experience' as direct sensuality without cognition through carrying over the immunisation against particular need, or particular personhood, into this newly aestheticised experience. Any gender or race – that is any gendering or racialisation which marks the subject also marks them out with the filth of need, or inequality – disqualifying them from the purity necessary for an enjoyment which is rather like that of Odysseus bound to the mast listening to the sirens. QRT's raver, then, finds themselves bound by inaction in order to maintain 'neutrality', no wonder… so many militaristic metaphors start to flow… the hardened body both open and totally closed to the experience of beauty.

AG: I mean… yes, it makes sense that the onto-epistemological subject of the white supremacist theory disco aligns with Kant! I think the dynamic to highlight is how the 'neutral' unmarked subject, capable of critical judgement etc, has the ability to deliberately descend into 'savage' activity on the weekends: it's a choice and a temporary one at that. It's an experience you can buy a la Burning Man.

AI: Yes, and returns as a business entrepreneur in the week!

in
business techno
the dynamics of white
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AG: Right now in London, local activists in Brixton are fighting a multi-million pound regeneration project which threatens to destroy multiple working-class black and brown communities. Notably, the project is spear-headed by a billionaire property-developer who is also a DJ. And it's not at all a coincidence that this figure is both a businessman and a DJ. The type of lifestyle and concept of leisure of this businessman-DJ, as Hutchinson speaks of in the article, make it abundantly clear that in business techno the dynamics of white supremacy and capitalism are intimately entwined. The pandemic exacerbates existing inequalities and it is laid bare within club culture whose leisure continues and in what manner.

AI: I think this was what Horkheimer and Adorno were getting at with the figure of Odysseus as the quasi-transhistorical (actually historical) bourgeois subject, his journey is an allegory of the voyages of merchants who travel the mediterranean interacting with monstrous others only to transform these experiences into a viable traffic in commodities. He appears to risk himself body and soul, but in fact is hard-wired to survive, to overcome both his own nature and that of others. Even the loss of self through musical and narcotic experience are subjected to restraint in order to further the project of social control.

> The fettered man listens to a concert, as immobilized as audiences later, and his enthusiastic call for liberation goes unheard as applause. [...] Between the cultural heritage and enforced work there is a precise correlation, and both are founded on the inescapable compulsion toward the social control of nature.[2]

Counter to QRT's futurism, this is a form of rational subjectivity and a model of experience which is not new, not suddenly available through a breakthrough in technology and breakdown of large state formations, rather it has haunted the long unfolding of enlightenment, and has shadowed it as the threat of its undoing; in turn integrated into it and neutralised.

> The effort to hold itself together attends the ego at all its stages, and the temptation to be rid of the ego has always gone hand-in-hand with the blind determination to preserve it. Narcotic intoxication, in which the euphoric suspension of the self is expiated by deathlike sleep, is one of the oldest social transactions mediating between self-preservation and self-annihilation, an attempt by the self to survive itself. The fear of losing the self, and suspending with it the boundary between oneself and other life, the aversion to death and destruction, is twinned with a promise of joy which has threatened civilization at every moment.[3]

I find these analogies pertinent to the white supremacist theory disco, even if I would severely question the race politics driving Adorno's remarks on jazz as 'popular music' which were echoed in the racist and homophobic demonisation of disco that peaked in the 1970s with a series of 'Disco Demolitions' taking place at stadium events in Chicago, with artists like Terre Thamelitz encountering its residues into the 1980s. On the other hand, the dynamic QRT's text explores parallels the experience of Odysseus – a model of the bourgeois subject, who abandons himself to self-annihilation only to re-master himself, 'nature' and dominate others – is definitely something intensified in modernity. We see an early articulation of this dissolution of the human into the machine in the first world war writings of Ernst Jünger and in the work of the Italian Futurists. This connection with Futurism is something noted by Benjamin Noys in his book *Malign Velocities*, naming this 'mutated and modulated futurism, which [...] straddles [...] genres, forms, and cultural domains', 'cypherpunk phuturism.' On the other hand, this is

[2] Adorno & Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. 27

[3] Adorno & Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. 26

a theme explored intensively, within Surrealism, and notably by several notable female Surrealists, provoked by the horrific scarring endured by returning soldiers, they reflected much less affirmatively on destruction and deformation of the human body in capitalism, and indicated that this logic was extended by commodification, rather than imagining transcendence through machinic 'perfection'. Indeed, error, dance, the uncanny, machines, is something Charlie Chaplin already worked on in a highly popular form. Perhaps this provides us another way to reconsider the seemingly mechanical choreography massified through rave as not simply a unidirectional becoming machine but rather a parody of industrial work and robotic, macho, machine-like conformity. Rave choreography in turn has a way to embrace err, or the glitch, as a way of breaking with the devastating congealment of power in industrial society.

where is the scope and what are the conditions for a transformative anti-capitalist, anti-racist, non-patriarchal politics of the dancefloor to occur?

AG: I'm interested in what differentiates these two poles of the white supremacist theory disco, the business techno pro-capitalist and the cyberpunk futuristic (purportedly) anti-capitalist. If the temporary loss of self – heightened through intensive music/sensory stimulation and psychoactive substances – only reaffirms the bourgeois (cis-white-male) subject and both sides might experience a similar sort of jouissance as a forbidden pleasure in such activities, then where is the scope and what are the conditions for a transformative anti-capitalist, anti-racist, non-patriarchal politics of the dancefloor to occur? I don't have any easy answers but clearly we have to begin with abolishing/tearing things down!

For the ULWC discussion I revisited a generative audiovisual composition and net-art project I made around 2013-14 called The Banality of Affect. It began as an investigation into trance music – as in: the largely Dutch, commercial electronic dance music genre – euphoria and the commodification of affects and emotion; attempting to create a system of sonically-induced euphoria based on various data streams from Twitter and the Dutch stock market. At the time when I presented the project, I had to emphasise that it wasn't in any way a simplistic derision of trance music or its related cultures (mass raves, superstar DJ-worship), but I was then and remain fascinated in the intersections between sonic articulations of emotions such as ecstasy and euphoria, and masculinity, whiteness, leisure industries and neoliberal mood-regulation. I suppose I created a space for this to be contemplated.

AI: Psychedelic trance would appear to be the antithesis of cold hard techno, or drum and bass. Aesthetically it makes claim to a vacant spirituality, tends towards the organic or at least fungal, feminine or at least seemingly aligning with female or androgynous deities... however, trance is orientalising of an imagined eastern other, much-beloved in macho cultures e.g. recent military conscripts in Israeli culture, and associated with the kind of contained white heterosexual hedonist transcendence which appropriates, but dare not actually engage with, the other. As your installation allegorises, trance mystifies social relations of exploitation, inequality and true difference in order to provide a temporary escape from them, all the better to put the back-from-holiday rational agents to work amidst all those forces in

the name of naked self-interest. Its distance from economic reality is what makes it quietly the most lucrative of the business techno pantheon. Again, this returns us to the theme of escape, which was explored in the Club through the image of the prince's castle in Poe's 'Masque of the Red Death', where the ruling class wall themselves within to create a realm of safety and revelry during the pandemic. This fantasy-space turns out to be entirely dependent on the exploitation of subordinated class others, therefore the plague – a metaphor for the social question of inequality and exploitation, work but also pleasure and joy – returns, breaching the castle's walls, to terrorise the ruling class would-be-escapees. The party peaks with an orgy of biological hubris as they succumb to the threat of the faceless 'red' death.

END

Links

Annie Goh, '"White Brothers With No Soul" UnTuning the Historiography of Berlin Techno: An interview with Alexander G. Weheliye', January, 2015, LINK

QRT, 'Tekknologic, Tekknowledge, Tekgnosis – Ein Theoriemix' Merve Verlag Berlin 1999 (Excerpt Translated by Annie Goh), LINK

Mike Urban, 'Privilege, wealth and power: Brixton landlord Taylor McWilliams and his Housekeeping DJ Collective' 26 May, 2020, LINK

Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson, 'Business Techno Matters: how those who have the most sacrifice the least', August 2020, LINK

Annie Goh, The Banality of Affect, 2013-14, LINK

Annie Goh, 'Appropriating the Alien', July 2019, LINK

Luis-Manuel Garcia, 'An Alternate History of Sexuality in Club Culture', January 2014 LINK

Luis-Manuel Garcia, Terre Thaemlitz on Queer Nightlife: the Unabridged Interview' February, 2014, LINK

Peter Kirn, 'No Love Parades this time: in the midst of crisis, an image of tonedeaf ravers in Berlin', June, 2020, LINK

Video footage of a Disco Demolition event in Chicago in 1979 LINK

'Disco Demolition: The Night They Tried to Crush Black Music', July 2019, LINK

Conversations:
Pokalbis tarp ULWC ir Palanga Street Radio

Vaida: Pradėsiu trumpai pristatydama „Ultimate Leisure Workers' Club“ – „Absoliutaus laisvalaikio darbuotojų klubą“. Apie jį pirmoji mintis užsivedė, kai darėme „Tarką“. Tai buvo įvykis, kolaboracija tarp jūsų kaip „Palanga Street Radio“ ir mano ko-kuruojamos projektų erdvės „Kabinetas“. Jis įvyko laikotarpiu, kai daug mąsčiau apie laisvą laiką, kas tai yra mūsų visuomenėje. Tai buvo 2018 metais, bet šios mintys nepaliko mano galvos. Tuo metu buvau apskritai pervargusi, dėl ko žvalgiausi į pasaulį ir bandžiau atsakyti sau tam tikrus klausimus. Kas yra laisvas laikas? Kokia yra būsena tarp darbo ir nedarbo? Kas, šiuo atžvilgiu, yra naktinis gyvenimas? „Tarka“ labai įkvėpė šias mintis. Tai buvo fainai, kolektyviškai įvykęs ir pavykęs reivas, kurį mes darėme dienos metu – apvertėme naktinį laisvalaikį aukštyn kojomis. Susirinko labai įdomūs žmonės, įdomioje vietoje. Tos mintys apie laisvalaikio ir kolektyvišumo apraiškas šiandieninėje visuomenėje, kapitalizmo laiku, ar veikiame kažką su muzika, bendruomene ar naktiniu gyvenimu – nepaleido, ir buvo vėliau jau labiau išdirbtos ULWC. „Palanga Street Radio“ man atrodo vienas iš tų veikėjų Lietuvoje, kurie lygioje būsenoje stato sampratas „bendruomeninis“ ir „radijas“. Jūsų apibūdinimas „bendruomeninis radijas, įsikūręs Vilniuje“, sutelpa į šiuos du žodžius. Jeigu jūs turėtumėte vietos daugiau sakinių, kaip jūs dar apibūdintumėte savo veiklą?

Ignas: Mes labai daug diskutuojame apie tai – nėra vientiso apibrėžimo, nes kiekvienas žmogus, kuris kuria radiją, atneša savo suvokimą apie tai, kas yra „Palanga“. Yra toks, sakyčiau, tarpusavio vertinimas, kur mes vienas kitam sakome: „Okay, man patinka, kaip tu suvoki šitą vyksmą.“ Net nenoriu PSR vadinti „projektu“. Pavyzdžiui, aš sakau: „Aš noriu fokusuotis į radijo dalį – man Palanga yra radijas, muzikinė platforma, kur žmonės per garsą, per muziką atskleidžia save”, o tarkim Daina turi savo viziją.

Daina: Aš įsivaizduoju „Palangą“ kaip inkubatorių, kuris jungia žmones. Jie susitinka toje erdvėje, ir iš to išsirutuliuoja kiti projektai, kuriuose „Palanga“ dalyvauja. Neseniai kalbėjomes apie video renginius, kuriuos mes pradėjome daryti – Ignas sakė, kad, galbūt, nereikėtų orientuotis ties video, nes mes esame radijas. Bet aš pagalvojau, kad gal mes po truputį tampame kažkuo daugiau, nei radijas. Ir, kas yra radijas, ar tradiciniai radijai Lietuvoje?

Vaida: Jūs nesate tradicinio supratimo radijas. Nesate „Žinių radijas“, neturite savo stoties. Nesate laida „ZIP FM'e“, kur daug kolegų iš muzikos pasaulio ten ėjo kurti savo laidas. Nuo jūsų veiklos pačios pradžios, turbūt, pavadinime buvo užkoduota daugiau. Mąsčiau apie „Palangos“ evoliuciją – nuo radijo Mindaugo miegamajame, iki radijo jau atskirame kambaryje tame pačiame Palangos gatvės bute, ir, paskui, išsikėlėte į studiją. Gal galime apie tai pamąstyti, apie radijo formatą, patyrusį šį virsmą?

Ignas: Mindaugai, kaip tau virsmas iš kambario į studiją?

Mindaugas: Normaliai. Bet aš galvojau, kad mes literally ir esame laisvalaikio darbuotojai, tad tu gerai pataikei, kreipdamasi į mus. Man rodosi, kad čia yra mūsų hobis ir laisvalaikis, bet, iš tikrųjų, dafiga dirbame ties tuo. O kaip mes pasikeitėme? Nežinau, man labai sunku būtų pasakyti… Aš iš šono beveik niekada negaliu pasižiūrėti ir stebėti, tai man būtų labai sunku.

Ignas: Bet tu gali iš vidaus.

Mindaugas: Iš vidaus? Patobulėjome.

Vaida: Būtų įdomu pamąstyti, kaip ir Mindaugas, apie „laisvalaikio darbuotojų“ terminą, kuris labai gerai nusako, kaip jūs veikiate.

Ignas: Man, asmeniškai, „Palanga“ visiškai pakeitė požiūrį į tai, kas yra darbas. Jeigu tu gyveni dieninio, tiesiogiai apmokamo darbo formatu, tai viskas labai aišku. Bet kai tik nukrypsti nuo to, ribos tarp darbo ir nedarbo pradeda nykti. Tai stipriai jaučiasi su „Palanga“. Tu dirbi labai daug, bet labai keistais ir neapčiuopiamais būdais, kuriuos sunku iškomunikuoti – į tai įeina ne tik manual labor, kai tu sėdi ir keli MP3 į folderius, nes tą reikia padaryti, antraip žmonės negalės klausyti. Bet yra ir visa ta dalis, kuomet tu palaikai socialinį tinklą ir žmones emociškai, įdedi žiauriai daug darbo, kad užtikrintum solidarumą tarpusavyje. O kaip tai įvertinti? Kaip tai, išvis, suvokti kaip darbą? Gal net nesinori taip suvokti, bet, kartu, tai kainuoja daug laisvalaikio.

Vaida: Kalbame apie darbą, kurį, kaip ir sakei, sunku apibrėžti kaip tokį. Jūsų atveju, tai yra darbas, kuris vyksta ne tik į išorę, bet ir į vidų, kalbant apie bendruomenę. Į radiją neinate vesti laidos, nes tai yra jūsų darbas, tačiau todėl, kad tai yra skirta ir jūsų bendruomenės vystymui. Šitie du aspektai man atrodo neatsiejami.

Daina: Manau, kad, kai mes persikėlėme į studiją, joje darbas tapo profesionalesnis, nes atsirado daugiau įrangos, daugiau laisvės žmonėms ateiti ir dirbti joje. Bet, vis vien, bandome palaikyti šeimyniškumą ir žmonių priėmimą. Pavyzdžiui, aš atsimenu, kai aš pati pirmą kartą apsilankiau „Palangoje“ ir mane hostino Mindaugas, kurio aš nepažinojau. Jaučiausi esanti saugioje erdvėje, nesijaudinau ir galėjau atsiverti. Mes tai vis dar skatiname ir bandome išlaikyti „Palangoje“. Nors didėja ir žmonių skaičius, juos mes vis mažiau pažįstame, nes plečiasi tas ratas, bet bandome išlaikyti savo vertybes. Tai daro šį darbą labai svarbiu. Net vakar Ignas sakė: „Nesiparink, čia gi ne darbas.“ Sakau: „Jo, svarbiau negu darbas.“

Vaida: Ar jums asmeniškai būtų noras, kad tai būtų veikla, kuri išlaiko jus finansiškai?

Mindaugas: Man – nebūtinai.

Daina: Aš atsimenu, kad pačioje pradžioje labai norėjau, kad taip būtų. Dabar matau, kad tai galėtų kažkada tapti tai, bet jau nebenorėčiau.

Mindaugas: Reikia, kad būtų struggle.

Daina: Tada tai praranda kažkokį žavumą. Dabar tu esi, tarsi, įsipareigojęs, bet ne iki galo. Jeigu turėtum gyventi iš to, tada jau būtų kitoks požiūris.

Ignas: Man dar atrodo, kad ne tik asmeninis požiūris pasikeistų, bet kai veikla tampa matuojama pinigais, neišvengiamai pradedi lyginti – kažkas gavo už vienokį darbą pinigus, o už kitokį – ne. Tai transformuoja visą projektą ir bendruomenę. Gal įmanoma kažkaip transformuotis ir integruoti pinigus į tai, bet tai atrodo pavojingai. Šie aspektai šiek tiek išryškėjo ir pas mus, kuomet atsirado daugiau projektinės veiklos su institucijomis. Kyla sudėtingų jausmų, kuomet pradedi klausti: „Kiek mūsų darbas kainuoja? Kiek jis yra vertas?“ Dėl to keičiasi ir vertybinė pusė.

Vaida: Gal tada tai ir pavirsta projektu – ir nesinori to žodžio vartoti, nes man, dirbant kultūroje, kiekvienas dalykas, kiekviena mano veikla, yra projektas. Tada egzistencija ir tampa tokia.

Mindaugas: Bet ir negali sakyti, kad darbu. Tenka vis tiek kažkokį žodį sugalvoti.

Ignas: Aš tai vadinčiau „veikla“, akcentuojant, kad tai yra ne kažkas laikina, o vyksmas, kuris neturi numatytos pabaigos.

Vaida: Jo, nes veikla gali būti neapibrėžta laike, ar pasibaigus finansiniams ištekliams nebūtinai reiškia, kad ji baigsis. Bet visai gerai, kad palietėme šią temą. Būtų įdomu atsidaryti šiek tiek daugiau jūsų vidinę ekonomiką. Galite pasakoti apie tai, kiek norite. Klausimas yra ne apie tai, kiek pas jus ateina pinigų. Pradėjote imtis daugiau iniciatyvos, kuri reikalinga jūsų veikloms paremti – darote „Patreon“, taip pat laimėjote projektinį finansavimą, darėte video koncertų seriją, bendradarbiavote su institucijomis.

Ignas: Reikėtų grįžti laiku atgal. Iš pradžių, „ekonomika” buvo tai, kad mes kiekvienas sunešame savo pinigus ir iš tų pinigų kažką kuriame. Kol viskas buvo Mindaugo kambaryje, tai pinigų nelabai ir reikėjo. Kai atsirado studija, kurią reikia nuomotis, pinigų poreikis iškart padidėjo. Kaip tu minėjai, yra, kas padeda mums įdėti mažiau savų pinigų. Viena, tai tiesioginė bendruomenės parama per „Patreon“. Man atrodo, ši sistema labai gražiai veikia, nes ji nėra vien tik apie pinigus. Žmonės remia, nes jiems įdomu. Ir, kai jiems įdomu, tai ir mums įdomu – mes tada galime su jais bendrauti, smagu palaikyti santykius su bendruomene. Ši finansinė parama mums yra tikrai vertinga, bet kartu nesijaučia, kad tai mus per daug įpareigoja, keičia ar verčia nukrypti. Kitas pajamų šaltinis, kurį bandome plėtoti, yra projektų įgyvendinimas. Iš tikrųjų, neseniai įvykęs „Sealed“ projektas, remtas Lietuvos kultūros tarybos, buvo pats pirmas, kai mus tiesiogiai finansavo kaip „Palangos“ VšĮ. Tiesa, beveik visi tie pinigai išėjo projekto dalyvių darbui ir honorarams padengti, tad prie radijo išgyvenimo šios pajamos prisidėjo nedaug.

Daina: Atsimenu, kad labai svarbus įvykis „Palangos“ gyvenime buvo tapti tuo VšĮ, legaliu visuomenės dalyviu. Mes projektus visai ilgai, jau kokius du metus, bandome rašyti. Mums labai sunkiai sekasi surasti instituciją ar savo vietą, kur būtų parašyta, kad „Palangos radijui“ yra konkursas – pateikite projektą, ir ten gausite finansavimą. Palanga visą laiką tarsi laviruoja tarp skirtingų kultūros disciplinų. Labai sudėtinga išsiaiškinti, kas mes esame. Ar mums reikia aplikuoti į muzikos sritį, ar tai tarpdisciplininis menas, ar tai radijas? Mūsų kaip radijo iš viso nepripažįsta. Tos paieškos jau po truputį išsigrynina, nes patys kuriame savo „Palangos“ koncepciją būtent per tai, ką jau padarėme. Aš taip suvokiu.

esi verčiamas
pateikti save ne taip, kaip
esi, o taip, kaip reikia parašyti
ant popieriaus

Ignas: Svarbus aspektas, kad, bent jau lietuviškame muzikos kontekste, bendruomeninė veikla yra suprantama kaip šokio ansambliai, pučiamųjų orkestrai ar dar kažkas. Labai apčiuopiamas organizmas. O, mūsų atveju, jis yra labiau abstraktus – per muziką ir kūrybinę laisvę besisiejančių žmonių asociacija. Tam gauti paramą labai sunku.

Vaida: Kaip ir sakėte, kad sunku save apsibrėžti ir visa tai tampa sudėtinga. Ypač, kai reikia ant popieriaus sudėti ir pasakyti: „Čia yra vertinga, nes tokie bus skaičiai, tokie bus rezultatai.“ Aš labai suprantu jūsų finansavimo struggle. Žinau, kad muzikos srityje labai sunku gauti finansavimą tam, kas nėra klasikinė ar kitaip oficialiai pripažinta muzika. Tarpdisciplininio meno srityje labai sunku, jei tai nėra vizualus menas, performansas, tad radijui irgi labai sudėtinga. Aš irgi esu susidūrusi su tuo, kai reikia save apibrėžti, kad būtų tam tikra finansinė grąža, tačiau, kartais, tai turi įrankio prieskonį – kai savęs apsibrėžimas neateina iš natūralios būsenos, o dėl tam tikros naudos.

Ignas: Tikrai yra tas, kad esi verčiamas pateikti save ne taip, kaip esi, o taip, kaip reikia parašyti ant popieriaus.

Mindaugas: Dėl to, šnekant apie pinigus, svarbiausias finansavimas yra iš „patreonų“, nes jie remia mus tokius, kokie esame, kaip viską suvokiame ir darome. O rašome projektus, bandome pritempti kažką, įtikti. It’s not it.

Ignas: Dažniausiai norėtum parašyti „Finansuokite mūsų pastangas, finansuokite šitą įdedamą darbą ir sukurtą bendruomeniškumą.“ Bet to niekas nefinansuos. Tada, vietoje to, rašai: „Mes sukursime projektą.“ Ir tada grįžti nuo vyksmo prie projektų.

Vaida: Čia, kaip sakote, susiveda daug taškų – ir bendruomenės, ir finansų klausimas. Galbūt išsiplečia pati bendruomenės sąvoka. Jūs pradėjote bendruomeninį radiją, kuriame yra apibrėžtas skaičius, nedidelė grupė žmonių, kurie vis prisijungia organiškai prie uždaro rato. Dabar, kaip Daina sako, ratas plečiasi, lyg jau mažiau pažįstate žmones, galbūt jie prisijungia jau kitu būdu, ar atėjo tuo metu, kai jūs tapote jau atskira studija – o ne kai pas Mindę ateinama į miegamąjį pahanginti ir mixą įrašyti. Tuomet jus finansiškai paremia tokius, kokie jūs esate, jums nereikia nieko įtikinėti. Įdomu, kaip jūsų bendruomenės samprata keičiasi su tuo.

Daina: Man bendruomenės sąvoka nesikeičia. Mus remia tie žmonės, kurie yra patikėję idėja ir viskuo, kas jau buvo ir kas vyksta. Man atrodo, tie tolimesni žmonės nėra tiek daug suinteresuoti.

Vaida: Ką turi omenyje „tolimesni žmonės“?

Mindaugas: Ateiviai.

Daina: Ne draugų draugai. Nebent kažkas žiauriai pagauna konceptą ar jiems kažkas labai patinka. Mes turime tokių žiauriai true fanų, kas yra labai smagu, bet jų nėra daug. Vis vien, pagrinde, yra žmonės, kurie pažįsta vieni kitus. Ignas: Arba susipažįsta per „Palangą“.

Daina: Manau, kad ši mano nuomonė galėtų pakisti, jeigu būtų galima pajausti tai per naujus bendruomeninius renginius, nes dabar mes viską vykdome tik studijoje. Anksčiau dar turėjome gyvus renginius, kuomet vizualiai pamatai žmonių scope, kurie ateina ir appreciatina viską, o dabar nėra to kontakto. Dėl to sunku suvokti.

Vaida: Čia kalbi grynai apie pandemijos situaciją, ar tai kažkas iš anksčiau?

Daina: Gal ir pandemijos metu, ir prieš tai.

Mindaugas: Pandemijos metu daug kas sumažino „Patreon“ sumą – iš 5 į 2, iš 2 į 1, iš 1 į 0 eurų.

Ignas: Ir tai suprantama. Bet aš dar norėjau grįžti prie padidėjusios bendruomenės ir kontaktų skaičiaus. Neseniai diskutavom apie terminą „kuratorinė prabanga“ – būseną, kai ne tik imi viską ką tau duoda, bet kai leidi sau filtruoti ir atsirinkti, ar turinys atitinka tavo kriterijus, vertybes, prioritetus. Mes turbūt jau esame tokiam etape, kur turime šiokią tokią „kuratorinę prabangą” – kai atsiranda žmogus, kuris nori muzikaliai ar kitaip prisidėti, mes galime iškelti tokį klausimą: „Ar mes norime dabar tam skirti jėgas ir palaikymą? Ar visi supranta, kodėl tai yra svarbu?“. Potencialiai, tai reiškia jog kartais tenka atstumti žmones, bet, kartu, tai stiprina mūsų savęs suvokimą ir išgrynina veiklos gaires.

Mindaugas: Bet čia labiau dėl to, kad mes negalime apimti to masto. Ne dėl to, kad mes renkamės – šitas geresnis, šitas fainesnis.

Ignas: Turiu omeny, kad atsiranda natūralus procesas, kur tu klausi savęs: „Ar čia labiau fainai, ar mažiau fainai?“

Mindaugas: Man rodos, tai nuo pat pradžių buvo, visiškai neužrašyta ir neapsitarta, tiesiog mes taip iš intuicijos darėme. O dabar per meetus ir labai dalykiškai pažiūrime – „Blemba, neturime žmonių, negalime priimti.“

Vaida: Manau, kad procesas informuoja vienas kitą – kai laikas bėga ir jo eksponentiškai mažėja, o dalykų daugėja, tuomet atsiranda atsirinkimo procesas. Aš irgi esu jį perėjusi. Tada gal yra vienokia prabanga – turėti laiko ir galimybę viską permąstyti, priimti. Tada pereina į kitą prabangą, kur jau atsirinksi, kitiems dalykams skirsi laiką.

Ignas: Man patinka terminas „kuratorinė prabanga“, nes tai verčia į šį procesą žiūrėti ne kaip į vargą, o į privilegiją. Mano pirma reakcija taip pat buvo „O, ne! Dabar reikia atsirinkti, kažką atstumti, kažkam pasakyti „ne.“ Vargas. Bet kai įvardini tai kaip „prabangą“, tada galvoji „Gerai, super – čia galia/laisvė rinktis“.

Vaida: Labai geras pastebėjimas.

Daina: Manau, faina, kad pas mus komandoje atsiranda vis daugiau žmonių, kurie gali arba nori prisiimti tai, ir leidžia tai sau. Tada jie pagal savo skonį renkasi, ką kuruoja. Kažkaip dar kitaip atsiskleidžia tos radijo spalvos per papildomus žmones.

Vaida, Mindaugas: „Radijo spalvos“.

Mindaugas: Viskas – laida.

Vaida: Minėjai, Daina, kad pradėjai galvoti apie kitus formatus, pavyzdžiui, video, kuris irgi tikriausiai ateina su laiku, daug ką prasibandžius ir pagalvojus, kur tai dar gali eiti. Man būtų įdomu, jei papasakotumėte apie video koncertų projektą (ar veiklą), nes tai susiję su pandemine situacija. Nors atrodo, kad pandemija ar ne – radijas veikia. Nors, turbūt, kai tai yra „bendruomeninio radijo“ formatas, pandemija tai paveikia bet kokiu atveju.

Ignas: Apie „Sealed” koncertus galbūt aš galiu papasakoti, nes prie to daugiau dirbau. Mes buvome patys savęs įkvėpti daryti live streamus, nes iš patirties jautėm kad video dimensija stipriai sujungia žmones. Užtenka parodyti truputį vaizdo, kad tam „materializuotųsi” sąryšis su radiju ir garsu, nes tuomet žmonės suvokia visą vyksmą kaip apčiuopiamą dalyką su „realiais” žmonėmis, o ne kažkokią abstrakciją. „Sealed” projekto tikslas buvo parodyti, iš kur gimsta „alternatyvi” muzika – iš jaunų ar mažiau žinomų kūrėjų, kurie, galbūt, neturi daug platformų, kur pasireikšti. Pagrindinė idėja buvo perkelti klausytoją į kūrybos užkulisius ir parodyti, kad „Štai, šie žmonės užsidaro į kažkokį rūsį, sėdi ten ir repetuoja valandų valandas. Čia yra jų būvis.“ Žinoma, tuo pačiu visas projektas buvo susietas su pandeminiu laikotarpiu ir tuo, kad atlikėjai apskritai negali pasiekti žmonių ir koncertuoti gyvai, todėl šios gyvos video transliacijos buvo ir kaip virtualūs koncertai.

Vaida: Kaip jūs išgyvenate pandemiją, kaip tai keičia jūsų vidinius veikimo būdus, formatus ar turinį?

Mindaugas: Kartais įdomiau, bet tik labai kartais. Dabar, pavyzdžiui, studijoje vienu metu gali ateiti daugiausia vienas žmogus. Tai truputį liūdna, nes tai kažkiek riboja laisvę ir kūrybą. Kita vertus, bandai atrasti naujų būdų, bet, čia gal yra labiau vidiniame rate. Kai derini su žmonėmis, kurie savo pirmą ar antrą mixą nori atsiųsti ir norėtų ateiti į studiją, bet tu turi sakyti: „Nu, gal kažkaip įrašyk ir atsiųsk.“ Tada jau tikrai atitolsti nuo pagrindinio bendruomeniškumo. Bet, aišku, nėra kur dėtis.

Vaida: Tada jau tampi, kaip sakai, dar vienu radiju, kur tiesiog atsiunčiamas mixas ir jį paleidžia.

Mindaugas: Tai mums ypatingai kerta, nes mes tokie: „Ateik, prisiglausk! Arbatos, viską.“
Ignas: Dar, man atrodo, tie renginiai, kuriuos darydavome (nesvarbu, ar dažniau, ar rečiau), sukurdavo lokalumo jausmą. Ta bendruomenė pamato vieni kitus ir supranta, kad „Ai, jo, čia tikri žmonės. Mes esame bendruomenė.“ O dabar visiškai to nebeliko. Yra atitolimas nuo visu žmonių. Tai yra gana sunku.

Ignas: Bet, iš pozityvesnės pusės, dėl pandemijos radijas sprogsta visiškai, nes žiauriai daug susidomėjimo ir visi nori daryti laidas. Nes, viena – kai žmonėms nebelieka kitų būdų save išreikšti, tai radijas tampa nauju įrankiu tam. Kita – žmonės sėdi namie ir visiems bloga nuo žiūrėjimo į kompą, o radijas nereikalauja to – pasileidi radiją ir tiesiog veiki kažką namie. Tad, ironiška, bet pandemija mums yra savotiškas aukso amžius.

Vaida: Dar būtų įdomu paklausti apie tai, kad pastaraisiais metais pas jus atsirado daug turinio, kuris susijęs su kultūros institucijomis, organizacijomis. Tapote neatsiejami nuo daugumos parodų ir kitų kultūrinių veiklų. Kaip šis posūkis įvyko, ir kaip jį toliau matote?

Mindaugas: Jo, bet, man rodos, mes įėjome į tai kaip amateurs. Man patinka, jeigu kažkas bent kažkiek susiję su menu, tai amateur, o jeigu peržengia ribą, tai neįdomu. Bent jau man, ir daug kam iš mūsų taip yra. Man rodos, kad niekas nepasikeitė, bent jau iš to mąstymo.

Ignas: Mindaugai, turi omeny, kad jeigu supportiname laidą, susijusią su menu, tai ji turi būti amateur?

Mindaugas: Bet taip ir būdavo. Arba, konkrečiai neapčiuopiama riba.

Daina: Tu sakai tie, kurie ateina interviu duoti yra amateurs?

Mindaugas: Ne, čia dėl to, kad Vaida šnekėjo apie meno renginius.

Vaida: Jo, turbūt turiu omeny tai, kad pas jus atsirado daug turinio, kuris yra susijęs su kultūros, vizualaus meno lauku.

Ignas: Trys laidos, ir bus ketvirta dar.

Daina: Aš galvoju, kada buvo tas lūžio taškas, ir kas pradėjo tas pirmas laidas, gal tavo, Mindaugai, interviu su Pauliumi Petraičiu? Gal jis uždavė natą, o mūsų bendruomenėje natūraliai yra žmonių, kurie yra iš kultūros. Gal jie pamatė, kad mes leidžiame tokią informaciją per radiją.

Ignas: „Palanga“ nuo pat pradžių turėjo kontaktą su meno institucijomis, su vizualiniu menu. Vienas pirmųjų viešų renginių buvo „Rooster gallery“ – visiškai atsitiktinai. Nuo seno daug bendradarbiaujam su „Rupert“. Plius, kadangi vis pasirodydavome viešoje erdvėje kartu su „rimtomis” institucijomis, manau, tai padėjo įgauti šiokį tokį vardą ir pasitikėjimą, supratimą, kad mes nesam kažkokie–

Mindaugas: Tusovčikai.

Ignas: Jo, kad PSR nėra kažkoks trashas. Iš to pasitikėjimo atsirado dar daugiau galimybių, ir, kuo daugiau sėkmingų įvykių, tuo daugiau kontakto. Dabar turime netgi keletą laidų, kurios susiję su konkrečiais kultūriniais / instituciniais kontekstais, kas yra labai smagu.

Vaida: Referuojant į tai, ką kalbėjome, man buvo labai įdomus ir svarbus momentas uždėti veidus ant radijo – kuomet su jumis susipažinau ir pamačiau, kad „Palanga“ yra reali grupė žmonių. Iki tol galvojau, kad tikrai būsite iš menų, kad tai yra kas nors iš mano kolegų, pasidarę anoniminiais. Tuomet paaiškėjo, kad tai visiškai nebuvo taip, o, kai su jumis susipažinau, pradėjau ir visai kitaip suvokti jūsų veiklą.

Ignas: Grįžtant atgal prie diskusijos, kuria pradėjome – ar Palanga turi būti visapusis meno „inkubatorius”, ar vis tik fokusuotis ir būti radijo platforma – man atrodo, kad PSR verta riboti save ties muzika/garsu, nes tuomet mes esam labiau prieinami amateur kūrėjams, kurie visą laiką buvo mūsų „fokusas”. Tau patinka kažkokia muzika, tu ja tiki ir nori ja nuoširdžiai pasidalinti? Ateik, pasidalink. Mums faina, kad tu esi išjautęs ją. Jei PSR taptu kultūriniu inkubatorium, tai gali žmones gąsdinti, gali atrodyti jog mūsų veikla skirta tik išmanantiems ‘high–art’. Faina išlaikyti paprastumą Palangos veide – „Mes tiesiog radijukas. Čia, gabaliukai, čia radijukas, čia cat pictures. Viskas okay.“ Tokiu būdu mes liekam prieinami, ir tai labai svarbu. Mes galime palaikyti stiprius ryšius su meninėmis institucijomis, daryti sudėtingus projektus, bet išlaikyti tą prieinamą veidą, manau, yra būtina.

Mindaugas: Lygiai taip pat – nenurašyti institucijų. Nesakyti, kad per daug fancy. Jeigu tai yra bendruomeninis radijas, tai negali į nei vieną pusę būti kategoriškas.

Ignas: Taip, faina, kad Palanga gali būti kaip mediatorius tarp abiejų pusių.

Daina: Aš visgi manau, kad galima būti ir tuo inkubatoriumi, ir galima vis vien palaikyti tą lo–fi vaibą. Nes mes vis tiek neprarasime savo interpretacijos, kaip mes grojame muziką, kaip mes darome garšvą – visi šie dalykai išliks ir jie niekada nebus aukštesnis menas. Nebent kažkada pripažins.

Vaida: Mąstau, kad ta amateur sąvoka yra labai įdomi. Tai susiveda ir į tai, ką šiek tiek kalbėjome pradžioje. Laisvalaikio darbuotojai – ar tai darbas, ar ne darbas? Nes jeigu ne darbas, jeigu tai nėra tavo profesija, iš kurios tu gyveni, tai tada tu esi amateur kategorijoje. Tam tikra prasme, jūsų pasilikimas amateur kategorijoje galėtų būti statusas, kurio jums nebūtina pamesti, nors tai darote labai profesionaliai.

Ignas: Visiškai.

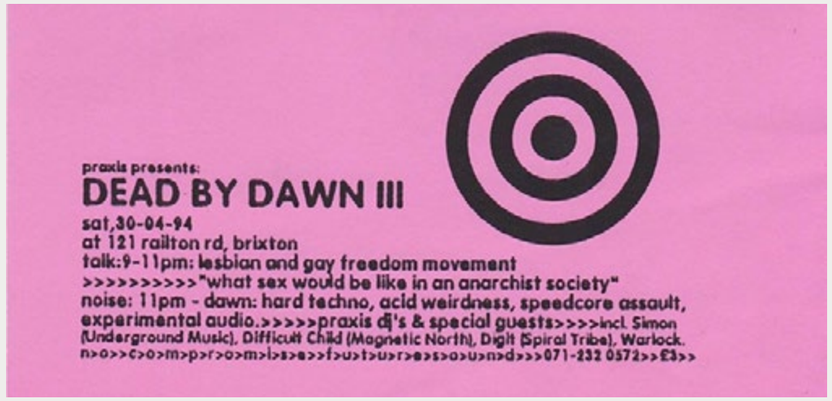
Mindaugas: Visada yra kur būti amateur.

Vaida: Va, uždaromoji mintis.

Clubstories:

Dead By Dawn, 121 Centre, Brixton, 1994–1996

Neil Transpontine
History is Made at Night



Dead by Dawn was a techno and speedcore club in Brixton, South London that ran from 26 February 1994 until 6 April 1996. In itself this was nothing particularly unusual – at the time it felt that every available social space was being taken over by record decks, speaker stacks and dancers – in Brixton there was plenty varieties of techno to be heard. But Dead by Dawn was unique, and not just because its music was the hardest and fastest to be heard in London at that time.

Dead by Dawn was only discovered by the mainstream dance music press after it had ceased. A Mixmag article by Tony Marcus on 'Hooligan Hardcore: the story of Gabber' (July 1997) stated that 'In London, the music is supported by the crustie scene or parties like last year's Dead by Dawn events, hosted by the Praxis label, conceptual events that were preceded by Mexican Revolutionary films or talks on topics like Lesbians in Modern Warfare.' Likewise, it wasn't until September 1997 that The Face published an article by Jacques Peretti, 'Is this the most diabolical club in Britain', documenting the speedcore/noise scene: 'Like any embryonic scene, no one quite knows what to call it yet. But at the clubs where it's being played (Rampant, Sick and Twisted, Dead by Dawn, Acid Munchies) they're also calling it Black Noise, Titanic Noise, Hooligan Hardcore, Gabber Metal, Hellcore, Fuck-You-Hardcore or, my favourite, by a severed arm's length, Third World War' (the 'diabolical' club written about was incidentally Rampant at Club 414, also in Brixton).

Dead by Dawn is also name-checked in Simon Reynolds' book Energy Flash (1998): 'The anarcho-crusties belong to an underground London scene in which gabba serves as the militant sound of post-Criminal Justice Act anger. A key player in this London scene is an organisation called Praxis, who put out records, throw monthly Dead by Dawn and publish the magazine Alien Underground.' All of these references contain some truth, but don't really convey the real flavour of the night. This is my attempt to do so and also reflect on the wider politics around the club and 1990s techno.

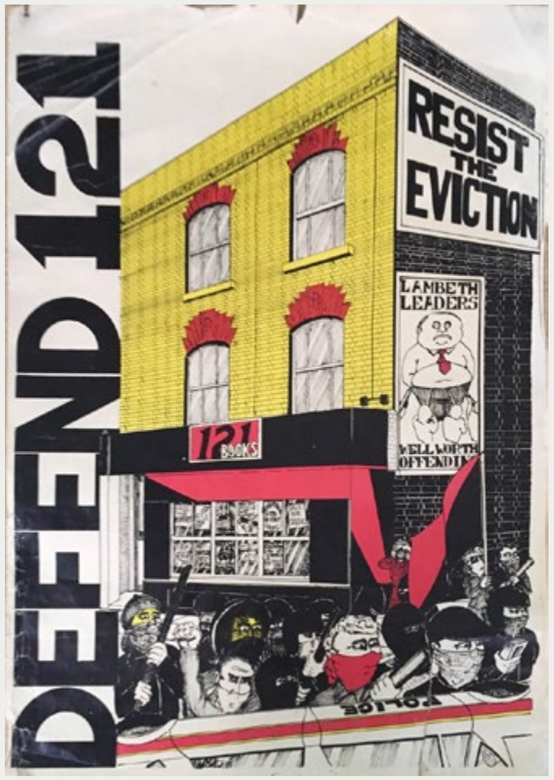
Railton Road and the 121 Centre

Dead by Dawn took place on the first Saturday of the month at the 121 Centre, a squatted anarchist social centre at 121Railton Road in Brixton, South London.

Railton Road in this period was a major focus for Brixton's large African Caribbean community and had become known as the 'front line' for conflicts between local black youth and the police which culminated in the major riots of 1981 and 1985. The radical black magazine Race Today had its HQ at 165 Railton Road in the 1970s and early 1980s, its collective including the dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson and leading activist Darcus Howe. The Trinidadian Marxist CLR James, a mentor to the collective, lived out his later years in a flat in the same building. The area was known for its shebeens, unlicensed black nightclubs that popped up and were periodically closed down by the police.

The area was also home to many squatters who occupied empty houses and other buildings. The UK's first gay centre, the South London Gay Community Centre, was squatted by the South London Gay Liberation Front in 1974 and served as a meeting/social space as well as holding discos in its basement. Although long gone by the time Dead by Dawn came along, the area still had a significant LGBTIQ scene.

121 Railton Road had first been squatted in 1973 by a group that included Olive Morris of the Brixton Black Panthers. It continued as Sabarr, a radical black bookshop, until 1980. In 1981 it was squatted again and became an anarchist bookshop and social centre, remaining as one of London's longest lasting squats until it was finally evicted in 1999. The building was converted to private flats in an area becoming gentrified from which the last remnants of squatter culture were being erased.



The Centre was essentially a three storey (plus cellar) Victorian end of terrace house. By the mid-1990s the top floor housed a print room and an office used by radical publications including Bad Attitude (a feminist paper) and Contraflow (radical news sheet), the latter had been part of the European Counter Network – an early radical internet project. Below that was a kitchen/cafe space, decorated with graffiti art murals. Food rescued from local skips discarded by shops and markets was turned into meals of variable quality. On the groundfloor there was a bookshop and occasional lounge area with sofas. Down a wooden staircase was a small damp basement with silver painted walls used for gigs and parties.

The space was used for all kinds of events: meetings, benefit gigs and cafes, film nights etc. Many groups used the centre at various times including Brixton Squatters Aid, Brixton Hunt Saboteurs, Food not Bombs, Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax, London Socialist Film Co-op, Anarchist Black Cross and the Troops Out Movement. It was one of the key venues for the first Queeruption festival in 1998. There were close links between the 121 Centre and the 56a Infoshop, another South London radical centre which is still open today in the Elephant and Castle area. In 1994 the 121 Centre and 56a hosted an International Infoshop Gathering, which brought people together in London from similar projects across Europe and North America.

Dead by Dawn

Dead by Dawn (DbD) was therefore by no means the first party held at the 121 Centre though it was the most substantial regular club night held there. The basement of the 121 Centre was where the decks and dancefloor were set up for Dead by Dawn, but the rest of the building was used too, 'Dead by Dawn has never been conceived as a normal club or party series: the combination of talks, discussions, videos, internet access, movies, an exhibition, stalls, etc. with an electronic disturbance zone upstairs and the best underground DJs in the basement has made DbD totally unique and given it a special intensity and atmosphere' (Praxis Newsletter 7, October 1995).

Musically, the initial driving force behind DbD was Christoph Fringeli of Praxis records. The notion of praxis, of a critical practice informed by reflection and thought informed by action, was concretely expressed at Dead by Dawn with a programme of speakers and films before the party started. A key theme played with around Dead by Dawn was that of the Invisible College, a sense of kindred spirits operating in different spheres connecting with each other. Those invited to give talks were seen as operating on similar lines to Dead by Dawn. They included the Advance Party (opposing the anti-rave Criminal Justice Act), the London Psychogeographical Association, Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, the Association of Autonomous Astronauts and the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Movement whose question of 'what will sex be like in an anarchist society' remains unanswered. I particularly remember a talk on women and drugs by Sadie Plant, author of *The Most Radical Gesture: the Situationist International in the Post-Modern Age*. Of course, only a minority of those who came to party came to the earlier events, but I recall intense discussions going on throughout the night on staircases and in corners.

It is important to state though the DbD was not an abstract, over-intellectualised event; it was a real club, complete with smoke, sweat, drugs (maybe more of a speed than an ecstasy vibe), people hooking up with each other and general messiness.

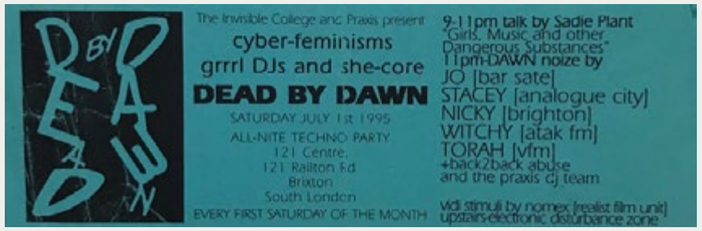
The crowd included people who came from around London and beyond – especially for the night – Brixton Euro-anarcho-squatters for whom 121 was their local – at the time there was a particular concentration of Italians in the area – and the usual random collection of passers-by looking for something to do when the pubs shut, including odd dubious characters. UTR (Underground Techno Resistance) zine warned in August 1995: 'if you go to the Dead by Dawn parties watch out for the bastard hanging around passing off licorice as block on unsuspecting out of their heads party goers. We suggest if he tries it on you that you give him a good kicking. You don't need shit like that at a party.'

DbD was one point in a network of sound systems and squat parties stretching across Europe and beyond, through Teknivals, parties and clubs. I remember talking to somebody there one night who had just got back from Croatia and Bosnia with Desert Storm Sound System. They'd put on a New Year's party (January '95) where British UN soldiers brought a load of beer from their base before being chased back to base by their head officer.

Hardcore is not a Style

Dead by Dawn took place in a period of rapid mutation in electronic dance music, in the aftermath of the late 1980s 'acid house' explosion in the UK. This had been based initially on US house and techno and the efforts of home grown imitators. By 1994 the era of giant unlicensed raves had more or less come to an end and were channelled into indoor clubs which increasingly specialised in a bewildering proliferation of micro-scenes and sub-genres. House music became differentiated into progressive house, hard house, deep house, garage etc., and new forms of breakbeat dominated sounds emerged from the hardcore scene. What was initially known as 'jungle' soon too flowed in many different streams – darkcore, intelligent drum and bass, techstep, etc.

In terms of techno, we can see some of this evolution going on contemporaneously to Dead by Dawn at other spaces in the Brixton area. At the nearby Fridge nightclub a new psychedelic/goa trance scene was finding expression in clubs like Return to the Source and Escape from Samsara, characterised by a hippy aesthetic and orientalist imagery. A flyer for Escape from Samsara promised 'cheap entry with drum or didg' – the didgeridoo being an appropriated Australian aboriginal musical instrument. Suffice to say there were no drums or didg at Dead by Dawn.



Meanwhile at Club 414, just around the corner from Railton Road, the Liberator DJs 'Nuclear Free Zone' nights were beginning to give birth to the 303-drenched London acid techno sound. Associated with Stay Up Forever records, this was to become the dominant soundtrack of the squat/free party scheme in the second half of the 1990s.

Closer to Dead by Dawn musically were the VFM techno nights, held at various places around London including the Vox club in Brixton. Dead by Dawn's Christoph Fringeli played out there, while VFM founder Jason Mendonca played at Dead by Dawn. The Vox club was also known for its 'Institute of Dubology' reggae nights. Later in the 1990s it became the gay club Sub Station South, hosting the influential 'Queer Nation' night among others. Also nearby to 121 was Cool Tan, a squatted former unemployment benefit office, which hosted many parties, as well as housing the office for Freedom Network, set up to oppose the anti-rave Criminal Justice Act.

Dead by Dawn was known for 'cutting edge hardcore and hard experimental sounds to challenge the techno establishment' (Panacea zine, 1995). Techno itself was becoming more mainstream, and even being framed in some quarters in a racist way as a uniquely white European dance music.

As sometime DbD party goer Alexei Monroe (2002) put it, Dead by Dawn saw 'some of the most extreme sounds to have been heard in London playing to an audience of one or two hundred in an almost stereotypically bleak basement space' ('Bread and (Rock) Circuses: sites of sonic conflict in London' in Imagined London edited by Pamela K. Gilbert). The sounds that were played at 121 including speedcore, gabber and some more black metal-tinged sounds: Jason Mendonca's black-hooded satanists Disciples of

Belial played at the closing party. But DbD was not defined by any of these genres – indeed what separated DbD from many of the other 'noise' clubs was an ongoing critique of all genre limitations: 'Hardcore is not a style... Hardcore is such a sonic weapon, but only as long as it doesn't play by the rules, not even its own rules (this is where Jungle, Gabber etc. fail). It could be anything that's not laid back, mind-numbing or otherwise reflecting, celebrating or complementing the status quo' (Praxis Newsletter 7, 1995).

This refusal to be confined meant that DbD sometimes challenged its own crowd. Reviewing one party, the Institute of Fatuous Research complained that 'we were sorely disappointed to have to watch the spectacle of certain elements getting angry because some Dark Jungle was playing out. Did this so offend their techno tastebuds that they had to spout their pathetic invective against breakbeats?' (Alien Underground 0.1). Sometimes there were live PAs, for example by Digital Hardcore Recording's Berlin breakbeat merchants, Sonic Subjunkies.

Even with gabber it was possible to get into a kind of automatic trance setting – after all it was still essentially a 4:4 beat, albeit very fast. The experience of dancing at DbD was more like being on one of those fairground rides which fling you in one direction, then turn you upside down and shoot off at a tangent with no predictable pattern.

A quick roll-call of some of the DJs as well as the core collectives, could include: DJ Scud, Deviant, Jason Mendonca, Controlled Weirdness, Torah, Stacey, DJ Meinhoff, Terroreyes, Deadly Buda, not forgetting VJ Paul Nomex, responsible for the video action.

Politics and Zines

Dead by Dawn was perceived as having a ready made political context simply by taking place at the 121 Centre, which along with the 56a Infoshop was one of the main radical hubs in South London. For instance, a 1995 issue of Contraflow lists Dead by Dawn alongside antifascist and migrant solidarity meetings, as well as OutRage, the LGBTQ+ direction action group. DbD was also included in the programme for 'Anarchy in the UK 1994: Ten days the shook the world', a festival of actions, meetings and other events held across London.


contra FLOW

AUGUST /SEPT 1995
FREE
56a INFOSHOP
56 CRAMPTON ST.,
LONDON SE17
fax: 0171 326 0353

• **Fri 8**. Meeting to launch anti-fascist Unity Committee, with refugee, community, anti-racist and political groups. 7.30pm, Aloysius Hall, Eversholt St, Euston Rd, NW1.
• **Sat 9**. 'Festival of Global Rights' (?), Brockwell Park, Brixton, SE24. Tel Freedom Network 0171 501 9253 for info.
• **and**...Benefit for the Freedom Network, at Cooltan, 372 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, SW9. No details yet. Tel their events line.
• **Mon 11**. Picket the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, EC1. Demanding long sentence for the racist responsible for death of Donna O'Dwyer and the injury of many other black people, after he firebombed a party in Leyton. Leyton Race Attacks Supp Grp, 0181 5480268.
• **Sat 16**. Cannabis/Hemp Conference. All about the practical uses of hemp and the, er, medicinal value of cannabis. Somewhere in Kentish Town, NW5. Tel 0171 613 5166.
• **and**...Public Meeting Against Racism & Fascism. Called by Colin Roach Centre, turkish and refugee grps, YRE and others. 1-4pm. Aloysius Hall, Eversholt St, NW1
• **Wed 20**. Colin Roach Centre Public Meeting, "Can Police be made Accountable?". 7.30 pm, Halkevi Centre, 92-100 Stoke Newington Rd, N16.CF says. "We doubt it".
• **Sat 23**. National CAAT action against Landmines. Tel 0171 281 0297.
• **Sun 24**. Comm/FLOW benefit cafe at 121 Nosh, booze and good crack. 3-9pm.
Oz (see contacts).
• **Every Tues & Thurs**, 7pm: 121 Cafe, 121 Railton Rd, Brixton, London SE24. Dead cheap vegan food Plus radical video nights Mondays, 7pm.
• **Every Thursday**: radical queers OutRage meet, 7.30, YWCA Central Club, 16-22 Gt Russell St, WC1.
• **First Saturday of each month**: Dead By Dawn,speedcore/techno party at 121 Centre. Discussion at 9pm; dancing 11pm till light.
• **Last Friday of every month**: Critical Mass: cyclists & skateboarders take over central London streets. 5.45pm, NFT Piazza, South Bank, SE1
• **Last Saturday of every month**: demos at Campsfield Immigration Detention Centre, near Kidlington, Oxfordshire. 12 noon.
• Freedom Network events line: tel. **0171 501 9253.** Actions, parties and more.

But the relationship between dance music and radical political milieus was more complex than my story may suggest. The rave explosion had been dismissed as apolitical escapism by some anarchists and socialists, partly because unlike folk music or punk it rarely had an explicitly political lyrical content. Rave organisers were seen as dubious narco-capitalists (not without good reason in some cases), and in any case by the mid-1990s the chaotic energy of raves was being replaced by a licensed leisure industry of brand-

ed commercial superclubs like London's Ministry of Sound with attendant 'superstar DJs'.

> RTS developed the technique of blocking roads through the deployment of mobile sound systems for street parties

These tensions played out at 121 itself where some of the collective were opposed at first to Dead by Dawn taking place. Partly this was due to pragmatic concerns such as who was going to clear up afterwards, could the single toilet cope (not really)? But there were also political suspicions of the music and all that went with it, part of a wider political dispute within 121 about whether to hold on to its specifically anarchist identity or broaden it out.

In the mid-1990s though, two things had begun to shift the politics of rave (though it must be said that by 1994 hardly anybody involved was using the terms 'rave' and 'ravers' anymore). Firstly, the right-wing Conservative government announced in 1993 that it was going to give the police more powers to close down parties – specifically singling out 'raves' defined as featuring music with 'repetitive beats'. Opposition to this Criminal Justice Act led to large demonstrations, including riotous clashes in London's Hyde Park in October 1994 as the police tried to stop sound systems. Secondly the potential power of the sound system as a political weapon bringing together a purposeful crowd had been discovered by the new Reclaim the Streets (RTS) movement. Starting out with an environmental focus, and in particular opposition to the effects of cars and roads, RTS developed the technique of blocking roads through the deployment of mobile sound systems for street parties. Their first party blocking was north London's Camden High Street in May 1995, which was followed a couple months later by 'Rave Against the Machine' in Islington wherein one of the sound systems was mounted on an armoured car – rumoured to belong to Jimmy Cauty of KLF.


THE BATTLE FOR HYDE PARK:
ruffians, radicals and ravers, 1855-1994

1855: "it looked as if the demonstration was going to simmer down to harmless Sunday amusements, but the police reckoned differently"

1866: "The police brought their truncheons into active use, and a number of the roughs were somewhat severely handled"

1932: "mounted police charged forward only to be repulsed by thousands of workers who tore up railings and used them as weapons and barricades"

1994: "the flashpoint came when thugs opposed to legislation against raves tried to turn the park into a giant party"

Free/Donation


STREET PARTY II

Rave against the Machine !

SUNDAY, JULY 23rd

RECLAIM THE STREETS
0171 354 5306

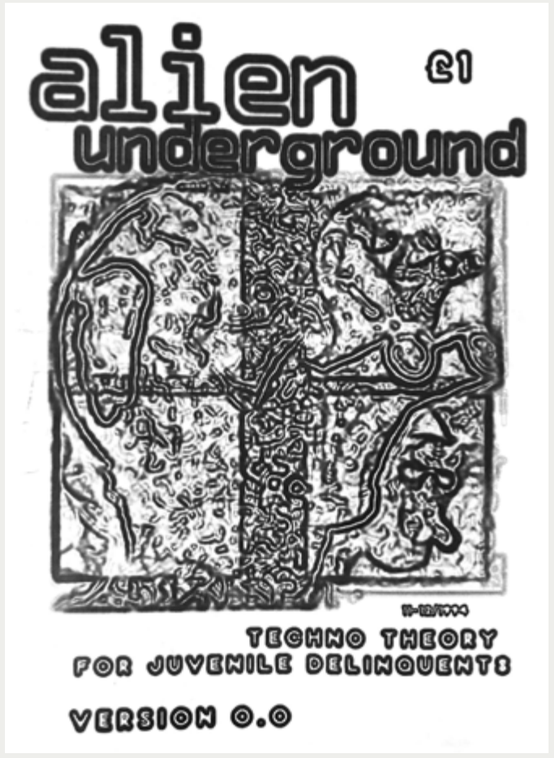
As some of the formerly suspicious radicals were now beginning to appreciate techno, those who were more immersed in the scene began to reflect on how the political significance of parties could be conceived beyond their utility in mobilising crowds or raising funds through benefits. Such discussions started out in clubs – given space could be found to hear ourselves talk – and were continued in print. With the internet still in its infancy this was perhaps one of the last sub-cultures that was mediated primarily through the printed word (zines and flyers) as well as through analogue pirate radio. If you wanted to say something, or let people know about an event, you generally had to put it on to paper.

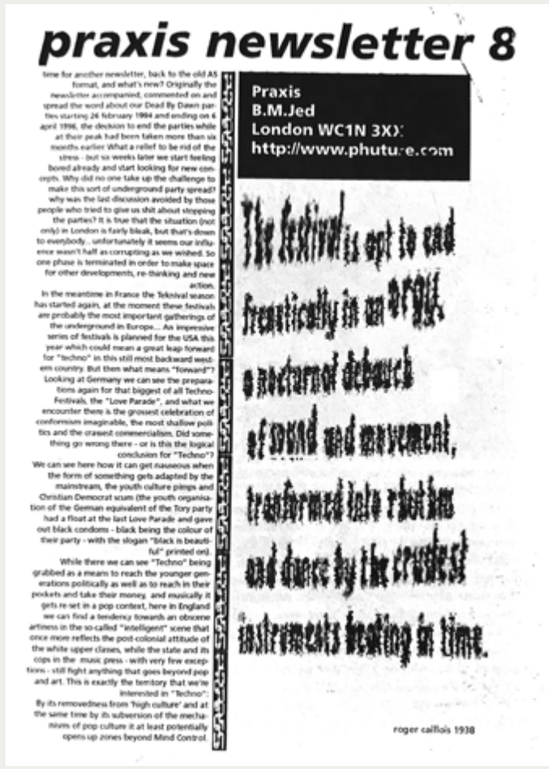
Dead by Dawn was one of those places where a very high proportion of people present were also making music, writing about it, or otherwise involved in some DIY publishing or activism. There were at least four zines put out by the four people in the core DbD collective, including Praxis Newsletter, Alien Underground: techno theory for juvenile delinquents, TechNet and Fatuous Times. Others put out by people attending and/or linked included Turbulent Times, Underground, the Cardiff-based Panacea and Sheffied's Autotoxicity. My modest contribution to this DIY publishing boom, other than a couple of short articles for Alien Underground, was 'The Battle for Hyde Park: Ruffians, Radicals and Ravers 1855 -1955'; an attempt to put the movement against the anti-rave Criminal Justice Act in some kind of historical context.

This was a period in which there were many kinds of zines – musical, political, artistic etc. – and the 121 Centre bookshop at this point was a distribution point for such DIY material. In October 1995 the Centre hosted 'Counter Intelligence', an exhibition of zines, comics and other 'self published and autonomous print creations', the opening party of which was combined with that month's Dead by Dawn event. In the words of Dead by Dawn's Howard Slater – jointly responsible for TechNet and later Break/flow – this was a place where 'The free space of the party met the free space of the page.'

> To work for delight and authentic festivity is barely distinguishable from preparing for a general insurrection

One of the most popular quotes in the zines linked to DbD was Jacques Attali's statement that 'nothing essential happens in the absence of noise' from his work *Noise: the Political Economy of Music* (1977). Attali saw music as prophetic, making 'audible the new world that will gradually become visible.' He quoted Plato to the effect that 'the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling of the most fundamental political and social conventions.' This notion of the party as prefiguring future social relations resonated with Hakim Bey's idea of the party as 'temporary autonomous zone' which was also frequently cited in the 1990s.





Ideas of the carnivalesque, of its festivity as a facilitating a playful and subversive politics – drawn from the Surrealist and Situationists – were also applied to parties. For instance, a Praxis Newsletter included a 1938 quote from Roger Caillois: 'the festival is apt to end frenetically in an orgy, a nocturnal debauch of sound and movement, transformed in to rhythm and dance by the crudest instruments beating in time.' A later Reclaim the Streets flyer for the 1999 'Carnival Against Capital' quoted Raoul Vaneigem (1967): 'To work for delight and authentic festivity is barely distinguishable from preparing for a general insurrection'.

> The traditional leftist approach to music is based on a didactic, propagandist concern with textual content. From this 'agit prop' perspective what makes music radical is words and slogans. But what if the absence of words or even conventional instruments gives rise to an exciting new possibility, a sense of being beyond language, beyond our normal sense of space and time, beyond our normal sense of identity?

Deleuze and Guattari's *Milles Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (1980) was another important influence, taken as the name for an influential techno label, as well as being raided for quotes by TechNet and others. There was something about the language of intensifiers, lines of flight, bodies without organs and nomadism that seemed to relate to the new socialities and new subjectivities arising in a place like Dead by Dawn. TechNet wrote that 'What attracts us to techno is its dynamic nomadic notions, its passage to the limit, its continuous variations – all the action is in stuff that moves.'

The traditional leftist approach to music is based on a didactic, propagandist concern with textual

content. From this ‘agit prop’ perspective what makes music radical is words and slogans. But what if the absence of words or even conventional instruments gives rise to an exciting new possibility, a sense of being beyond language, beyond our normal sense of space and time, beyond our normal sense of identity? TechNet described ‘feeling like another self… the moment where future and past no longer meet in consciousness, where the music reverses the effect of gravity’, quoting Deleuze and Guattari: ‘what is heard in sound is the non-face.’

The radical nature of parties was also seen as being embodied in the social relations of the dancefloor. Instead of a passive audience watching a performer on stage, the crowd was the centre with the DJ often barely visible. Reflecting on Dead by Dawn John Eden of Turbulent Times enthused: ‘Our bodies don’t care about record labels, music labels. Every man and every woman is a star here… Save us from a dance music that distances itself from the mob of whirling people we have come to love.’

Another concern was the critique of the commercial dance music scene. Fatuous Times imagined Dead by Dawn as a kind of virtual reality game, but with the warning: ‘Parties provide space for you to assemble Noises and begin Composing.

But remember, with every Party you organise you take a risk, gambling on slavery or freedom - always avoid the Caricatures, such as Business Head, Drug Casualty and Career Opportunist.’ In a similar vein they argued that ‘These digital hardnoises accelerate the displacement of hierarchy, they provide space/time travel to a classless society where there will be no plagues of crap music, no ego tripping pests and self promoting bores, no extortionate prices and rip offs and where there will be unlimited free drugs, records, dancing and sex.’

For Alexei Monroe (2002), Dead by Dawn created a space that ‘served as a nexus of extreme sensory experience and had a unique atmosphere.’ For those ‘slumped in armchairs on the ground floor surrounded by the blast of dystopic noise emerging from the basement space, the 121 could seem as hyperreal as anywhere, even without chemical enhancement’, generating a sense ‘of being in a parallel space that was at least symbolically beyond the reach of daily commodification and oppression.’

In his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844), Karl Marx discussed radical workers in France coming together for political reasons but in the process generating something new: ‘as a result of this association, they acquire a new need – the need for society – and what appears as a means becomes an end… Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring them together. Association, society and conversation, which again has association as its end, are enough for them.’ The contexts of clubs in the 1990s or today are very different from the 1840s but here too we can see that in these laboratories of noise and bodies people have been inventing new human needs – with new forms of music, new ways of experiencing them with other people, new ways of being together in the night.

The last days

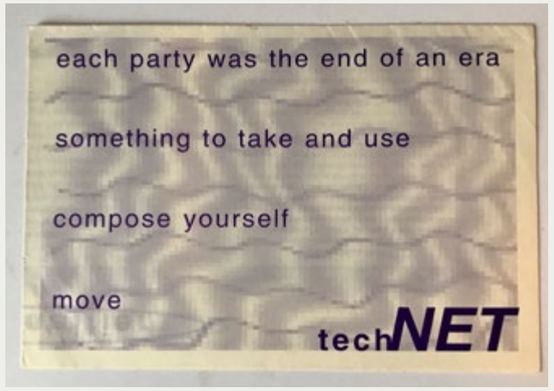
Dead by Dawn quit while it was ahead. Praxis Newsletter announced in October 1995: ‘In order for this never to become a routine we have decided to limit the number of events to take place as DbD with this concept before we move on to new adventures – to another 5 parties after the re-launch of this newsletter on October 7th.’ So it was that the last party took place in April 1996. There was to be some frustration that the baton was not taken up by others: ‘What a relief to be rid of the stress – but six weeks later we start feeling bored already and start looking for new concepts. Why did no one take up the challenge to make this sort of underground party spread? Why was the last discussion avoided by those people who tried to give us shit about stopping the parties?’ (Praxis Newsletter 8, 1996).

Looking back shortly afterwards in an interview in Autoxicity zine they explained: ‘We never saw ourselves as club promoters, we didn’t want to take on that role… What was positive was the fact that it generated its own community and was consciously making more connections… through the meetings, through the publications that were happening around it, through the space it was happening in. It created a focus for these things which is quite rare and special.’

The final document was a Dead by Dawn double compilation album (Praxis 23, vinyl only) with tracks from Richie Anderson & Brandon Spivey, Sonic Subjunkies, Deadly Buda, Somatic Responses, DJ Delta 9, Controlled Weirdness, Torah, Aphasic, Shitness and The Jackal, plus recordings made at Dead by Dawn parties.

We shouldn’t over-mythologise Dead by Dawn. At the end of the day, or rather the night, the story of DbD is just the tale of the passage of a few persons through a rather brief moment in time, but like many parties and clubs that moment lingers with those who were there for many years afterwards. While Dead by Dawn was over, its spirit was carried forward by those affected by it. Christoph Fringeli’s Praxis Records continues, as does Datacide magazine which he started as a successor to Alien Underground to explore the world of noise and politics. Howard Slater moved on from TechNet to start the influential Break/Flow zine, while Jason Skeet under his Aphasic DJ moniker started the breakcore label Ambush with DJ Scud. Paul Nomex (Paul Kidd) continued with his visual and noise experiments before his untimely death in a motorbike accident in New Zealand in 2014.

As a late flyer put it ‘somewhere in a far off universe a small star has gone out forever’… but the waves it gave off are still being detected a quarter of a century later.



techNet: ‘each party was the end of an era’

Clubstories:

The Dil Pickle, Chicago, 1917–1935

Anthony Iles

The Dil Pickle was a club established by Industrial Workers' of the World (IWW) activist Jack Jones in Chicago though some argue that it was his ex-wife, author of a renowned pamphlet on *Sabotage*, Elizabeth Gurley-Flynn who, with people around the Charles Kerr Publishing Company and the leaders of the Chicago IWW, first founded the space.

The club attracted differing appellations depending from which direction you approached, or which paper trail you followed: Tea room, lending library, art room, debating club, chapel, theatre, night club, dance hall, coffee bar, machine shop and political forum. At some point the club is both described as a gallery and at another it is stated that its walls were *painted by its inhabitants.*

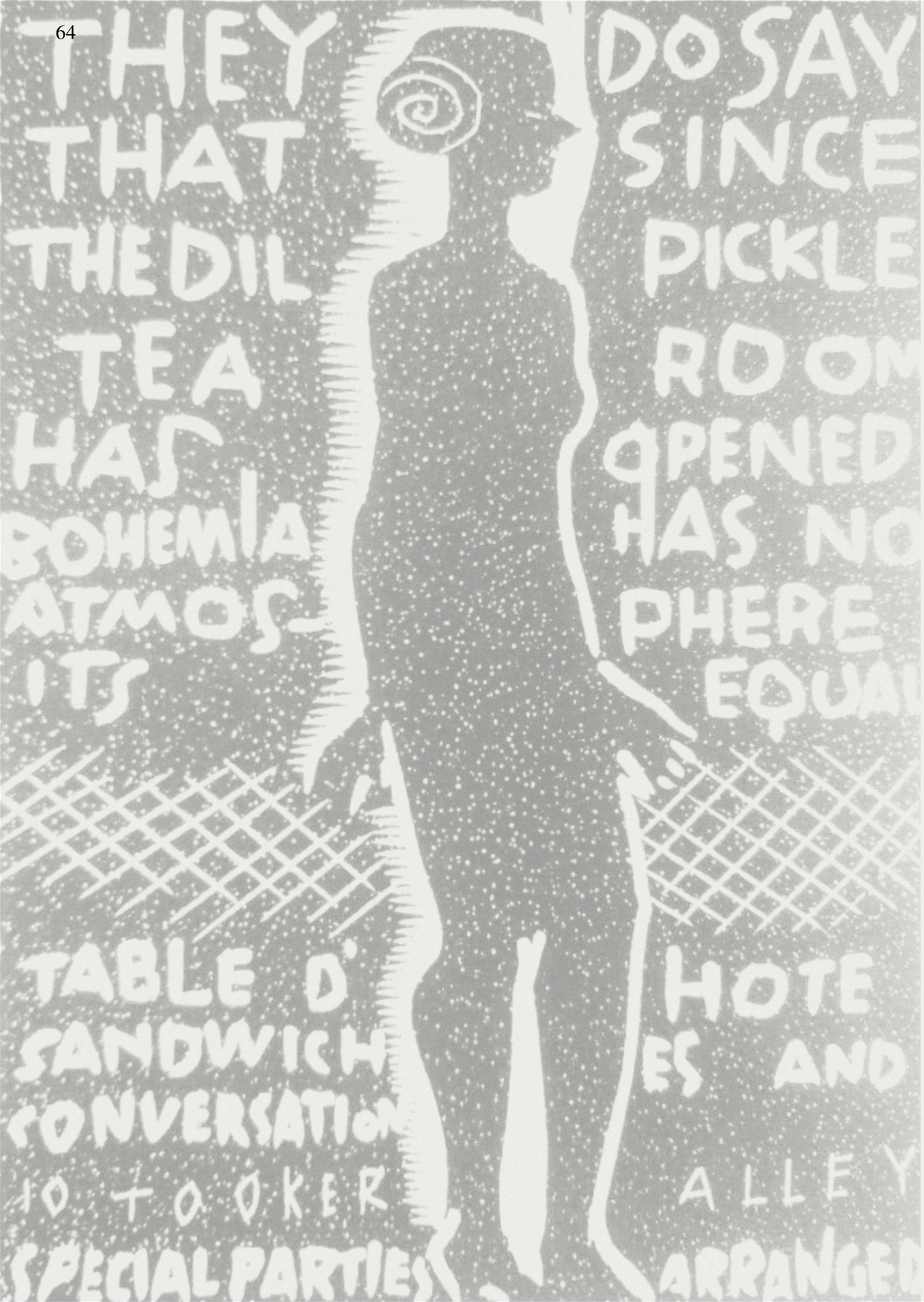
At the club gathered IWW militants; sex workers; anarchist Doctors (Ben Reitman); Hobos and soapbox preachers (Whitey Miller, Rickey Lewis, Triphammer Johnson, John Loughman, Sarraine Berreitter and Eddie Guilbert owner of a lion called Georges Sorel); exiled European communists and anarcho-syndicalists (Paul Mattick, Sam Dolgoff); modernist writers and poets (Slim Brundage, Carl Sandberg, Kenneth Rexroth, Djuna Barnes, Upton Sinclair, Sherwood Anderson, Ben Hecht, Vachel Lindsay, William Carlos Williams and Vincent Starrett); and occasional speakers (Clarence Darrow, Emma Goldman, Big Bill Haywood, Hippolyte Havel, Lucy Parsons and Nina Spies). In its orbit, the Proletarian University movement, the Proletarian Party of America, the Charles Kerr Publishing Company and the satellite of soapbox speakers of Bughouse Square.

A portal

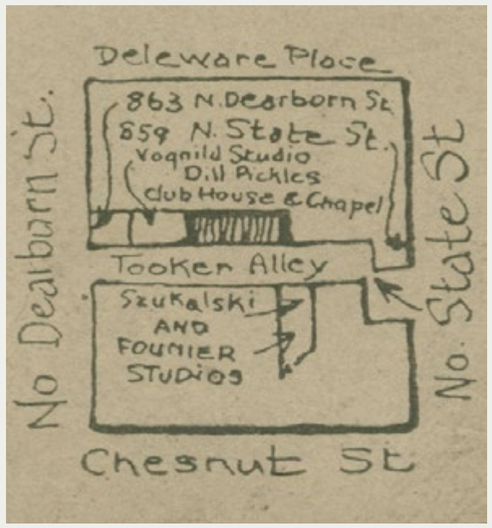
Step high

Stoop low

Elevate Your Mind to a Lower Level of Thinking



On Sunday nights Jack ran a lecture, followed by an open forum. He had only one principle of publicity. He would bill a lecture on relativity theory—and he had amazing talent for getting really important scholars to talk for him—under a lewd title, such as "Should the Brownian Movement Best Be Approached from the Rear?" Saturdays the chairs were cleared away and the Chicago jazzmen of the early Twenties played for a dance which lasted all night. Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays the Little Theater put on Strindberg, Ibsen, Shaw, Lord Dunsany, Synge, and the early plays of Eugene O'Neill. Jack was a fair actor and fitted the early seagoing plays of O'Neill as though they had been written for him. The rest of the company had trouble learning their lines and finding their way on and off the stage. On the walls there was always an art exhibit of the leaders of early Chicago modernism. As the years went on, Jack got old and pretty crazy, the Dil Pickle grew more and more vulgar, was finally taken over by the Organization and turned into a rough and fraudulent operation.



In his 1907 book, *The Spirit of Labor*, Hutchins Hapgood surveyed Chicago's early twentieth-century workingclass cultural/political ferment. He was especially interested in the open forums, which attracted so many rank-and-file trade-unionists: the Anthropological Society, for example, co-founded by Ida B. Wells, and the anarchist Social Science League. (Lucy Parsons was one of many who were active in both.) Deeply impressed by the richness and variety of the city's "intellectual proletariat," as expressed in the forums as well as in the publications of radical workers' groups, Hapgood realized that he was in the midst of a Renaissance—a "Renaissance of Labor." This was a crucial insight—that the "Chicago Renaissance" began with the working class, extending back to Haymarket and beyond, to "Chicago Idea" anarchism, the Pullman Strike, the long struggle for the eight-hour day.

The Dil Pickle wasn't the only open forum operating in those days. Somebody was always starting one and, in my time, I have seen come and go the Temple of Wisdom, the Gold Coast House of Correction, the Lower Depths, the Seven Arts, the Oasis, the Social Science Institute, the Intellectul Inferno and the Pindarians. Some were in rented rooms, some in banquet halls, one in a garrett and a few in tearooms.
– Slim Brundage, 'Step High, Stoop Low and Leave Your Dignity Outside'

[Paul] Mattick spoke often in public, not only at engagements sponsored by the groups with which he was involved but at other forums as well. The countercultural Dil Pickle, while it was still open, was one venue. Later on, the Olivet Institute was another [also at the invitation of Jack Jones], with its forums six evenings per week 'for the benefit of the men and women of our community who because of financial conditions are not able to attend . . . events which would be of interest to them' . Invitations sometimes took him into nearby coal mining districts. Everyone in the family explored the city. As part of his travelogue series, Mattick had written about Chicago's different neighbourhoods. His short story, '*Endstation*' ('Last Station'), was based on the Halsted Street area where the Matticks lived. His article on the plight of black Americans ('*Schwarze Amerikaner*') was published in the European free-thought journal, Urania, and represented another example of Mattick's interest in the most downtrodden among the working class.
– Gary Roth, *Marxism in a Lost century: A Biography of Paul Mattick*, Brill, 2014.

If the Dil Pickle was the foul weather and late-evening friend of the orators, Bughouse Square remained their fair weather battleground. Just as the squares of today look on the soapboxers as kooks, so the squares of that era called them 'bug'... hence the name, Bughous Square. If anyone had anything to say at the Bug Club, he just stood up on the grass and started yakking. If he said it well, he had a tremendous audience. If he was a rank tyro, as I was in those days, he still got a few kindly souls to listen. Sometimes there were three or four big meetings on a pleasant Sunday afternoon, with 3,000 people getting free entertainment. Besides the big gatherings, there were the 'beehives', which were just arguments people clustered to listen to.
– Slim Brundage, 'Step High, Stoop Low and Leave Your Dignity Outside'


PROLETARIAN NEWS

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS! YOU HAVE A WORLD TO GAIN! Karl Marx

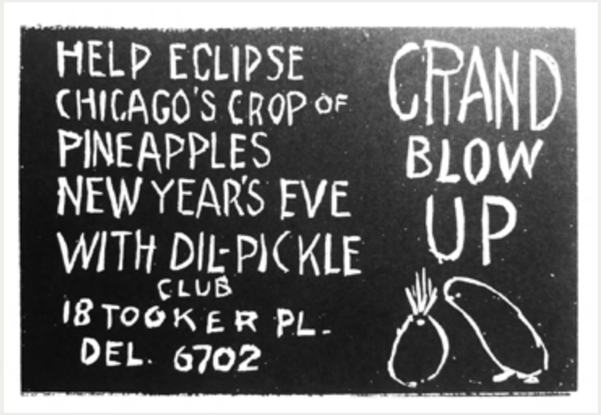
A JOURNAL FOR THE WORKING CLASS

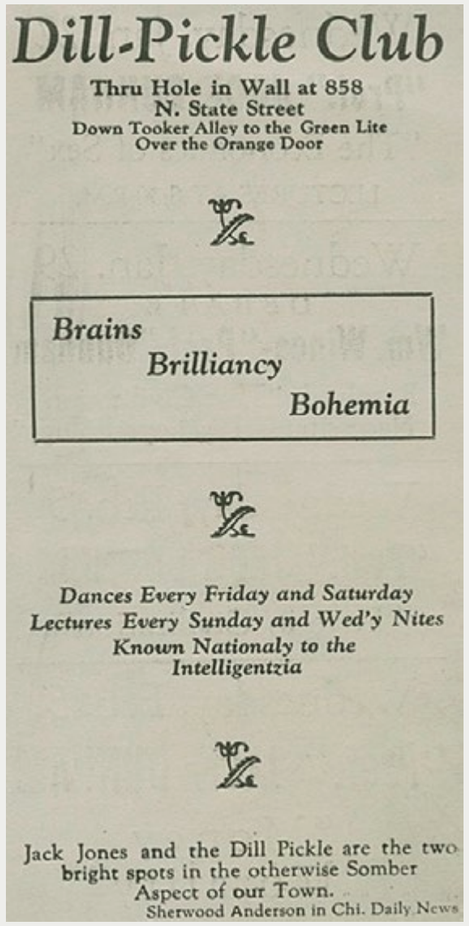
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PROLETARIAN PARTY OF AMERICA

Largest of the Communist opposition groups for some fifteen years, the PP was the perennial prey of other oppositionists. German-born Marxist economist Paul Mattick was expelled for factionalism in 1931, and the following year a small group of his supporters left the PP to help him form the short-lived United Workers Party. Several PPers joined the Trotskyists; a few became Lovestoneites; a very few—notably Oakley C. Johnson, Stanley Nowak, and Harry M. Wicks—joined or became associated with the CP.

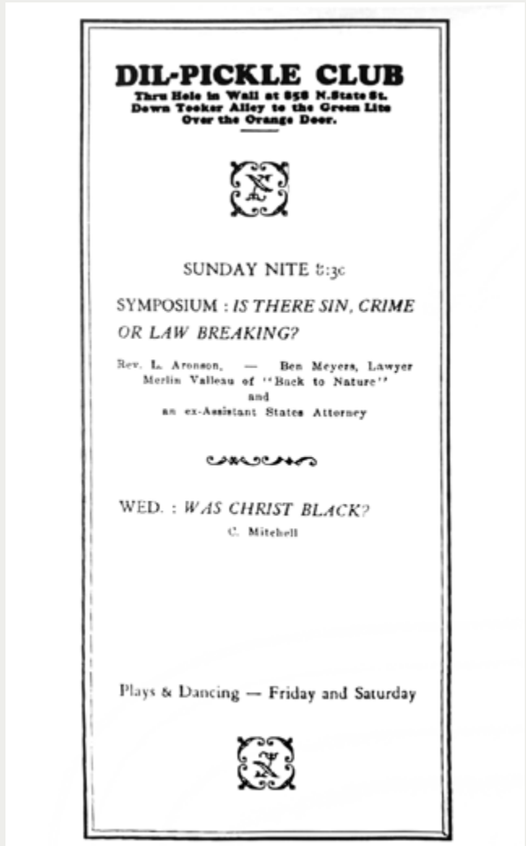
Notwithstanding the PP's vociferous assertions of its Leninist orthodoxy, PP Marxism remained that of the left-wing of the SP during World War I—a naturalistic Marxism that owed more to Engels than to Marx, as far from the Neo-Hegelianism of the Frankfurt School as from the "diamat" of Moscow, and deeply influenced by Charles Darwin, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Joseph Dietzgen. Essentially a socialist educational group rather than a revolutionary political party—its activity consisted almost exclusively of study classes, forums, lectures, and soapboxing—the PP proved to be a good caretaker for Charles H. Kerr's old socialist publishing co-op, which Keracher and other PPers ran from 1928 till the party's demise in 1971.

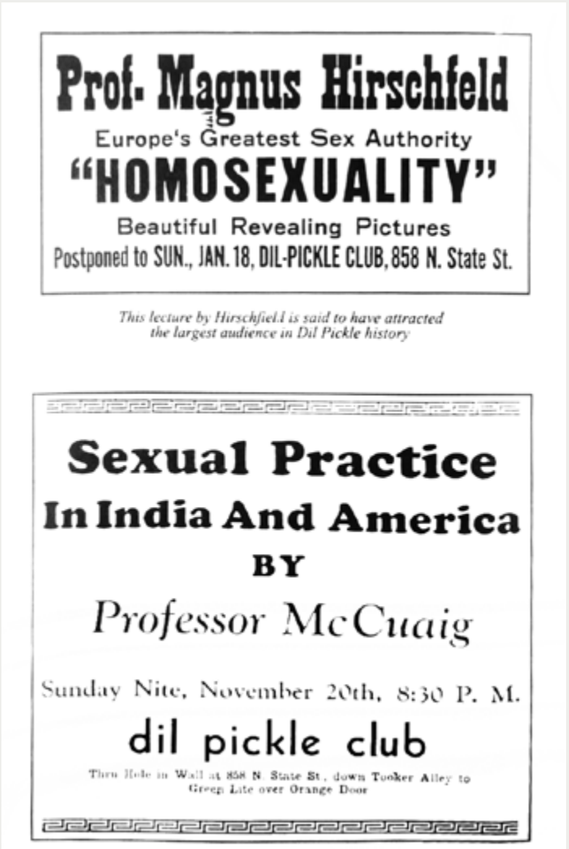
For a few years during the Great Depression, the alumni of Proletarian U. enjoyed an activist phase that had a real impact on the broader working-class movement. PPers were active in the Briggs Auto Body strike in Detroit, 1933, and later helped lead sit-downs in Flint and elsewhere. In the early days of the United Auto Workers, PP street speakers expounded the ABC's of Marxism to larger and more receptive crowds than ever.





Best of all as far as I was concerned, was the iron core of Anarchist and IWW freelance soapboxers. […] They were men of total cynicism, absolute courage, and completely irreconcilable intransigence.
– Kenneth Rexroth, 'A Most Important Part of the Mythology of Chicago





Dill Pickle's Trade Sour! Court Decides Fate Today

After sixteen years as one of Chicago's unique night life centers in the near North Side's Little Bohemia, the Dill Pickle Club faces extinction in Municipal Judge R. J. Dunne's court today.

Impressario Jack Jones, founder, fondler and fooler of the Dill Pickle, is behind in his rent, and down on the world.

"There is no room for ART in Chicago," Jack complains.

"I have had 150 arrest slips this Winter, a distress warrant has been issued, and they intend to seize not only my property but my name, because the Dill Pickle Club is chartered by the state.

"With the landlord, the police and the gangsters, I'll soon be without my old home, but I'll find a new one soon. I have had my club at 22 Tooker place for sixteen years and it won't take me long to find another spot in the neighborhood, if they force me out."

So Jack is ready to go to court today and learn the fate of the Dill Pickle.

Given the liberty to do so, young people will make some wild stuff with random ingredients.

> ...so some local youngs, mostly on Chicago's southside, have for some time been combining two easy-access food items, things you can buy at many gas stations and convenience stores: peppermint sticks and dill pickles. The peppermint stick needs to be straight, with no curl at the end, and it's good to get a sturdy one; the pickle is usually the kind you see sold in single plastic bags; Van Holten's "pickle-in-a-pouch" is standard.
>
> Preparation is simple: you gingerly bite off the end of the pickle, just as you might the tip of a cigar, and firmly gripping the pickle, plunge the peppermint stick in dead-center.
> https://www.oakparkeats.com/blogs/behold-the-peppermint-stick-in-a-dill-pickle

The Dil Pickle Club owned by Jack Jones has been succeeded by the Dill Pickle Food Co-op, Dil Pickle Press, and the Dill Pickle Club of Portland, or, 'an experimental forum for critiquing contemporary culture, politics and humanities.'

Clubstories:
Hughson's Tavern, New York City, 1741

Hughson's Tavern*

The now infamous Hughson's Tavern made its way into the history books by way of its ruthless elimination in social life: the tavern, the lovers Hughson and Peg, as well as several members of the broader community that frequented the establishment were hung and exiled as organizers of the 1741 insurrection in NYC. History has a way of conveniently directing us away from the sources of our power. It wasn't simply the conspiracy, nor its repression, that made Hughson's Tavern such a threat. The terror invoked by the object which came to be called 'Hughson's Tavern' was rather its connection with the communist forms of life that prospered in the maritime waterfront ecology it swam in. Power isn't simply out to destroy us but tends to produce us as isolatable, identifable, and removable, from the general population. The excerpts that follow from Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker on Hughson's Tavern offer us a window into the forms of life that surrounded the tavern, while also presenting the story of their more outward political expression on that infamous night of Saint Patrick's Day, 1741.

- Noah Brehmer, 15 Jan, 2021

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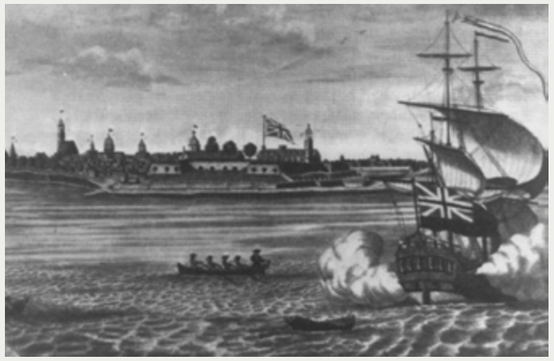
At the heart of the New York Conspiracy of 1741 lay a love story. The lovers were John Gwin (or Quin), ''a fellow of suspicious character'' rumored to be a soldier at Fort George, and ''Negro Peg,'' ''a notorious prostitute'' who lived at John Hughson's waterfront tavern on the west side of Manhattan. Gwin paid Peg's board at Hughson's and joined her there many a night, climbing on top of a shed and through her open window. During one of these late-night meetings he gave her a ring, a pair of earrings, and a locket with four diamonds. Eventually Peg bore his child, whose color was a matter of considerable gossip and debate around town. Some said the baby was white; others insisted that it was black.

John Gwin had long been a regular at Hughson's, and not only because he visited Peg. He often showed up with ''a good booty''—speckled linen, stockings, even a worsted cap full of silver coins—that he gave to the tall, gaunt Hughson, who in turn fenced the purloined goods. Gwin's friends at the tavern were always glad to see him, for they knew of the man's generosity. Since aliases were common along the waterfront, where strangers and their secrets came and went with the tides, they also knew that Gwin and Peg were called by other names: Gwin, an African American slave, was known as Caesar, at least to his owner, John Vaarck. ''Negro Peg'' was the twenty-one- or twenty-two-year-old Margaret Kerry, though she was also known as the ''Newfoundland Irish beauty.'' Another thing tavern-goers knew was that Gwin and Peg were deeply involved in plottingwhat was later called the ''most horrible and destructive plot that was ever

yet known in these northern parts of America.'' For it was at Hughson's that they and dozens of others planned a ''general insurrection'' to capture the city of New York.

Saint Patrick's Day, 1741, was a day for remembering that Saint Patrick had abolished slavery in Ireland. A revolutionary arsonist named Quack set fire to New York City's Fort George, the chief military installation of the colony and one of the greatest fortifications in all of British America. The fire smoldered all night and on the following day exploded into billowing bursts of ocher and orange. Violent March winds carried the flames from the governor's mansion to the Church of England chapel, the army barracks, and the office of the general secretary of the province. Flying sparks and burning debris wafted above the wooden houses that sat just beyond the walls of the fort, threatening the city with conflagration. A shift in the winds and a sudden rain shower halted the spread of the blaze, but the damage had been done: the very heart of royal authority in this important Atlantic port now lay hollow and smoldering in ashes.

It was the first and most destructive of thirteen fires that would terrorize the city of eleven thousand in the coming weeks.When Cuffee, a slave owned by city eminence Adolph Philipse, was seen leaving the premises of the tenth fire, the cry went up that ''the negroes were rising.'' A vast dragnet caught almost two hundred people, black and white, many of whom would be investigated and tried over the next several months. Peg, Hughson, and others were charged with ''conspiring, confederating and combining with divers negroes and others to burn the City of New-York and also to kill and destroy the inhabitants thereof.'' The conspiracy had been organized by soldiers, sailors, and slaves from Ireland, the Caribbean, and Africa, whom the officials called ''the outcasts of the nations of the earth.''[3] Disrespected by the mercantile oligarchy of New York, they were not without a mutuality of respect among themselves.



A view of Fort George and the city of New York, 1735.
I. N. Phelps-Stokes Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations

The outcasts had met regularly at Hughson's, where they exercised ''the hopes and promises of paradise.'' Here the dispossessed of all colors feasted, danced, sang, took oaths, and planned their resistance. The enslaved Bastian remembered a table overflowing with ''veal, ducks, geese, a quarter of mutton and fowls'' from the butcher shops in which several of the conspirators worked. Others recalled the raucous, joyous fiddling, dancing, and singing for which Hughson's was famous around town. Yet others emphasized the subversive conversation, followed by solemn oaths: Gwin asking a recruit ''whether he would join along with them to become their own masters''; Cuffee saying ''that a great many people had too much, and others too little''; Hughson announcing that ''the country was not good, too many gentlemen here, and made negroes work hard.'' At Hughson's tavern, the rebels practiced a simple communism. Those who had no money were entertained ''at free cost''; they ''could have victuals and drink for nothing.'' Hughson told them, ''You shall always be welcome to my house, come at any time.'' Bastian, exiled for his role in the rebellion, fondly recalled, ''We always had a good supper and never wanted for liquor.'' Here, once again, was a world turned upside down, a place where Africans and Irish were kings, as they would be in the larger society after the uprising. In New York, they believed, ''there should be a motley government as well as motley subjects.''

Here the dispossessed of all colors feasted, danced, sang, took oaths, and planned their resistance. At Hughson's tavern, the rebels practiced a simple communism. Those who had no money were entertained ''at free cost''; they ''could have victuals and drink for nothing.''

The Waterfront and the Conspiracy

The events of 1741 began along the city's docks. As valuable outposts of empire, New York and other Atlantic ports garrisoned soldiers to protect their cities and propertied people against enemies within and without. Soldiers such as William Kane and Thomas Plumstead, both stationed at Fort George, drilled, guarded, loafed, and grumbled their way through rounds of life endlessly governed by the soldier's quietest but most common enemy: boredom. As bustling centers of transatlantic trade, the seaports contained masses of workers who labored in the maritime sector of the economy, sailing, building, and repairing ships, manufacturing sail, rope, and other essentials, and moving commodities by boat, by cart, and by the strength of their backs. People of African descent, almost all of them enslaved, were especially important to the waterfront, representing about 18 percent of the city's population and fully 30 percent of its workers. Brash and Ben, for example, worked together on the Hudson loading timber, while Mink labored at his owner's ropewalk. Cuff's merchant master sent him down to the docks to work with a white boy to ''sew on a vane upon a board for his sloop.'' The Spanish ''negroes and mulattoes'' involved in the conspiracy were all sailors, as were the slaves Ben and London. Quack worked with soldiers on a new battery near Fort George. After work these soldiers, sailors, and slaves retired to the dram shops, taverns, and ''disorderly'' houses along the waterfront ''to drink drams, punch and other strong liquors,'' often staying ''till two or three o'clock in the morning, . . . drinking, singing and playing at dice.'' Here they told tales, sometimes tall, sometimes true, among which were the stories of an uprising that had shaken New York in 1712. Here, too, they cursed, caroused, fought, danced, and created constant public dis-

turbances, after which they often awoke in the basement of City Hall, in jail. Mutinous soldiers and sailors had been a problem for New York's rulers for several decades, prompting numerous acts of legislation to contain and punish their unruly ways.

Map of Manhattan, with details of Hughson's tavern and a burned-out Fort George. A Plan of the City and Environs of New York, *1742-4, by David Grim. Collection of the New-York Historical Society.*

The rebels of 1741 traveled along the wharves for secret meetings, gathering at Hughson's, at Comfort's on the Hudson, and "at the house of one Saunders, upon the dock." The docks and taverns, like ships, were places where English, Irish, African, Native American, and West Indian persons could meet and explore their common interests. The authorities could not easily circumvent the flow of subversive experience, for a port city was hard to police. There were always "some strangers lurking about the city"—people such as Sambo, described as "a tall negro living at John Dewit's (a stranger)." Always there were "Vagrant and Idle persons" to be found, and "obscure people that have no visible way of subsistence," for the growth of the cities, and especially of their maritime sector, depended upon a mass of desperate but necessarily creative proletarians' being forced to work for wages in order to keep body and soul together. Everyone knew that a combination of such people was not only more likely in a port city, but more dangerous than it might be elsewhere to the concentrated, established power of a cosmopolitan ruling class.

The waterfront taverns were the linchpins of the waterfront economy, the places where soldiers, sailors, slaves, indentured servants, and apprentices met to sell illegally appropriated goods and pad their meager or nonexistent wages. Tavernkeepers sometimes encouraged such trade by extending so much credit that bills could be settled only after goods were taken and submitted as payment. New York's rulers passed legislation to limit the amount of credit tavernkeepers could offer to workers, especially soldiers and sailors. The latter were especially important to illegal trade because they not only sold stolen goods but also purchased them, and conveniently disappeared when their ships set sail. Other bills were meant to halt the flow of pilfered goods ("Cloathing, or any other Goods, Chattles, Wares, or Merchandizes"), promising double restitution or jail for offending tavernkeepers. New York's comprehensive slave code of 1730, "An Act for the more Effectual Preventing and Punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negro and other Slaves," also acknowledged the subversive potential of the waterfront economy: its first article prohibited any "trade or Traffick" with a slave without his or her master's permission, "on forfeiture of trebel the Value of the thing or things traded." Lieutenant Governor Clark noted—almost prophetically—that illicit transactions promoted "an habit of idleness, that may in time prove ruinous to the whole Province if not prevented."

None of the threats against tavernkeepers who traded with soldiers, sailors, or slaves worried John Hughson. His house was the perfect place for the "caballing and entertainment of negroes" and for the fencing of stolen goods: built into it were secret compartments—in the cellar, in various rooms, and under the stairs—where hot items, slipped in through a back-alley window in the middle of the night, could be hidden. As Bastian explained, "The negroes brought what they could steal to him." In return, they, like apprentices, indentured servants, soldiers, and sailors, received money, some of which they left in the hands of the tavernkeeper, "to drink out" on credit. Other, lesser fences worked through Hughson's network. The slave Will stole a silver spoon from his mistress and carried it to the wife of soldierWilliam Kane, who then turned it over to her husband, who in turn sold it to the silversmith Peter Van Dyke and gave Will "eight shillings of the money." Other Irish conspirators also had a hand in the illegal circulation of goods. Daniel Fagan, Jerry Corker, and John Coffin wanted William Kane "to rob houses with them and go off." But before they "went off," they would have stopped at Hughson's, as Edward Murphy had done when he wanted to cash in some purloined jewelry.[13] Indeed, so many "run goods" passed through Hughson's house, making it "a mart of so great note," that its customers had wryly begun to call the place Oswego, after the great provincial trading house where the English and Iroquois swapped their goods on the upper colonial frontier. Like the Iroquois, those who gathered at Hughson's had a special interest in guns, powder, and ammunition, which they stockpiled through the winter of 1740-41.

Two of the most daring and most notorious members of the waterfront economy—and part of Hughson's "black guard"—were John Gwin and Prince, who worked along the docks, wharves, and warehouses, taking hauls big and small: fifty firkins of butter, a cache of pieces of eight, beeswax, a shirt, stockings, a coat, and whatever else came their way. According to Horsmanden, these two "very wicked idle fellows had before been detected in some robberies, for which they had been publickly chastised at the whipping-post." The authorities scarred their backs for a theft of gin, a Dutch contribution to civilization and the drink of mortal desperation of the London poor in this era. Carried by cart in a "suitable Procession round the Town," they got "at every Corner . . . five Lashes with a Cowskin well laid on each of their naked black Backs," as bystanders pelted them with "Snow balls and Dirt." Gwin and Prince took the momentary defeat in stride and in humor: in honor of the event they soon founded the "Geneva Club" and proclaimed themselves its leaders. They continued to show up at Hughson's with booty, in their pockets, on their backs, or "tied up in a large table cloth." When it came to the plot, Gwin and Prince were "two principal ringleaders in it amongst the blacks." Daniel Horsmanden made this point clear when he called the waterfront workers "brother criminals" whose thefts were the actual "ingredients of the conspiracy." Such operations along the waterfront generated leadership, connections, and solidarities that proved crucial to the conspiratorial design.

As the number of committed conspirators grew, the older, smaller gangs of the waterfront economy evolved into quasimilitary forms of social organization adapted to insurrectionary purposes. A gang called the Fly Boys met at John Romme's tavern, while the Long Bridge Boys met at Hughson's. Each group had its highest leader and below him several captains, each in charge of a company. Gwin was the leader of the Long Bridge company; his equivalent in the Fly Boys was the

experienced Spanish-speaking soldier Juan. Both apparently reported directly to Hughson. Other captains included Ben, a ‘‘head man or captain’’ and ‘‘commander of a hundred at least,’’ and Jack, called a ‘‘head captain.’’ Curac¸ao Dick, York, and Bastian rounded out those named (or selfnamed) in the testimony as captains, though the group should have included both Cuffee and Prince as well. All stayed in close, steady contact with Hughson. Dundee, Cook, London, and Gomez’s Cuffee were lesser officers. Each company had its own drummer, such as old Tom, and its fiddler, such as Braveboy, who, Albany insisted in recruitment, was needed precisely ‘‘because he was a fiddler.’’ Perhaps he would have been like Louis Delgres, the Martinican who led a slave revolt on the island of Guadeloupe and was last seen sitting in a cannon port in theisland’s Fort Matouba, fiddling madly amid the smoke and the sizzling shot to inspire his fellow rebels against the French.

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Rebellion of the Hanged

The multiracial waterfront posed a political problem for New York’s rulers. The cooperative nature of work in the port had created dangerous insurrectionary connections between slaves of African descent—men such as Gwin and Cuffee—and ‘‘the most flagitious, degenerated, and abandoned, and scum and dregs of the white population,’’ represented by John Hughson and Peg Kerry. The love story alluded to at the outset of this chapter was an instance of the human solidarity that developed in the plot. Colonel Thomas Rainborough had warned at Putney that care must be taken to choose the right mother and father. Solidarity was not restricted to the genetic nuclear family, nor could it be so restricted among ‘‘outcasts.’’ As Francis spoke of the ‘‘sisters’’ of her spiritual community, so the Irish soldiers called one another ‘‘brother.’’ The love of John Gwin and Peg Kerry thus paralleled a broader alliance.

The authorities approached the solidarity with a trident in hand, each of its points carefully sharpened to puncture the prevailing multiracial practices and bonds of proletarian life in Atlantic New York. First they went after the taverns and other settings where ‘‘cabals’’ of poor whites and blacks could be formed and subversive plans disseminated. Next they self-consciously recomposed the proletariat of New York to make it more difficult for workers along the waterfront to find among themselves sources of unity. And finally, they endeavored to teach racial lessons to New York’s people of European descent, promoting a white identity that would transcend and unify the city’s fractious ethnic divisions. Let us treat these three major consequences of the conspiracy of 1741 in turn.

Both during and after the trials for conspiracy, New York’s men in ruffles attacked the city’s low tippling houses, criminalizing black-white cooperation and controlling the sites where multiracial conspiracies might unfold. Horsmanden urged ‘‘diligent inquiry into the economy and behaviour of all the mean ale-houses and tipling house within this city,’’ especially those that entertained ‘‘negroes, and the scum and dregs of white people in conjunction.’’ Such establishments encouraged theft and debauchery, but even worse, they provided ‘‘opportunities for the most loose, debased and abandoned wretches amongst us to cabal and confederate together, and ripen themselves in these schools of mischief, for the execution of the most daring and detestable counterprizes: I fear there are yet many of these houses amongst us, and they are the bane and pest of the city; it was such that gave the opportunity of breeding this most horrid and execrable conspiracy.’’ Horsmanden was right: mean alehouses such as Hughson’s, where the wretched of many colors and nations gathered, were indeed schools. These were places where such people told their Atlantic tales, yarns, and stories, their oral histories and lore of insurrection.

* Excerpts from Chapter Six ‘The Outcasts of the Nations of the Earth’, in Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic, London: Verso, 2000 (Pages: 174, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 206, 207)

Drifts:

The Fall of Night

Anne Boyer

Perhaps day becomes night when the signs of the city light up. What were in the daytime complete words, like LINWOOD SUPER FOODS, become, upon their illumination, a mere and bereft OD FO. Over the pick-up window of the ALGREENS, it is DR E T RU, CHINA MARKET abbreviates to CHINA, FLACOS AUTO becomes FLAC TO. Nightfall in this city – the kind of city where businesses either can't afford to fix their signs or haven't the will – could be defined as 'the moment in which some of the letters of our words disappear.' A few words, however, remain clear and fully spelled in the fresh semi-darkness. TENSION ENVELOPES looms over this city from the top of a tall building and never burns out.

Perhaps night begins when the gray-green of dusk meets the sensors built into the dashes of cars. Light sensors lack subtlety – all absence of brightness is to them, as Mary Shelley once described an eclipse, 'night, sudden, rayless, entire.' Then the headlights click on without notice, meet each other on the streets, not-quite-needed-yet except to announce night's probable approach. Handfuls of cars line up near the now-lit signs of drive-thrus. Fast food workers – elderly women, teenagers, mothers of small children, people just out of prison – are at the end of their evening shifts or the beginning of their night ones. The workers stand against the aggressively bright backdrop of the drive thru window and lean into dusk to hand out taco supremes or medium fries.

The voices of the drive-thru workers nearly carry to the sidewalks as the darkness falls. The air cools, and drivers roll down their windows so that whatever song that plays can drift behind them like whiffs of a rich person's perfume. At the intersections, there is competing spill off, music against music, or sometimes, if everyone is listening to the same station, music drifts in social stereo with satisfied sideways looks from car to car. Motorcycle engines rev with greater pride at night. Perhaps night begins when sound becomes more vivid than sight.

Helicopters – police, ambulance, local news – circle overhead more, make more clatter, become more arrogant, ominous, and loud. They, along with sirens, warn the rest of the city that despite the apparent permissions of the coming night, the social apparatus remains vigilant and intact. Helicopters are to night as lawn mowers and leaf blowers are to Saturday mornings. They exist to ruin everything wild.

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'Doctor,' says Nora Flood, the protagonist of Djuna Barnes' Nightwood, 'I have come to ask you to tell me everything you know about the night.' In that novel night has reached an irrefutable peak. There is no question that night is night when it is 3 a.m. in 1920's Paris: 'French nights are those which all nations seek the world over.' Paris at the witching hour is night's apogee, not like dusk in a rough-shod mid-western American city – America a place where, says the doctor, 'the night is a skin pulled over the head of day.' Nora is fraught, betrayed by the woman she loves. Matthew O'Connor, the doctor, had been sleeping in full makeup and a long nightgown, an appropriate expression, Nora thinks, of the

‘grave dilemma of his alchemy.’ The doctor then asks Nora, ‘not without irony,’ if she has ever thought about the night. ‘Thinking about something that you know nothing about,’ Nora says, ‘does not help.’

That Nora claims to know nothing about the night is appropriate to it. Night’s mysteries are definitive. Certainties are what happens when the sun comes out. To know what the night means is to know what shrugs off being known in preference for what can be hazily remembered. The prolific Italian notebook keeper, Leopoldi, in his Zibladone, asserts that mystery lends night its poetic nature. ‘Notte,’ he writes of the word night, ‘confounds object so that the mind is only able to conceive a vague, indistinct, incomplete image, both of the night and whatever it contains.’ To know the night is a lot like knowing poetry, and knowing poetry requires what Keats called ‘negative capability,’ the capacity for ‘being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.’ To know the night means having the clarity that some things are and should be and always will be hidden, for the night has been, or is, or should always be, the time of lovers, revolutionaries, and other conspirators. The night world is that which should be, or once always was, veiled.

It makes sense, then, that night is the precondition for witches. The first accusation against any suspected witch is almost always about the night: a witch is she who goes out into it. In sixteenth century Italy, good witches – the Benandanti – gathered each Thursday for midnight battles with the wicked ones, armed, according to historian Carlo Ginzburg, only with stalks of fennel. Other witches merely toured, searching the phantasmagoria of the darkness for gossip and mild trouble. Witches were the flaneurs of the night sky. As Silvia Federici illustrates in Caliban and the Witch, the regulation of the night and the persecution of witches and sex workers – the other women called guilty for roaming at night – were all part of the same operation of history that attempted to tame the bodies of the proletariat by extending their day into night. ‘Magic,’ Federici writes, ‘seemed a form of refusal of work.’ In order for industrial capitalism to take hold, night – and the freedoms the poor and oppressed once found in it – had to be conquered first.

Night was once an obvious and self-contained entity, but the border skirmishes between day and night have been going on now for centuries. Shift work was an attempt to, among other things, usurp the sun’s rule. Something that Nightwood’s Doctor O’Connor knows about the night is that ‘the nights of one period are not the nights of another. Neither are the nights of one city the nights of another.’ Night is never a general and universal experience. The nights of my city and my time and are not like the nights of yours.

When they try to
tell us that night is
day that is when,
writes, Marx,
‘Capital celebrates
its orgies’

Karl Marx, who wrote a book obsessed with night (Capital Volume I), or at least partly so, briefly mentions an English Judge who must adjudicate a definition of night with ‘Talmudic sagacity’. Trying to enforce a labor act that nominally prohibits night work for children, the judge faced the problem that the legislative definition of night differs from what anyone thinks of as the actual night. In ‘Reports of the Inspectors of Factories, to her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State from the home department for the half year

ending 30th April 1858,’ Judge Otway Belfast’s decision is nearly performatively contortionist. It is easy to see why Marx was amused.

Belfast starts by asserting that night could be defined its etymological sense as a word with: ‘proximity to a German derivation and means a period which is marked by the sun’s declension below the horizon, as distinguished from day, and the opposite of it; it is the time of darkness, or, it may be for some purposes, twilight.’ Belfast goes on to quote Milton purportedly quoting God: ‘Light the day, and darkness night.’ The same legislation that purported to protect the night was a statutory contributor to its ruin. Industrial capitalism and its new laws extended daytime — via the grafted-on version of it called ‘the working day’ – past darkness, and then well into it, from 5:30 am to 9:30 pm., a stretch that previously only constituted day (if day is ‘light’) at midsummer. Common law, what Belfast turned to next, did not veer from the laws of nature or poetry in matter of the night. The common law understanding of night, as it relates to the crimes like burglary, also refers to a condition of light, not the position of a clock’s hands.

Marx despised the infringement of the working day on what once was night. He wrote that the capitalists would do anything to keep labor working every available hour, that even ‘the prolongation of the working day beyond the limits of the natural day, into the night, only acts as a palliative. It quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst for the living blood of labor.’ If these particular vampires could invent extra hours in the day, they would and still try to, always seeking condensations of productivity and amplifying nocturnal intrusions, like how people now sometimes get tricked into answering their work emails at 1 a.m. When they try to tell us that night is day that is when, writes, Marx, ‘Capital celebrates its orgies.’

Night and day was once a near-universal source of contrast. It’s as plain as night and day. Night, too, is our primal half-source of all analogy, so foundational to how we compare and organize our perceptions of the world that night is to the day like day and night are to each other. The rotation of the earth itself gives us a first and incontestable example of how to distinguish one thing from another, and so the affront of the working day upon the night was egregious not only against ‘nature,’ God, Milton, and workers: it was also an affront to common sense. Because these are the two most distinct things on earth – those two things which are so distinct that they gave us enduring model for telling this from that – no one could convince us that night is day, and yet they do.

It is not just the clock or capital that tries to fool us into believing the world has gone topsy- turvy. Electric light does, too, but it never creates convincing form of daylight: pineal glands are the body’s truth detectors, refusing to believe that the overhead fluorescent of a pre-dawn

Walmart is the sun. Night workers are sicker, more depressed, die earlier and with more stress. The industrial revolution, however, was not the beginning of night work. Servants, mothers, those who care for the sick and infirm have always had their sleep disrupted at the call of someone else, and some trades, like bread baking and waste collecting, have mostly been performed, if not at night proper, during the hours at the tail end of it. Capitalism did not invent working at night, but it did invent the insult of trying to tell us that night isn’t night.

Day doesn’t fall: night does. Light is slick and fluid, darkness is heavy and can grow heavier. Everything we know about the night inspires catalogs, but defies dissection, for the night, despite how it gets thick, doesn’t have a body. Night

has no anatomy, just inventory. Night contains. Perhaps the most epic of all list-makers, Walt Whitman, wrote a poem, The Sleepers, about the contents of the night. In 1856 he called it Night Poem then called Sleep-Chasings and did not resolve its final title until 1871. In this poem, sleep is a democracy shared across social category, its particulars accrued by the poet-wanderer who creeps through it, watching people asleep in their beds: 'The consumptive, the crysipalite, the idiot, he that is wrong'd, / The antipodes, and every one between this and them in the dark, /I swear they are averaged now – one is no better than the other.' Sleep redeems the species – all, he says, are now 'beautiful'. In sleep, the felon is freed from prison, the slave is free, the sick are relieved. In this poem, the whole world, when asleep, holds hands. Sleep is night's utopia, but the poem has no comment about what happens when there is a lack of it.

'Sleep,' as Doctor O'Connor says in Nightwood, 'demands of us a guilty immunity.' Dream crimes can't be criminal, and what we don't see as we sleep is that for which we can never be held accountable. The night of the sleepless happens in the hidden away places, the grossly lit prisons, the hulls of airplanes full of strangers who toss and turn in restless and intimate proximity, nursing homes. Night lasts longer for the institutionalised. Hospitals are hostile to sleep: cold air infused with beeps, bright hallways, glowing screens, a would-be-emergency hovering over any would-be-sleeper, births and deaths and the suffering that is endured between. Nurses and paraprofessionals circulate in the false noon of hospital passages at midnight, speak softly when they enter rooms rouse sick sleepers despite this. The night of the city enters the night of the hospital through the portal of emergency rooms where parents hold their children, and other people hold their injured limbs and hold up their heavy heads, too, waiting for their turn.

Back in the streets, night keeps falling. In the houses and apartments, curtains are drawn, plastic horizontal blinds are let down by graying strings. Children, having been fed dinner, are put to bed or set in front of screens by exhausted mothers who go to bed or sit in front of screens. Dogs stop barking. Workers lock up shops or change out cash drawers. Revelers make their first timid step into revelry.

People stand on corners waiting for buses that have grown infrequent. The waiting fidget or slump, tired or impatient or both, wanting to go their way. Once, at a well-used bus stop to which the buses only slowly come, someone brought a rocking chair. It stayed there for a week: feral art. 148 people have been murdered in this city so far this year, some shot on the street, at least one at a bus stop where he was waiting in the dark, the shooters leaning out of a passing car into the night. Fourteen of the murdered were killed by the police. The plexiglass holders of route maps have been pierced by bullets, too. Shattered things get fixed in slow motion here, so the people who must wait for the buses wait near the bullet holes, stuck in the slivers of vacant time reserved for the poor. For the carless in a spread-out city night begins when it gets harder to get around. Inside the buses, itinerant drinkers have already started their parties, semi-belligerent and huddled in the back. In the front, a tired-eyed mother holds her tired-eyed toddler, one resisting sleep, the other-resisting wakefulness. 'The very constitution of twilight,' says Doctor O'Connor, 'is a fabulous reconstruction of fear.'

The crickets in the parking lots sing as if they have never heard about any of this. This city at dark is always the backdrop of a noir that no one ever thinks to film. Then a pale old man in slippers and a robe pedals a bike slowly down the sidewalk from the liquor store, white plastic

bag with a happy face on it in hand. Have, the bag read when there was light enough to read it, a nice day. The first gunshot of night echoes, too, far away and negligible. A man in a reflective vest dances around in the median waving a cardboard 'WILL WORK 4 FOOD'. It's the new moon, so the earth is at its darkest. Only two or three stars can be found in the sky.

Drifts:
The Crowd and its Double

Sacha Kahir

The Word coming down…(Gunshot),' high-hats and snares weave through the dark off kilter sound of organs playing. A hypnotic voice begins a sermon for the dance floor - *This is the time to take a stand, against all evil…. You all are one, but you all are blind. For these reasons (cut) I cannot say, it's ok*… (Gunshot). *Who's gonna take the blame?* Shards of Eddie Kendricks' falsetto vocals from the strangely sweet but apocalyptical 1970s soul ballad *Going Up in Smoke* flicker in and out of the track – punctuated by the sound of a gunshot – an example of what a friend and I used to describe as panic funk.

- Foremost Poets – *Reasons To be Dismal? (Foresight version),* 1991

From 2021 Backwards

The chorus is contagious. Dance floors lie empty. There is a fear that those with 'a hatred for home life' will be walled in. Baudelaire spoke of those for whom that thing that people call love is so small, so restrained, so restricted compared to that ineffable orgy – the bustle of the crowd in which some find their natural habitat and shelter. So, we kill time. While the box set series is set to play through the pandemic. Endless high quality drama… Automatonophobia: the fear of statues, mannequins, puppets etc, automatons – kicked in yesterday.

Trapped in
castles having to
entertain a prince no one
recognises or has seen in
recent memory but still
having to play on

Many, including myself, have got the blues, so what might we learn from what is termed a blues epistemology? How do we rework the silences and empty spaces inside old myths and stories? Reworking old rhythms even in the essay form using the 'force of ruthless negation, the out and rooted critical lyricism of screams, prayers, curses, gestures, steps (to and away) – the long, frenzied tumult of a non-exclusionary essay' is necessary, as Fred Moten says, but not enough.

Well, I got up this mornin', jinx all 'round
jinx all 'round, 'round my bed,
I said, I got up this mornin' with the jinx all round my bed
– Son House, 'Jinx Blues'

The omphalos - the centre of the world, the world's navel, individual consciousness, (I), the body and its voice, the place where travellers' paths intersect, the place where legend has it that Robert Johnson (1911-1938) sold his soul, to become the greatest guitarist in the Delta / Mississippi region.

We are at a cross roads now. Trapped in castles having to entertain a prince no one recognises or has seen in recent memory but still having to play on.

The crowd has been in a kind of suspended animation for some time already it feels. Even before the lockdown, 808 drum machines had been playing funeral marches in Chicago. Drum patterns staggering like a wounded soldier. Punctured by bursts of machine gun rhythm. Mutating from the heart beat of House into the martial rhythms of Drill, with gang culture becoming a death cult…25 dead over a weekend. *Zang Tumb Tuuum?*

Having just recovered from an unspecified illness

For Edgar Allan Poe, the crowd assumed the form of a cryptic language – written in the gestures, fashions, gait and cut, fabric and accessories adorning those flowing past the anonymous narrator of 'The Man of The Crowd' (1840). Having just recovered from an unspecified illness, the narrator watches people pass from behind the window of a coffee house in the hotel D__.

At first the crowd is perceived as an aggregated mass in the back of the narrator's wandering mind – minute details of demeanour and attire, however, soon come to the fore as the crowd is catalogued into various groups and sub-groups. The multitude of 1840s central London was populated in large part, according to Poe, by wildly gesticulating, flushed and muttering types with a business-like demeanour who would frequently impede each other, re-doubling their gesticulations. Recounting the character of these early

metropolitan flows, Giorgio Agamben speculated that Tourette's syndrome had become so widespread that it ceased to be the focus of diagnostic attention, only shortly after its initial inception as a pathological category for psychiatric inquiry.

The crisis of the
body as a proliferation
of gestures and tics
are linked to its opposite,
the highly organised
presentation of self

Thirty years after 'The Man of the Crowd' was first published and twenty years before Tourette's was first diagnosed, Isidore Ducasse – under the pen name Comte de Lautréamont – stated 'with the existence of nervous tics having been established let none be surprised to see the same words appear more than their fair share.' Lautremont's objective was the total fusion and democratisation of art and life through plagiarism and détournement, as expressed in his prose poem/manifesto *Poésies* (1869). Unfortunately, the dream of avant-garde modernists inspired by Lautréamont, like the Surrealists and Situationists, has been overtaken by reality. Performing has been mandatory in most forms of life for decades. The middle class form of life has proliferated across the globe. We now present our lives across various platforms of social media, or at job interviews, if we're lucky, which now often resemble facing the panel of a television talent show, or is it the other way around? At the same time a kind of enervation has set in over the last decade, expressed in the appearance of forms of often auto-tuned, murky and slurred R&B that seems driven by a mixture of overstimulation and feelings of impotence.

I think I started somethin', I got what I wanted
Did-didn't, I can't feel nothin', superhuman
Even when I'm fuckin', Viagra poppin'
Every single record, autotunin'
Zero emotion, muted emotion
Pitch corrected, computed emotion, uh-huh
- Frank Ocean 'Novacaine', 2011

Promoted through word of mouth on platforms like Soundcloud, Youtube, MySpace and Instagram, outside centralised channels, an amazing array of work has emerge by artists like the enigmatic Shiloh Dynasty, who released 78 seconds of content in the form of 5-10 second vines, plus two 1-minute tracks, between 2014–15, before disappearing, they have lived on through various samples of their work. Though, tragedy stalks this era like nothing has changed since Robert Johnson sat at the crossroads but just that the roads are now lined with an endless flow of SUVs.

Stab Father, forgive me for you know I've always been sinning. I take no interest in partyin with liquor, fuckin up my system. Excuse my language that's a hang up on how shitty I been feeling. I'm sorry I feel no attraction. I know that it's been a minute
- XXXtentaction feat. Shiloh Dynasty, 'Angel', 2017

The Corresponding Habitual Presentation of Self

Wilhelm Reich, whose early work explored fascism as a middle class pathology (*The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 1933), described the corresponding habitual presentation of self as 'character armour' (Character Analysis, 1933): defense mechanisms, blinkers and mannerisms adopted to deal with and dampen emotions. If we think of soldiers goose-stepping on parade we can clearly see an exaggerated gestural rigidity in their syncopated movements, one of the more obvious examples of this armoring.

Those Poe categorised according to their business-like demeanour and Agamben in terms of a 'proliferation' of a 'generalised catastrophe of the sphere of gestures,' were the upper to lower middle classes: noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers.' The crisis of the body as a proliferation of gestures and tics are linked to its opposite, the highly organised presentation of self. Also, to this list could we add doctors, psychiatrists, and the therapists of various kinds, whose trade was developing at a rapid rate from the late 1800s onwards with the birth of behaviourism and psychoanalysis in the early to mid 1900s and the identification of numerous syndromes.

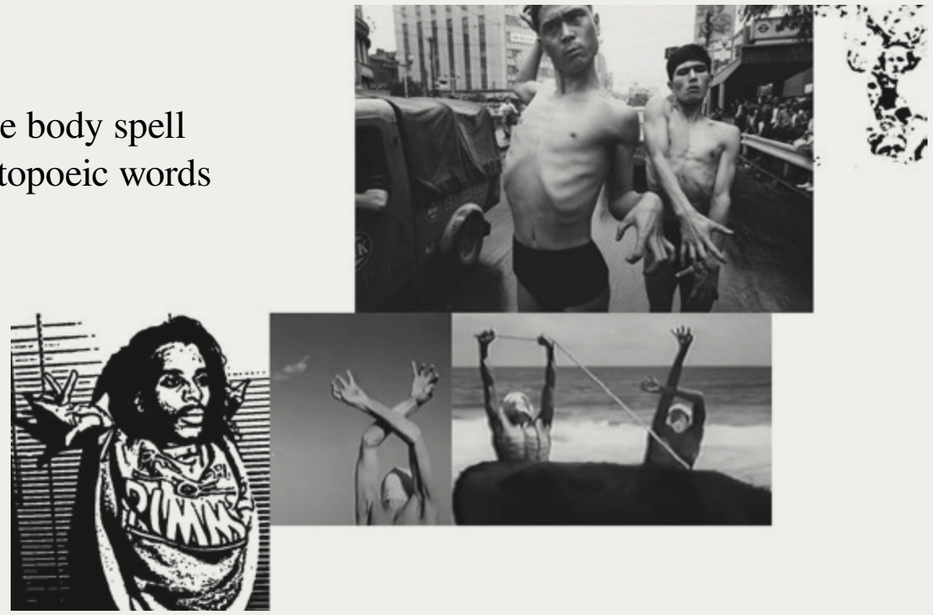
Cruelty in its most liminal awkwardness

Saidya Hartman in her seminal work *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self Making in 19th century America (1997)*, explores the relationship between entertainment and slavery. Something of a wrecking ball to the humanities and cultural studies, its close examination of the quotidian details of slavery and the bizarre and horrific arrangements that wed festivity, cruelty, emotional release and entertainment to the logistics of slavery; problematised the project of a syncretic universalism founded on a merger between class, gender or any other category in relation to blackness. Hartman equated such imperatives with the logic of the commodity form, stating:

> The fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others' feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved (becomes) the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as (a) sign of his power and dominion.

Black slaves in the United States mocked the physical and emotional rigidity of the white master's disembodied universality through dances like 'the cakewalk,' where the absurd and stiff mannerisms of their white masters were mimicked in a stylised fashion. Born out of the relationship of cruelty and entertainment, dance like the cakewalk, were in turn mimicked through the widespread culture of white minsteralism (black facing), only recently becoming taboo. However, as Amiri Baraka & LeRoi Jones'(1934-2014) mused in *Blues People* (1963), 'If the cakewalk is a Negro dance caricaturing certain white customs, what is that dance, when, say, a white theatre company attempts to satirise it as a Negro dance? I find the idea of white minstrels in blackface satirising a dance satirising a dance satirising themselves a remarkable kind of irony.'

make the body spell
out onomatopoeic words



Within the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 70s, which Baraka was central to along with writers including Ntozake Shange, Ismael Reed, Sonia Sanchez and Henry Dumas there is often a reoccurring affinity with the intentionally savage but cosmopolitan French poetics of Artaud, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and others. The Theatre of Cruelty in its most liminal awkwardness, a strict application of nervous tics, stammering, contagion and screaming is born out of an equally strict necessity according to Artaud. How, for example, to bear witness to the horrors of the Middle Passage, Jim Crow, or Auschwitz?

A Number of Names – Charivari

In De Sade's 120 Days of Sodom the victims are stripped of all qualities and become, by the very end, mere statistics. This final act of domination erases all the horror of the crime scene into a numerical abstraction.

The shock of events often threatens to unbind the self. It is the shocks produced by the environment of London in the throws of ever intensifying capitalism that – according to Walter Benjamin – lead to the events depicted in 'The Man of the Crowd.' The self disintegrates or becomes more rigid when bombarded by unrelenting stimuli. We are always on the threshold of being other versions of ourselves, some which may seem almost foreign to us when overwhelmed.

Marcel Proust in Remembrance of Things Past (1913-1927) presents the idea of the self as a crowd appearing in different formations according to various situations; while also changing over time as we move through different stages of our lives. The various versions of us that emerge contain the previous configurations of this internal multitude in the background – reappearing at different times, imbedding themselves within new formations of the self.

Mimicking gestures, tics and liminal states between illness and health or genders can be seen in certain forms of dance like Butoh and Voguing. In Ballroom/Voguing mimicry is central to the category of 'realness' the contestants attempt to embody, while celebrating their queerness. However, Voguing attempted to sum up a type of person through using the body in dance to carve out a hieroglyphic depiction of a character type's mannerisms. Amplifying their characteristics and transmuting them into sharp angular body movements, like trying to make the body spell out onomatopoeic words.

In 'The Theater of Cruelty' (1932), Artaud advocated labeling, cataloguing and 'making a kind of alphabet' of the 'visual language of objects, movements, attitudes, gestures'; the 'ten thousand and one expressions of the face.' This conception of theatre majorly influenced Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986), who is seen as having first developed Butoh. Pushing the body into unnatural postures and positions Hijikata performances shared a lot in common thematically and visually with early Voguing.

BUTCH QUEEN (BQ) SCHOOLBOY REALNESS

> This person should be a cisgender male, not a butch cisgender female or transgender male (FTM).
> The "realness" aspect is centred on being able to "pass" as a heterosexual male.
> The degree of "realness" a person exhibits is a positive indicator of their appropriateness for this category.
> – House of Luna

Being able to pass in normal society is very often a prerequisite for trans-people and these categories are sometimes referred to as 'going back into the closet,' though, beyond playing with the term for being openly gay, this also refers to picking the right outfit to embody the category.

There were also a lot of similarities between early Voguing and Breakdancing. If Kraftwerk wanted to become robots, so did kids in South Bronx in the 1980s it seemed, with Body Popping adopting robotic and mechanical movements. Vogue dance idol Willi Ninja's (*Paris is Burning*, *Brother to Brother*) persona and moves reference another important 80s pop culture archetype/figure: the Ninja. Martial Arts movies had wider influence than often recognised. Bruce Lee was among the first wave of Non-European / Non-white superstars known globally, along with Bob Marley. Bruce Lee was an icon for many black and working class kids from Kingston to New York to Manchester in the 1970s and 80s.

The Twisted Wheel

Types of dance inspired by Kung Fu movie energy could be found in the Northern Soul scene in Manchester and then the industrial North of England and Central Scotland. Notable clubs of this subculture were The Twisted Wheel and most famously during the 1970s and 80s Wigan Casino, which could stay open all night as no alcohol was sold. The dancers, fuelled by amphetamines, were given energy to dance all night after working all week in the factories, mines and various heavy industries that dominated those areas. Northern Soul developed from the Mod subculture of the 1960s. Mod emerged in early to mid 1960s in London's clubs, cafes and neighbourhoods where West Indians, Black American G.Is, white working class delinquent youth and beatniks mixed. Androgynous looks typified many Mods of both sexes, due to the amphetamines that kept people dancing all night and staying skinny enough to fit into the tightly tailored suits, trousers and dresses. Also there was the fondness for eyeliner, adorned by both genders, much to the amusement of their enemies the Rockers and Bikers. While many Mods became hippies in London by the late 1960s, this turn in fashion failed to catch on to the same extent with Mods in the North who wanted to be clean and sharp looking after a hard week of physical work. Eventually this gave the North a head start when House music emerged, as Northern Soul All Nighters were not so different from raves, with the music coming from the same places, namely Detroit and Chicago. The profusion of subcultures and subgenres seemed to reach its apex in the 1980s and 90s in the UK and elsewhere, in part due to a merger of social liberalism and neo-liberalism. In the UK New Labour and Cool Britannia in the late 90s, with its conscious courting of music, arts and pop culture was the death knell for the counter culture. Though, first we return to what is sometimes referred to as the roaring 20s, a time considered by some to be a golden age for the crowd.

> *The voice of a tour guide announces to the dance floor 'Good evening parents, tonight I'm gonna take you on a tour: Club Bad. Where all the bad little kiddies go! Tryin' to leave their bodies, by various means and methods…' Suddenly a house track bursts into action built around a militaristic sounding drum roll.*
> - 'Cameras Ready / Prepare To Flash' – Green Velvet, 1995

Travel and dance had taken on a theological significance, according to Kracauer: the pyramids and other such worldly wonderments were now put on an equal footing with the eating of your evening meal in a foreign setting. Kracauer's work during the 1920s focused on the lower middle classes – the salaried masses – at a moment when fascism started building its foundations in the stumbling Weimar Republic. The crowd and the advent of mass media fascinated the dialecticians of the 1920s like Kracauer, while at the same time a certain middle class European sensibility often veered into a conservatism, not dissimilar from certain notions circulating on the right, like Oswald Spengler's theories in *The Decline of the West* (1918).

The merger of the book and the horn as a type of weapon and the social dance as a esthetics of resistance often seemed too much for many European intellectuals

Meanwhile in New York and Chicago during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s rent parties emerged. Washboards, spoons and improvised instruments accompanied a handful of 'real' instruments. The cheap hooch being sold and a nominal entrance fee taken to collectively pay the overdue rent. Well known musicians mix with partygoers. Figures central to the Harlem Renaissance – like writer and lyricist Langston Hughes often attended – there is a general belief in the fusion of art, politics and 'black life.' The merger of the book and the horn as a type of weapon and the social dance as an aesthetics of resistance often seemed too much for many European intellectuals.

A new quality…
But deadly
It turns us into running animals, forced across the planet with demon time in mad pursuite
(…)"We have no need for time. In fact brother we have hatred for it…"
- Sun Ra and Amiri Baraka, *Black Mass,* 1966
(JUMPCUT)

At the Loft in the 1970s tweeters, woofers, and k-horns drive the bass and high hats of the soul, jazz and psychedelic rock that David Mancusso plays amongst a vast array of other styles to the frenzied dancers from midnight to midday. Party balloons are everywhere in case of a police raid. It's only a couple of years since the Stone Wall Riots. The Loft is an unlicensed space for the worship of sound and the queer body. Both Disco and House can be traced back to the Rent Parties of New York and Chicago. For legal – as well as ideological reasons – there is no alcohol only free punch with LSD at the Loft. People brought their own records to play, like a young Larry Levan (Paradise Garage) and Frankie Knuckles (Warehouse, Power Plant). Some pay a lot to get inside; many others pay nothing, with entry priced according to your economic situation and what you contributed.

'Bring what you expect to find' was a tagline used by free festival flyers during the 1980s and 90s.

1968 to 1919

In Furio Jesi's *Spartakus: Symbology of Revolt*, made up of writing from 1969 till the Italian writer's death in 1980, it is claimed the events of 1919 in Berlin belong to the masses and their myths. Jesi followed Rosa Luxemburg's 1918 thesis on the Russian revolution, which claimed that the bourgeois revolution needed only a change in leadership, while the communist revolution needed a change in daily socio-economic relations and realities. As Luxemburg stated, proletarian revolution was very much about the creation of situations: 'We have to work from below; and that corresponds precisely to the mass character of our revolution, which aims at the very foundations of the social structure.'

Jesi, like Benjamin, saw revolt as a suspension of bourgeois time (historical time, work time and the time of technified myth) and the creation of a time where 'the city [is] really felt as one's *own* city.' The suspension of time as Kracauer saw in the modern social dance, or the creation of situations as was popularised by Jesi after his return to Italy in 1969. We could equally say that a blues like epistemological versioning of theories, revolts and mythology fits this into this strain of left wing modernity.

Baudelaire's 'Man of the Crowd'

In his cryptic essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), on the artist M.G, Baudelaire explains that the artist's magic is not a result of their clumsily rendered works, but their state of eternal convalescence. M.G rises only when, at its apex, the sun provokes remorse and regret at the hours and opportunities missed while asleep – invoking what nowadays might be termed FOMO (fear of missing out). Due to this state of FOMO, alternately M.G is also always the last to leave anywhere: whether poetry, music or matters of human passion. Baudelaire uses what he emphatically describes as the picture drawn in Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd' to sketch out a kind of template for the artist's relation to modern life. Baudelaire claimed the man of the crowd is an archetype for the *flâneur*, and therefore part of a new type of aesthetic activity: 'the art of seeing.' The story of 'The Man of the Crowd' is retold in 'The Painter of Modern Life,' as it is in Walter Benjamin's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire'(1939).

The man of the crowd in Poe's story is trapped in a compulsion to submerge himself in city life. The narrator, in turn, compulsively stalks the man; bringing them both to gin houses and slums as official businesses of all sorts close. According to the narrator the man of the crowd and his clothes seem prematurely ruined but princely – adorned with a cloak, with a glimpse of a dagger and diamond underneath. The denser the crowd the more comfortable the man is, while conversely in an empty square he paces back and forth like a trapped animal. Even in abject surroundings the sound of people seems to restore hope and vigour, while silence and empty streets causes open expressions of dread and sorrow.

As day breaks the narrator is surprised to be back on the same street that they started on, though this time the coffee house is referred to as hotel and again its name redacted (the D__ Hotel). It is interesting to note that both the narrator and the man of the crowd, who he stalks, are not engaged in work.

Industrial Music For Industrial People

In the 1970s there was a worldwide collapse/reshaping of capital, leading to the death of heavy industry in its original birth places like Manchester, the North of England and central Scotland where coal mining, steel works, ship building and the automobile industries collapsed under pressure from global markets and monetarist ideology. Living standards fell and there was little investment in social housing and social mobility, which slowed down after the leap of the post war Baby Boom. Punk and post-punk genres like industrial music turned this decline into an aesthetic.

OUNDLE SCHOOL – 03.16.1980

A crowd of boarding school boys ranging from 10 to 17 years of age watch Throbbing Gristle play. Conservative MP Nicholas Fairburn had denounced the band in parliament, famously calling them 'wreckers of civilisation.' The pulsating wall of noise from specially designed synths and rallying cries in praise of masturbation and other taboos in tracks like 'Something Came Over Me!' drive the crowd into a hypnotic frenzy. Swaying back and forth in a trance they begin singing William Blake's 'Jerusalem.' To which frontman Genesis P Orridge unfazed by the effect the band has had on their young au-

dience replies ‘that it was funny someone could possibly think England was Jerusalem, as it’s not, it’s just a toilet...’

Later Genesis would form Psychic TV and the Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth, which explored and parodied the relationship between fan clubs, cults, secret societies, and snake oil salesmen type scams; continuing an obsession with forms of control and pop culture. Notoriously, the initiation ritual for joining the Temple involved posting your semen with a selfie (polaroid).

Throbbing Gristle’s disco track ‘Hot on the Heels of Love’ (1979) was a hit at The Music Box (1982-1987), where Ron Hardy (1958-1992) would DJ. Known for a no frills set up and the volume of the sound, Hardy’s eclectic taste in music and wild mixing style, the Music Box was the club most early House musicians in Chicago aimed to get their tracks played at. The Music Box spawned both the Jackin / Trax House sound and Acid House, as well as having a big influence on Detroit Techno. Though, having DJ’d for a number of years, Hardy’s reputation and abilities went to another level in the mid-80s when he began to re-edit and produce tracks with friends Chip E, Robert Owens and Larry Heard. With all four working together producing the track ‘Donnie’ as The It (1986). Hardy’s tape edit / re-mixes of Isaac Hayes ‘Can’t Turn Around’ spawned numerous versions in a Jacking style, before the release of Daryl Pandy and Jackmaster Funk’s ‘Love Can’t Turn Around’ (1986), which saw new vocals added and the track become an international hit.

There was already a virus spreading at the heart of the House/Garage scene: HIV/AIDs contributed to the death of many of its innovators like Arthur Russell (1951-1992) and Larry Levan (1954-1992), just as their music was going global. House also has a Blues quality built into it. ‘Cold World’ (1989) by Jamie Principle, ‘Club Lonely’ (1992) by Lil Louie, and ‘The Jungle’ (1986) by Jungle Wonz are examples of deep house imbued with a melancholy sadness, while the sample of Sirens and the Juno synthesiser’s ‘Hoover’ basslines in rave created a sense of panic or alarm. Equally the harder Acid House to emerge from Chicago in the late 80s like ‘Where’s Your Child?’ (1989) by Bam Bam, or ‘Your Only Friend (Cocaine)’(1987) by Phuture have a disturbing and uneasy vibe as well as being big dance floor hits that still grace Berghain’s giant Function One sound system to the present day.

Automatonophobia

Revolt belongs to decentralised myths recorded by the multitude. The original myth, or mythic persona, or event is duplicated and altered. Like in the folk forms of the Kabbalah, popular in the ghettos of Central Eastern Europe that were inspired by Frankish/Sabatian heresy of the 16th to early 20th centuries; the Talmud’s myths are retold in multiple versions, with the accent and focus shifting with each retelling. And regardless of whether movements built on messiahs and revolutions have materialised or not, they are always immanent.

In proposing, for instance, that Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* is an important communist text, we can see Jesi’s influence on the ideas of Wu Ming – the Italian collective who used multiple personas and shared identities in the 1990s – within a new wave of political dissent; amalgamating a burgeoning rave culture. Both the Centre and the far Right have now recuperated or realised these ideas. Q-anon, for example, being seen as a weird outgrowth of the satanic abuse hoaxes played by Wu Ming and their milieu as covered in *Mind Invaders: A Reader in Psychic Warfare, Cultural Sabotage and Semiotic Terrorism*. Q-anon believes Trump is bringing down a secret cabal of paedophiles.

Woop-woop! That’s the Sound of Da Police!
Woop-woop! That’s the Sound of Da Beast!

Meanwhile, the FBI further infiltrates the entertainment industry. 2020 saw the release of rapper Takashi 69 – the rainbow haired frontman for the FBI’s takedown of Brooklyn’s Nine Tray Bloods gang; garnering hundreds of millions of views on YouTube and World Star Hip Hop, with brightly coloured chant-a-long ‘gang porn’ in music videos like ‘Gummo’, ‘Billy’ and ‘Kooda’ (2018–2019). Mimetically spreading Post Industrial Prison Entertainment Syndrome, a death cult, and various dance moves. Takashi only receives 2 years after testifying against his co-defendants, while his former associates including manager Shottie receive 15 years in a plea deal. Shottie had claimed ‘Trey Way’ (Tr3yway Entertainment) was the new Death Row Records, just as that label’s notorious founder Suge Knight returned to a life in prison after an altercation on the film set of the NWA biopic. Many observers had already commented on how the comparison itself suggested a doomed fate. Many also claimed that Takashi 69 was an industry plant, an imposter in the first place.

Endless high quality drama… Automatonophobia - the fear of statues, mannequins, puppets etc. – automatons – kicked in yesterday.

Drifts:
Fragements from a Heretical and Utopian Movement

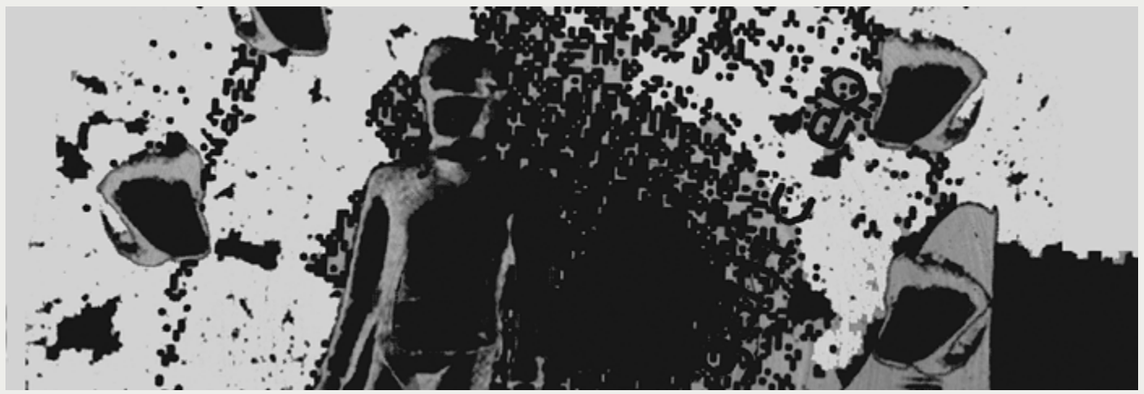
Christoph Fringeli

Nostalgia is a language of lack, a language for a past that never happened, a present that never comes, for the gift that never arrives.

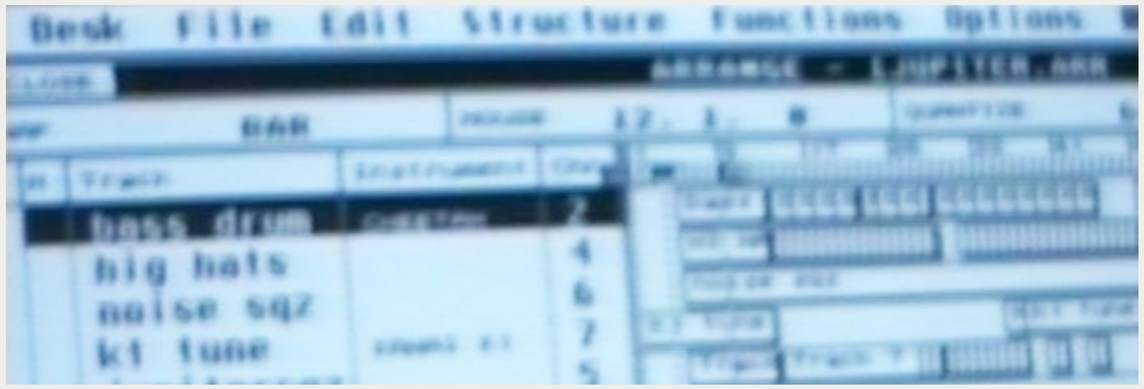
But there was a potlach, a challenge to our inability to recognise ourselves. A particular alignment, an intensification of forces, where a new kind of politics was starting to happen.

The human as a continuously mutating collage of old and new technologies, as adaption designed through play and experimentation.

A digital underground is developed by re-mixing ideas that disrupt the psycho-social order demanded by linear time.



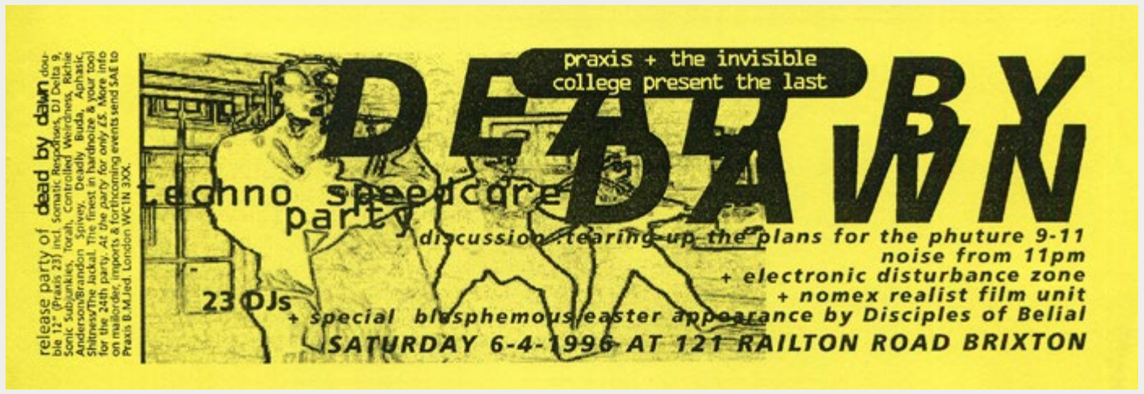
Cultural guerrilla warfare in unintelligible urban territories, experimental laboratories working on means to short circuit control, a confidence that new networks could corrode and destroy the supremacy of commerce, the creation of a focus that would aid the already ongoing INVISIBLE INSURRECTION OF A MILLION MINDS.



Whatever technology we can get our hands on we shall use: to contaminate the networks of power, to create webworks of counter-intelligence and information. To amplify NOISE. NOISE is what interferes with Control's broadcast of pacification and programming, fear and oppression. Noise erupts when anyone takes their life in their own hand…. it is irreversible: "Once the cloud of lies … was pierced, myth was shattered, leaving a vacuum that could be filled only by a delirious freedom and a splendid poetry"

AN UNINTERRUPTED RITUAL EXCHANGE, AN INFINITE ESCALATION, A SECRET COMPLICITY

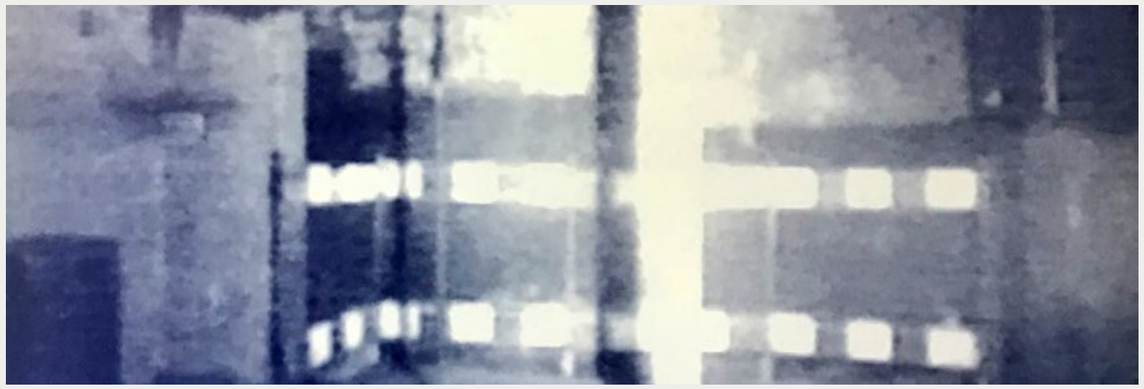
Only with machines can we recognise that most information is data trash. Only with machines is it possible for the bass to sound languid, tight and round at the same time. Only with machines can we simultaneously re-invent and destroy poetry. Only with machines can repetitious sound blocks clash to create unanticipated nuances. Only with machines is it possible to become the all pervasive ghost mob.



ACCIDENT / DELIRIUM / PAUSE

But soon enough formula were created & market research employed, documentaries made and laws drafted. It all needed to be brought back into the realms of the spectacle, made safe for mass consumption. All isolated and partial struggles against capital end in defeat.

We are confused in the city, there is no longer a temple of noise. Anonymity was the key. To be aligned and arrayed with everyone... to be cut through and enlarged by all that input, all those mute articulations. No stars here. Whole populations rendered static by the dead end of product... no more process-push but the formulaic of full-frontal photography. Singled out. Captured. Careering.



MOMENT / SUSPENSION / RISK

Every square inch of London is economically over-exposed, all cracks have been filled in and smoothed over. It's repeated all over the world. But this is deceptive. The intensifier is everywhere, inciting a new spirit of exploration leading to new discoveries & excitement, a new alignment of forces.

Christoph Fringeli, via *TechNET, Praxis Newsletter, Alien Underground* and run-out groove notations on various Praxis records.

Illustrations taken from Nomex video of event at the 121 Centre, Praxis releases, Dead by Dawn flyer.

https://datacide-magazine.com

Conspiracy:
All is Common: A Note on Baroque Sunbursts

Nindzė

For the dominant Left-wing discourse – not to mention the various more or less secular religious residues glorifying abstinence and production – *the party* (tūsas[1]) is merely infantile, leading nowhere, escapism. Fisher's text is far from being the only exception, but it remains on the margins of the Left tradition rather than at the center of analysis, perhaps because the tropes of suffering, work, sacrifice, and discipline, though directly not named as such, are deeply permeated in Left theories and practices. Pleasure is suspicious, unconstructive, unethical, selfish, irresponsible.

At first glance, the beginning of Fisher's analysis (the miners' strike in the UK) seems to have nothing to do with either our history or geography. The defeat of a year-long strike, described as the 'collapse of one form of collective life' and the great victory of neoliberalism, also coincided with the beginning of perestroika in the Soviet Union, the collapse of which we are still experiencing. What is common though, without excluding historical and cultural differences, is that in these three decades we have moved in a similar direction towards the destruction of collective forms and the spread of social Darwinistic individualism.

Although Lithuania may not boast the *same* rave scene now or in the past, it is probably more important to recognise the similarities between the forms and principles of the politics that Fisher discusses in his text, over the differences. According to him, rave is characterised by a mixture of technology, music and drugs formed in a specific historical period. But if we look at the tradition of free parties, which originated in England, but after 1994 moved to other European countries, we can see other, perhaps even more important, elements in them. In particular, the radically non-commercial nature (no tickets), the non-disclosure of the location to the public and the illegality. There have been and still are many raves, parties and shows in Lithuania that have taken place and are still taking place with a similar principle: whether it would be a collective garden house, discrete location under the bridge, an old bunker, a forest or an abandoned factory.

It is not entirely true that entertainment in capitalism is not possible or limited. Capitalism, as is well known, offers niche markets to consumers of even the most gourmet experiences. Rave ethics and aesthetics, achieved through self-organising forms and unauthorized, extralegal space, are create forms of collective engagement that stimulate as intensely as drugs. When space has an element of illegality, we suddenly see that not only are we able (though not always) to take care of each other, but we are also able to get out of our individualistic character and begin to feel collective power. What cannot be said about sanctioned, commodified, albeit supposedly subcultural spaces.

Rave may not be a revolutionary act in itself, but it allows us to escape the constant norms and prohibitions we endure under capital, the state, and the 'civil society' – to erase one's *self* even if for a brief moment, to articulate something different, even if for a short time – turns out *to be* possible. Such experiences develop their own micro-mythologies and shape anti-authoritarian skills and practices. Just as common activities, common goals, forms of resistance and struggle carried out in the day can bring us together and enable. No one denies it. But so is collective ecstasy at night (or day). The sooner we begin to erase our moralising impulses and let go of our fears about indulging in collective forms of experimentation, the sooner, perhaps, we will wake up from the dream of capitalist realism as well.

[1] Tūsas in Lithuanian, is appropriation of the Russian word тусовка, which has a double meaning as a party (as in entertainment) but also to any distinct social group.

Conspiracy: Baroque Sunbursts

Mark Fisher

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the psychic privatisation which is now such a striking feature of contemporary British Life entered a new phase. The miners' strike in the 80s had seen the defeat of one form of collective life. The privatisation of nationalised industries, the selling off of council houses and the proliferation of consumer electronics and new entertainment platforms (such as satellite TV, then in its early days) prepared the way for a retreat from, and denigration of, the public world. As the home became more connected, the space outside started to be abandoned, pathologised and enclosed.

It is in this context that we must see the Tory government's attack on rave in the 1990s. The infamous Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 targeted squatting, hunt saboteuring and unauthorised camping as well as rave. At the time, the Act looked arbitrary, draconian and absurd. The regulation of partying, under legislation that relied on the ludicrously vague term 'repetitive beats' seemed like overreaching. Yet the Act showed once more that authoritarianism has always been the supplement of neoliberalism's official emphasis on individual liberty. The founding event of neoliberalism was the savage crushing of Allende's democratic socialist administration in Chile. Throughout the 1980s, the Thatcher government had deployed authoritarian measures against the urban black population, and against the organised working class. But why now pick on ravers – who might be disturbing rural peace but weren't for the most part engaged in systematic dissent or rebellion?

The campaign against rave might have been draconian, but it was not absurd or arbitrary. Very much to the contrary, the attack on rave was part of a systematic process – a process that had begun with the birth of capitalism itself. The aims of this process were essentially threefold: cultural exorcism, commercial purification and mandatory individualism.

Cultural Exorcism

The exorcism was directed against what Herbert Marcuse called 'the spectre of a world which could be free'[1] – a spectre that music culture especially in its collective and ecstatic modes, has always called up. The historic mission of the British bourgeoisie was the total elimination of this spectre – something it was as close

[1] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation*, London: Abacus: 1972.

to achieving by the beginning of the twenty-first century as any culture has ever been. Rave's association with the English countryside made it especially problematic. As Michael Perelman shows in *The Invention of Capitalism*, the rise of capitalism would never have been possible without the enclosure of the countryside. 'Although their standard of living may not have been particularly lavish, the people of pre-capitalistic northern Europe, like most traditional people, enjoyed a great deal of free time...The common people maintained innumerable public holidays that punctuated the tempo of work.'[2] At least one third of the year was devoted to leisure. For capitalism to become dominant, this leisure culture, and the set of expectations and habits that went with it, had to be eliminated. This entailed the brutal destruction of the peasantry's capacity for self- provisioning. In addition to violent dispossession, the bourgeoisie also propagated a dismal cult of work, which extolled the virtue of hard work while condemning any use of time not devoted to capital accumulation as profligate and morally degenerate.

Rave's ecstatic festivals revived the use of time and land which the bourgeoisie had forbidden and sought to bury. Yet, for all that it recalled those older festive rhythms, rave was evidently not some archaic revival. It was a spectre of post-capitalism more than of pre-capitalism. Rave culture grew out of the synthesis of new drugs, technology and music culture. MDMA and Akai-based electronic psychedelia generated a consciousness which saw no reason to accept that boring work was inevitable. The same technology that facilitated the waste and futility of capitalist domination could be used to eliminate drudgery, to give people a standard of living much greater than that of pre-capitalist peasantry, while freeing up even more time for leisure than those peasants could enjoy. As such rave culture was in tune with those unconscious drives, which as Marcuse put it, could not accept the 'temporal dismemberment of pleasure [...] its distribution in small separate doses'.[3]

Why should rave ever end? Why should there be any miserable Monday mornings for anyone?

Commercial Purification

Raves also recalled the interstitial spaces – between commerce and festival – that provoked anxiety among the early bourgeoisie. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as it struggled to impose its hegemony, the bourgeoise was very much exercised by the problematic status of the fair. It was the illegitimate 'contamination' of 'pure' commerce by carnival excess and collective festivity which troubled bourgeois writers and ideologues. The problem which they faced, however, was that commercial activity was always-already tainted with festive elements. There was no 'pure' commerce, free from collective energy. Such a commercial sphere would have to be produced, and this involved the subduing and ideological incorporation of the 'marketplace' as much as it entailed the domestication of the

The fair always carried traces of 'the spectre of the world which could be free', threatening to rob commerce of the association with toil and capital accumulation.

[2] Pereiman, Michael, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, p.17.

[3] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation*, op. cit., pp.48–49.

fair. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White pointed out in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 'the fair, like the marketplace, is neither pure nor outside. The fair is at the crossroads, situated in the intersection of economic and cultural forces, goods and travellers, commodities and commerce.'[4] The concept of 'the economy' as we now understand it had to be invented, and this required the stabilisation of the unsettling and unsettled figure of the fair. 'As the bourgeoisie laboured to produce the economic as a separate domain, partitioned off from its intimate and manifold interconnectedness with the festive calendar, so they laboured *conceptually* to re-form the fair as *either* a rational, commercial, trading event or as a popular pleasure-ground.' Such a division was necessary in order that the bourgeoisie could make a clean and definitive distinction between morally improving toil and decadent leisure – the refusal of 'the temporal dismemberment of pleasure'. Hence, 'although the bourgeois classes were frequently frightened by the threat of political subversion and moral license, they were perhaps more scandalised by the deep conceptual confusion by the fair's mixing of work and pleasure, trade and play.'[5] The fair always carried traces of 'the spectre of the world which could be free', threatening to rob commerce of the association with toil and capital accumulation that the bourgeoisie was trying to impose. That is why 'the carnival, the circus, the gypsy, the lumpenproletariat, play a symbolic role in bourgeois culture out of all proportion to their actual social importance.'[6] The carnival, the gypsy and the lumpenproletariat evoked forms of life – and forms of commerce – which were incompatible with the solitary labour of the lonely bourgeoise subject and the world it projected. That is why they could not be tolerated. If other forms of life were possible then – contrary to one of Mrs Thatcher's most famous formulations – there were alternatives, after all.

At any point collectivity can be rediscovered, reinvented. The 'spectre of a world that can be free' has always to be stifled.

Mandatory Individualism

Capitalist modernity was thus shaped by the always-incomplete process of eliminating festive collectivity. It is possible, says the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish*, to read the impress of such collectivity in the very form that disciplinary institutions such as the factory, the school and the hospital would assume. 'Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of "contagions," of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in "disorder".'[7] In this memory, which is also a fiction, a hyperstition, plague and festivity fuse: both are imagined as spaces where the boundaries between bodies collapse, where faces and identities slip. 'A whole literary fiction of the festival grew up around the plague: suspended laws, lifted prohibitions, the frenzy of passing time, bodies mingling together without respect, individuals unmasked, abandoning their statutory identity and the figure under which they had been recognised, allowing quite a different truth to appear.'[8] The solution is an imposed individualism, the inverse of carnival:

[4] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, p.29.
[5] Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 1986, pp.29–30.
[6] Ibid.,, p.20.

[7] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books, 1977. p.198.
[8] Ibid., p.197.

‘not the collective festival, but strict divisions; not laws transgressed, but the penetration of regulation into even the smallest details of everyday life through the mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power; not masks that were put on and taken off, but the assignment to each individual of his ‘true’ name, his ‘true’ place, his ‘true’ body, his ‘true’ disease.’[9]

The capitalist realism that took hold in the UK in the 1990s aimed to complete this project of mandatory individualism. Any remaining traces of collectivity were now being extirpated. Such traces were to be found, not only in raves, in traveller encampments and free parties, but also on the football terraces and in football fan culture, elements of which were in any case fusing with rave. The 1989 Hillsborough Disaster was English football’s equivalent of the shock doctrine analysed by Naomi Klein. The disaster – caused by the malicious incompetence of ‘Thatcher’s police’, the notorious West Yorkshire force – allowed an aggressive corporate takeover of English football. Terraces were closed down and from now on each spectator was assigned an individual seat. At a stroke, a whole form of collective life was shut down. Modernisation of English football stadia was long overdue; but this was a neoliberal version of ‘modernisation’, which equated it with hyper-commodification, individualism and corporatisation. The crowd was decomposed into solitary consumers, and the rebranding of the top tier of English football as the Premiership and the selling off of television rights to Sky were the harbingers of the hyped-up existential desolation of life in twenty-first century England. The lonely connectedness of smart-phone addiction is a depressive hedonic reversal of MDMA festivity. Sociality is supervised by multiple embedded corporate platforms. We become our faces, working 24/7 for communicative capitalism.

[9] Ibid., p.198.

The move to mandatory individualisation was not of course immediately successful. The Criminal Justice Act provoked new forms of carnivalesque rebellion, most notably Reclaim the Streets. If the images of motorways blocked by ravers now seem to belong to a long ago historical era that is tantalisingly distant – as impossibly far off in some ways as the countercultural 60s – then the waves of new political organisation that have passed through Greece, Spain, Scotland and now (with the Jeremy Corbyn surge) even England remind us that the project of mandatory individualism can never be completed. At any point collectivity can be rediscovered, reinvented. The ‘spectre of a world that can be free’ has always to be stifled. It could flare up in any festivity that goes on ‘too long’, in any workplaces or university occupation that refuses the ‘necessity’ of drudgery, in any flourishing of a group consciousness that rejects the ‘inevitability’ of competitive individualism. The sheer extent and intensity of the machinery that was necessary to shut down rave is a testament to this. Individualism has had to be enforced, surveilled, compelled. All of capital’s-now flailing and conspicuously exhausted-inventiveness is dedicated to this compulsion.

‘From time to time’, writes Fredric Jameson in *Valences of the Dialectic*, ‘like a diseased eyeball in which disturbing flashes of light are perceived or like those baroque sunbursts in which rays of from another world suddenly break into this one, we are reminded that Utopia exists and that other systems, other spaces are still possible.’[10] This psychedelic imagery seems especially apposite for the ‘energy flash’ of rave, which now seems like a memory bleeding through from a mind that is not ours. In fact, the memories come from ourselves as we once were: a group consciousness that waits in the virtual future not only in the actual past. So it is perhaps better to see the other possibilities that these baroque sunbursts illuminate not as some distant Utopia, but as a carnival that is achingly proximate, a spectre haunting even – especially – the most miserably de-socialised spaces.

[10] Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, London: Verso, 2009, p.612

‘Baroque Sunbursts’ was originally published in *Rave: Rave and its Influences on Art and Culture* (ed. Nav Haq), UK: Black Dog Publishing, 2016

Conspiracy:
Sermon to the Insurrectionaries

Leisure Communism Group

In 1999 the French Communisation tendency Tiqqun, along with several other collectives, attempted to intervene in a rave in order to politicise it through the reading of their text 'A Sermon to the Ravers'. While identifying the threat of rave as an 'infra-spectacular world', lost in the muck of their Heidegerian spun post-situationism, they reductively dismiss all of its revolutionary potential. Yet, their critique seems to warrant our attention as one of the most formidable engagements with the rave scene, from what could broadly be called the communist movement. The problem we have with this text concerns a more integral problem we have with Tiqqun's anti-urbanist disposition – the critique of rave, it will be argued, stems from their more general refutation of urban flows and freedoms, as mere extensions of the capitalist spectacles false community of commodities. However, finding the critique of Tiqqun by Urbanist Socialists to all to hastily omit the integral role of insurrectionary phases of disruption in the revolutionary struggle for a international repurposing of productive processes and urban flows, we return to the question of Communisation theories anti-economism to consider the possible affordances of Tiqqun's own standpoint; while maintaining a critical distance from the core of their politics.

Tiqqun's interest, however confrontational, with the raver arises from their belief that raves constitute infra-spectacular worlds. Yet, in this short text they do not directly explain what a infra-spectacular world is, focusing their energy on explaining why the rave is not a revolutionary manifestation of one. So, let's start by figuring out what infra-spectacular worlds (i.e. worlds under the spectacle) are and go from there into a more wholesome response to their critique of rave and urbanist politics. The concept seems to have first appeared 1999, in their 'Thesis on the Imaginary Party'. In this text one finds a global order in crisis wherein exponential contradictions in the governance of social order are seen to inadvertently produce the negativities from which new forms of life arise. As Tiqqun nicely words, the crisis guarantees in its midst the necessary temporary subsistence of spaces of indetermination, zones of autonomy always more vast and always more numerous, where there is sketched an ethos for a whole infra-spectacular world that seems at dusk, but that in truth is at dawn. Some forms of life appear in which the

promise goes well beyond the general decomposition. In all respects, this resembles a massive experience of illegality and clandestinity. There are moments where one already lives as if this world no longer existed.[1]

The rave is then but one of a multitude of worlds arising from the fissures of an order in crisis. And the raver indeed 'wants by all means to escape the hopeless mediocrity of alienated everyday life[...] and 'In his own way, he is engaged, as were so many others, in the pursuit of truly lived time, and its agonizing intensity.'[2]

Yet, of the manifold forms of life that prosper in these worlds, only one is seen to attain the status of an 'authentic externality' to 'society': 'political conspiracy undertaken collectively, aiming to overturn and transfigure the totality of the social world and move it towards a real, substantial freedom.'[3] Meanwhile, the rave fails to constitute itself as a true externality, simply mirroring the false freedoms on offer by the society itself... 'crowds of puppets shaking themselves to exhaustion in a sterile chaos, responding mechanically to audio commands given by a handful of invisible technophile operators, who they think are at their service.'[4]

Although Tiqqun certainly has some arguments worth mulling over – say their trenchant commentary on the failures of the self-destructive pathos (of certain dance cultures) to effectively overcome separations between individuals – their hyperbolic division between the authentic externality of the communist political clique and the false externality of the rave, turns into a problematic denunciation of urban flows and economically mediated forms of life as possible sources of politics. As observed by Alberto Toscano, Tiqqun came to assume an anti-urbanist political line, seeing cities as 'stripped of any life not mobilised for the commodity and pre-empted from any behaviour at odds with a tautological drive for systemic reproduction.'[5]

The disruption of dominant nightlife formats and economies is absolutely necessary for our actual enjoyment of them

Tiqqun's *seemingly* categoric anti-urbanism, in turn directs them toward what they call the 'anti-economic' foundations of communism: a foundational refutation of *all* forms of life mediated by economic structures and a corresponding call for their destruction by direct and indirect means. Responding to the murderous ISIS attacks on the cafes and concert halls on a Friday night in Paris, 2015, the group actively identifies themselves with what they describe as the attackers' anti-economic war of spirit on the baseless joys and freedoms celebrated by the Western subjects of the spectacle:

[1] Tiqqun, 'Thesis on the Imaginary Party' *Tiqqun*, No.1, 1999. https://libcom.org/library/theses-imaginary-party
[2] Tiqqun, 'Sermon to the Ravers', *Tiqqun*, No.1, 1999.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Alberto Toscano, 'Logistics and Opposition', Metamute, August 2011. link

> If we wanted to be more cruel, and draw on an even more indisputable heritage, we should rather say that Friday's attacks - against a stadium, bistros, a concert hall – are a bloody offensive, and without charity, *against entertainment*.[...] the pleasure of the suicidal who shoots in the crowd is precisely to reduce the arrogant Western economic creature to the rank of rat, stepping over his moaning fellows in order to survive, to shatter the superiority of his false transcendence in the face of the miserable immanence of the *struggle for life*.[6]

As Toscano notes, this belief in the fundamental 'inauthenticity of massively mediated, separated and atomised lives in the metropolis' is then only to be countered by 'an anti-programmatic assertion of the ethical, which appears to repudiate the pressing critical and realist question of how the structures and flows that separate us from our capacities for collective action could be turned to different ends, rather than merely brought to a halt.'[7]

Such freedoms may support the opening of visionary political imaginaries that can turn worlds upside down

Yet, Toscano problematically uses his critique of Tiqqun's anti-urbanist 'politics of disruption' in order to build his proposal for a globalist urbanist Socialism that omits the integral role of insurrectionary phases *of* disruption in the revolutionary struggle *for* a global reorganisation of productive processes and urban flows. In doing so, Toscano aligns himself with a contemporary Socialist tendency typified by books such as Philips and Rozworski's *People's Republic of Walmart; Srnicek's Inventing the Future*; Bastani's *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*; Mason's *Post-Capitalism.* A patchwork of socialist policies cultivated in the laboratory of a radicalised social-democracy, decenter, incorporate, if not simply omit, class power as an autonomous, working class, vehicle of global transformation.[8]

So while we would agree that the global supply chain infrastructures built by the McDonalds' franchise have greater potential for meeting the new forms of need and desire that will arise under Communism than the medieval peasant commune; it is much more reasonable to imagine the revolutionary repurposing of such an infrastructure through their insurrectionary seizure – as literally

[6] Tiqqun, 'The Real War', Lundimatin, November 2015. link
[7] Ibid.
[8] Find a more developed critique in Gavin Mueller, 'The Palace of the Future is Nearly Complete', Commune Magazine, 2019. link
[9] Left Voice, 'Workers in France Take Over McDonald's to Distribute Food', April 2020. link

happened at a Mcdonald's in Marseille that was turned into a worker/union run food canteen and distributor in April 2020[9] then it is by Toscano's latent fantasy of some globalist Socialist committee put to power by electoral proceedings.

Reapproaching the question of the anti-economism of Communisation, calls for the total destruction of the exchange relation (money, value, labor, commodity) need not be carried out through sterile, mechanical, oppositions between the true community of communism and the so called false, corrupted, chimerical communities that converge, for instance, on a Friday night or at a rave. Moreover, the freedom of 'I do what I want with my hair / with my ass / with my cock / with my tongue, etc.' that Tiqqun scorns as 'terrible servitudes' of the 'social market' in fact are integral to the very history and present of the insurrectionary communist politics that Tiqqun themselves are the heirs of. Carefully approached, such freedoms may support the opening of visionary political imaginaries that can turn worlds upside down. Take, for instance, the New York insurrection of 1741 that was organised through Hughson's Tavern. The tavern was part of an elicit waterfront economy that stood as an integral social structure for the 'outcasts of the nations of the earth' to meet, conspire, and subsist. As observed in the *Many-Headed Hydra*, ruling class commentators of the period saw these economies as serious threats to the social order:

> Such establishments encouraged theft and debauchery, but even worse, they provided "opportunities for the most loose, debased and abandoned wretches amongst us to cabal and confederate together, and ripen themselves in these schools of mischief, for the execution of the most daring and detestable counterprizes: I fear there are yet many of these houses amongst us, and they are the bane and pest of the city; it was such that gave the opportunity of breeding this most horrid and execrable conspiracy."[10]

It will serve us well to neither identify nor dis-identify with the freedoms and political possibilities rave, nightlife, and metropolitan entertainment economies put on offer. Yet, the disruption of dominant nightlife formats and economies seems to be absolutely necessary for our actual enjoyment of them. The insurgent leisure cultures the ULWC is interested in very much walk the line between identifying political meaning in social forms that arise within capitalist social infrastructures and identifying political meaning in the disruption of such infrastructures by the very groups mediated by them. Stonewall was a mafia run tavern that only inadvertently supported the formation of queer community –– – it was in the tension between this *support* of and *violence toward* that

[10] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, London: Verso, 2000. 207

the uprising was engendered and the new forms of political subjectivisation manifested. Seizing the night is the only real path we have of giving political value to living free within it and beyond it.

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The poison may in fact be *a* cure.

Conspiracy:
Sermon to the Ravers

by Tiqqun

It’s not drugs or techno themselves that they fear, but just the constitution of any kind of infra-spectacular world

On May 23, 1998, that is, exactly five hundred years to the day after the good Savonarola was hung and then burnt by his enemies the odious Roman Curia and the little oligarchs of Florence, a second sermon was given, interrupting a ‘free party’. And from Savonarola’s time until now, it’s been a constant that domination rarely pardons those who conceive of ‘politics’ as anything other than a separate sphere of social activity. The project of a politicized rave – a number of ‘collectives’ were to intervene in the same way as us – was not tasteful in the eyes of the Political Intelligence Service, which thought the idea sufficiently seditious to send a few of their piggies out, even starting the day before, to keep people away from the entrance to the quarry where the techno-fest was going to happen. And so the first people to show up, who were in charge of setting up the equipment and smoothing out a rough path down to the party spot, got themselves democratically ‘enforced’ out of the area. The next ones to come were dissuaded by the example. This kind of episode shows the point where the apparent incoherence of domination on the issue of raves finally fades. Obviously, it’s not drugs or techno themselves that they fear, but just the constitution of any kind of infra-spectacular world, whatever the form and whatever the content. We consider that it would not be superfluous for us to reproduce here the text of the sermon, as it was to be read at the end of the morning on the second day of the rave.

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Enough convulsing! It's almost noon, and the high tide of chemical drunkenness is slowly starting to roll back. In ebbing it has given greater acuity to our perception of the dryness of things. All this sonic commotion, with everyone's nerves crashing against one another; all this streaming of electronic lightning bolts, cracking through time and streaking across space; all the colossal amounts of calories burned off by our bodies shaking – all this has returned to nothingness now that the sun is shining and the implacable, calm, triumphant prose of the world besieges you once more. All this agitation is incapable of holding it off for more than one day, and its only function is to cover up for a few hours the immeasurable extent of our aphasia, our unfitness for community. One more time we come out of it all alone, forlorn, and with our clothes reduced to rags by the pandemonium on parade. But above all, we come out of it deaf. Because every time a little more of our ability to hear is gone, and that's just fine for those who don't want to hear anything. The cataclysm of decibels, like all the recourse to drugs, just serves to erode, numb, and methodically devastate all your organs of perception, peeling away all the flesh of your sensitivity layer by layer, as you inure yourselves like Mithridates to a world made of poisons. Moreover, it's urgent that you be inured to it when it comes to sound, since, as De Sade once said: 'the sensations communicated by the sense of hearing are the most vivid.' And so, hardly even past the age of adolescence, some of us will already be stricken by tinnitus, that acute buzzing in the ear produced by the ear itself, which makes a person forever incapable of hearing silence, even in the most distant solitary places. And thus, they will have lost the most physical of their metaphysical faculties: that of perceiving the nothingness and consequently their own nothingness. Beyond that point, the flow of time is but a more or less rapid process of inner petrification into hard heartedness, fatigue, and death. And so we come to enjoy the growing violence that is needed to affect us emotionally even a little, and in this sense we are absolutely modern, because 'modern man has obtuse senses; he is subject to perpetual trepidation; he needs brutal excitements, strident sounds, hellish drinks, and short, bestial emotions.' (Valery) So we see how these nights are the mirror image of the suicidal resignation of these days: the rave is the most imposing form of our leisurely self-punishment, where each of us commune with each other in the jubilatory self-destruction of all. As you can see now, this is a call to desertion.

Crowds of puppets shaking themselves to exhaustion in a sterile chaos

All the tragic truth of the raver comes down to this: what he's looking for he doesn't find, and what he finds is not what he's looking for. And thus he has to coat his brain with ever more fantastic illusions, so that he can remain totally unaware of the abyss that separates what is from what he thinks is. And in the last resort he drugs himself so as not to die of truth.

What the raver is after, in the first place, is a certain romanticism of illegality, a certain adventure in marginality. In fact, he's entered into a desperate quest after a real exteriority to the total organization of society, an existing place where its laws would be suspended, a space where he could at last abandon himself to what he thinks is his 'freedom'. But in the same way as it's this society that commands the necessity of the phantom of revolt against it, this society dispenses, authorizes, and organizes its own exteriority too. The Law also decrees where and when the Law will be suspended. The interruption of the program is itself part of the program. These free parties, which aren't really free in any sense of the word, are tolerated, in a gracious gesture, by the City Administration, when it's not the cops themselves that distribute the access maps, or, more pleasantly, save the facilities from being overtaken by mudslides, as happened recently at pH4. And so, nothing, in this illusory space of freedom, escapes domination, which, undeniably, has attained a remarkable level of sophistication. But this lapse of judgment on the part of the raver would be but a comical irrationality were the reality not exactly the opposite of what he thinks it to be, in its principles and almost invisibly at its very heart. Because the rave is today the most precise metaphor that this society has come up with for itself. In both the one and the other, there are just these crowds of puppets shaking themselves to exhaustion in a sterile chaos, responding mechanically to audio commands given by a handful of invisible technophile operators, who they think are there at their service, and who create nothing, in both the one and the other, what we have is an absolute equality of social atoms to which nothing organic aggregates besides the unreal and booming cacophony of the world, obtained by the submission of the masses to the program; and in both, finally, we see the commodity and its hallucinatory universe centrally guaranteeing that people will tolerate the generalized drying out of emotionality, because all commodities are drugs. If, in spite of the obvious, the raver clings so dementedly to his blindness, it's only because he must at all costs maintain his illusions about the resolute hostility of Power and the furious energy of police repression. Otherwise he'd be forced to open his eyes to the frightening novelty of the most recent forms of domination, which no longer rest in a palpable 'outside,' simultaneously close by and far away – not in the authoritarian figure of a tyrannical master – but rather in the heart of all the social codes, even the very words we use, and carried in each of our gestures and in each of our thoughts. However, if he would for just a moment let go of his chimeras, he would have to recognize the revolutionary essence of his quest. Because this society's only authentic exteriority is political conspiracy undertaken collectively, aiming to overturn and transfigure the totality of the social world and move it towards a real, substantial freedom. And that's precisely what domination, which surrounds us so regularly with plain clothes cops, has now confusedly grasped.

But the raver is pursuing something different, and that is a certain tribal feeling of community, whether he's participating in organising the rave or if he's just at the rave itself everything about his life shows his search for a perfect and immediate community where egos will have ceased to comprise obstacles between people. He seeks this so blindly that he's ended up confusing it with the hellish fanaticism of a collective quest for depersonalisation, where the artificial and molecular explosion of individuality through chemicals has taken the place of intersubjective development, and where an external negation of the self by the sadistic stomping of machine like music takes place, and each person slowly erases the lines delimiting his or her singularity. From one confusion to the next, the raver, who intended to escape the false community of the commodity and the paranoiac separation of corporal and psychic egos, finds no other means of reducing his distance from the Other than reducing himself to nothingness. He thus certainly will have no Other left, but he won't have any Self left either. He'll just remain there at the centre

of himself, in the lunar landscape of his inner desert, which rushes him along, obsesses him, and stalks him. If he continues down the path of annihilation that people have deliberately directed him down, so as to turn him away from the revolutionary project of producing socially the conditions for a possible authentic community, he will only make his every moment of lucidity all the more painful. In the end he will have to choose to abrogate his suffering in one way or another – by regularly ingesting ketamine for example. For the raver, the cure has always been the same as the disease.

And that, at bottom, is the third object of his quest: a certain self-destructive pathos. But since what he's destroying has no value, that self-destruction itself is insignificant. As a kind of suicide, it's pathetic. That act, which once was the most dazzling affirmation of sovereignty, has now been stripped by this world of all its grandeur. People have now found a social function for suicide: it serves domination. This kind of leisure is exactly what the post-industrial society demands to bury any too-flagrant signs of its decomposition beneath striking colours, since it serially produces the kinds of brainless ectoplasms that productivity-hypnosis requires. One might even see a sort of overtime work in this kind of leisure where people submit voluntarily to traumas that only make them all the more resistant to the growing hardness of the world and of work. But to put it plainly, we don't believe in this desperate and premeditated pursuit of death at all. Everyone, at a rave, is quite simply behaving in the image of this society as a whole: it self-destructs in the most frenetic unconsciousness, entrusting the repair of the damage done to some hypothetical future technology, ignoring the fact that redemption does not count among technology's competencies. Because in the end, the raver is 'the most contemptuous of people, who doesn't even know how to have any contempt for himself,' the last man, who skips along on the now quite cramped surface of the earth, and shrinks everything down to size; he is of a species even more indestructible than the aphid. 'We invented happiness,' he says, and gives a sly wink. 'A little bit of poison now, here and there, to get yourself some pleasant dreams. And a lot of poison in the end, to die pleasantly.' Certainly, he goes on working, but his work most often is little more than a distraction. And he sees to it that that distraction will be maintained. 'We don't get rich or poor anymore; too boring. Who still wants to govern? Who still wants to obey? Both of those are too boring. No shepherds at all, just one big flock! Everyone wants the same thing, they're all equal: whoever has other feelings can be put away; they'll fit in perfectly at the madhouse. 'In the old days, everyone was insane', he says, and gives a sly wink.' (Nietzsche). He's prudent, in fact; he doesn't want to spoil his appetite. But there's ice in his laughter.

Finally, what the raver seeks is Festival. He wants by all means to escape the hopeless mediocrity of alienated everyday life, as it is planned out for him by organised capitalism. In his own way, he is engaged, as were so many others, in the pursuit of truly lived time, and its agonizing intensity. But in all the apparent chaos of his dancing, we only see the imperious boredom of identical lives, identically uninhabited. The time when he's at raves is no less hollow and empty than the rest of his time is, and it fills his excited, consumer passivity only all too imperfectly. And when you watch him thrash about in it, what you're seeing is just absence gnawing away at him from the inside. But these aren't really parties: they're get-togethers. That is, they're additive multitudes of beings gathering in places where a few other people will have the decency to get them to SHUTUP. There, at the rave, there are but the shadows of men who have forgotten what they wanted to forget, runaways who

think they're safe in the folds and recesses of their measly discourse-less sensations, the sterile rioters of a chemical happiness stupidly communing in a supermarket hedonism. Because the real Festival is none other than revolution, which contains within it the whole Tragedy, and the whole sovereign conscience, of an upside-down world. Whereas the revolution is the being at the highest summit of being, the rave is but the nothingness at the deepest depths of nothingness. This apparent negation of the rest of his existence is really nothing but the custom-built supplement that makes that existence tolerable to the raver: the chimerical abolition of time and consciousness, individuality and the world. All of this is little more than crystallized diarrhoea for domesticated pigs.

We claim that the energy that's squandered to pure loss in raves should be spent otherwise, and that what we're dealing with here is the end of a world. We've just said a lot of things. It is urgent that they be discussed.

* Originally published in *Tiqqun*, No.1, 1999. The full journal issue is available on Libcom:

Accomplices & Mixtapes

Some fierce sounds and words we have been listening to, while conspiring our exodus from the dungeons of neo-liberal disaster capitalism – indulge.

BCAA System, Prague

BCAAmusic // antiviral BCAA-core stream by BCAA

No~one Is an Island | VA | BCAA x No~one Is an Island (video)

BCAAstream

BCAAmusic// Sentimental Rave

Cesura: Journal of Music, Politics and Poetics

Sean Bonney • Time Negatives of Variable Universe: On Sun Ra and Amiri Baraka

Howard Slater - A Blind Eye Turned: Music and Libidinal Economy

Community Bread, New York

MIKE SERVITO (Visuals by ACE) x Community Bread Launch Stream

MCMLXXXV x Community Bread Launch

HYPERAKTIVIST | CB MIX 005 by Community Bread

HAAi | CB MIX 008 by Community Bread

Mayday Rooms, London

Techno Activate | Interview with Howard Slater by MayDay Radio Notes x MayDay Radio | Techno Activate

Mute Magazine, London

The Sea is Red: A Video Interview with Marcus Rediker

Salvage Punk on Vimeo

Oramics, PL

Oramics Podcast: Femmes in Sonology by Oramics

Oramics Podcast: Belarus / Беларусь by Oramics

ORAMICS: Rugilė “Lithuanian waves” by Behind The Stage

Discussion: Eastern Block after the pandemic: strengthening local scenes and their cooperation

Oramics crew guest mixes & podcasts - Avtomat for Couleur3

Zone-Free Zone: Poland’s Lgbtq+ Community In Arts & Activism

Palanga Street Radio, Vilnius

R.I.P CLUBS 1# & #2 - club is dead... non-club club music and club music no longer in clubs. with yours DJ Srirachas

ALYSSA MYLANNO FOR SAFE CLOUD RAVE 2

COMMON GROUND #6 PALANGA // how the radio platform came together and the growing community it has fostered

PSR interviews ULWC on what it's been like building a nightclub in 2020 and what went down in their recent Assembly

GUEST SHOW WITH NON-ESSENTIAL WORKERS by Palanga Street Radio

FLIGHTS OF FANCY #15 WITH YON ETA by Palanga Street Radio

We are Propaganda, Lithuania

GUEST SHOW WITH WE ARE PROPAGANDA, Palanga Street Radio, 2019

Clubbing Body Politics & Queer Performativity

their greatest battles will be with themselves

Social Discipline, Berlin

SD12 - w/ Ana Teixeira Pinto and Kerstin Stakemeier - Unweaving Social Sadism

SD07 - w/ Elena Biserna - We are really sick, but our disease is not the Covid-19

History is made at night

Revolt of the Ravers – The Movement against the Criminal Justice Act in Britain 1993-95

Datacide Magazine

Dancing with Death: The Excremental, the Sacred & Ecstatic Community in Free Party Culture

Spiral Tribe Interview with Mark Harrison

Hedonism and Revolution: The Barricade and the Dancefloor