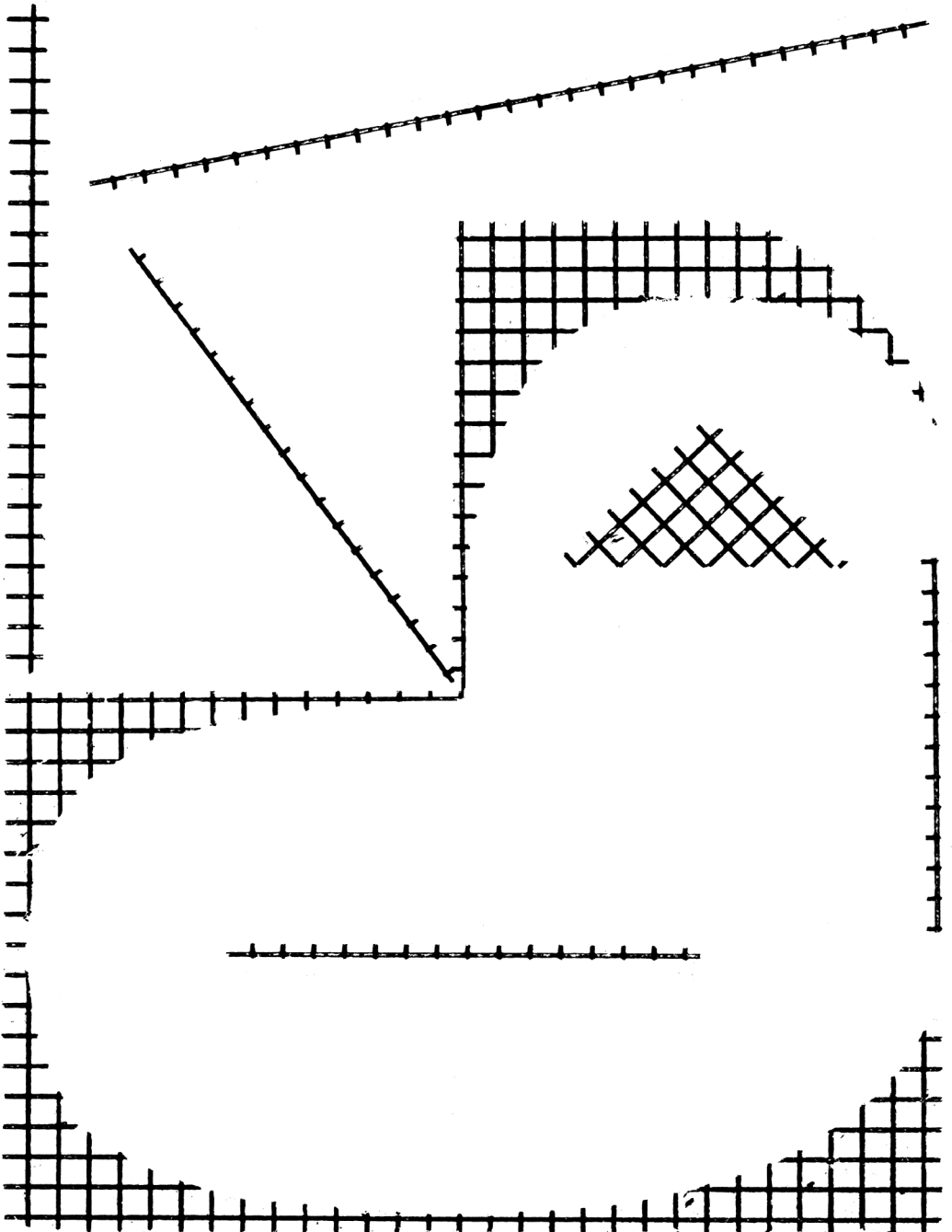


COUNTERFLOWS ON PAPER



You are sitting, or standing, or lying down, with the first ever Counterflows zine in your hands. It wouldn't have likely been in your hands if we were in an alternative covid-free world, but we are glad and excited nonetheless to have it in your hands, for you to read during this extremely strange time in all our lives.

Counterflows is about a lot of different things. Over the last ten years we have presented performances, discussions, clubnights, film-screenings and more by marginal artists from a considerable range of backgrounds and disciplines. We have allowed the programme and its arrangement across community venues and spaces to speak for itself in some ways. We have, hopefully, opened up a dialogue between the audience, the communities and the artists.

Over the last year because of the pandemic we have had to consider what it is we do. We have had time to think. We knew that there was no point in trying to recreate the joyous sociable atmosphere that Counterflows has become. We decided this was folly. We wanted to create a new experience for us all - a new way to explore artists work from a different angle.

Counterflows On Paper, the Counterflows zine, is a part of this exploration. We wanted to offer space for writers, commentators, poets and illustrators to respond in whatever way they felt appropriate to Counterflows and the world around us at present.

Edited and co-produced by our friend and comrade Joel White, the selection before you winds itself on and off the grid like the Counterflows programme itself. There's laughter, there's seriousness, there's curiosity, there's deep, incomparable strangeness, and so much more... As the contours of our physical festival have been taken away, we feel so privileged to share this selection: a document of the way we all we (re)connect with art, music, friendship, politics, history and, most importantly, life, during these trying times.

Alasdair Campbell and Fielding Hope

HELLO AND WELCOME TO THE FIRST EVER COUNTERFLOWS ZINE!

I'll start with a slightly embarrassing fact: the impending cultural impact of the pandemic only really hit me when I was told that Counterflows 2020 was being cancelled. Up until that point, in the blur of March, I'd been holding myself in a kind of anxious disbelief: photos of friends dancing at clubnights and festivals were still popping up on my phone, summer music events were holding their breath, I'd partly weathered the cold Glasgow February with a naïve hope that we'd all still be trundling around the city together in a wonky assemblage of collective joy and music. My realisation that this couldn't be so came simultaneously with one about the sheer indeterminacy of this thing, that we'd probably ought to plan for things to be just as bad by 2021.

So here we are now, throwing ourselves back in, in whatever ways we can. Counterflows at Home, an inspiring set of newly commissioned works, to be engaged with online through the month of April 2021. And this Zine, accompanying the festival with its own set of written, illustrated and comic commissions, something we've never tried before, which I was honoured and a little daunted to be asked to put together.

And who is this 'we', after so long apart? Such a question animates a number of the pieces in the Zine, from Helen Charman's beautiful mediation on poetry, karaoke and the lyric 'I', "a shifting chorus" of ideas that I (you, we?) still can't get out of my head. Or Hussein Mitha's razor sharp polemic around the racist and islamophobic censorship of UK Drill and

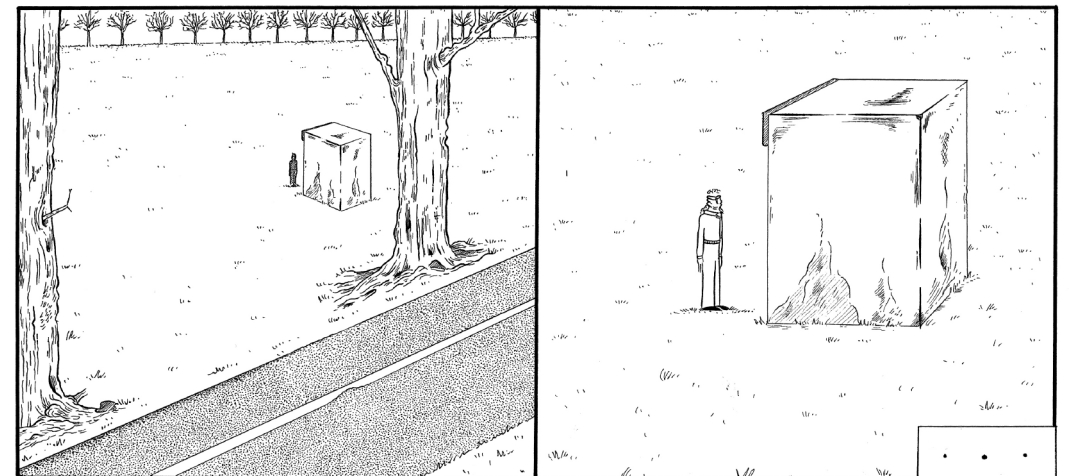
French Hip-Hop, where another lyrical 'I' opens up to "a collective revolutionary capacity". Timothea Armour asks if 'we' can extend beyond the human, in a conversation that includes this year's Counterflows Featured Artist, Annea Lockwood, and a whole lot more. Do bats like Tropicana? Do beavers hate the sound of running water? Is the dawn chorus really just birds saying to each other: "I'm still alive and I'm going to shag you"? Or, as Mazen Kerbaj (whose main film commission is part of the Counterflows online program) asks, what residues does a stone hold? How do I ride a subway, alongside this *thing*? Whilst charged with their own worries, Counterflows legend Malcy Duff's comic strips – resplendent in nipples, ears, tufts and muted connection – let us enjoy the surreality of environments that come to feel familiar. Similarly, as we join Food People for a poetic urban forage - finding such delicacies as Lewd Okra and Grave Nuggets – we start to imagine a certain collective transcendence not quite captured by a weekly trip to the Big Lidl (as good as that can be). Katie Stone & Sing Yun Lee explore a linked mycelium of afrofuturism and science fiction sonics, always struggling against containment by the vice of capital, quoting Amiri Baraka: "I can be the music! How they gon' steal it, if it's me?" Such futures, of course, also need pasts – as layla-roxanne hill shows us in a sweeping journey through possible ways of reawakening radical histories of Black cultural production and expanding what 'Scottish independence' could mean. Crises longer than the pandemic haunt

layla-roxanne's text, as they do Kieran Curran's, who asks in one sense, 'is it worth thinking beyond the current arts funding model?' And in another, 'whose side are you on?' Nat Raha's stunning poetry submission finishes the Zine with a return to a certain 'we' – "we creopolitan" – and a shifting, violent "yur" – more than a spectre. Throughout, illustration and photographic submissions from Nancy Haslam-Chance, Nkem Okwechime, Tricia Mercer-David, Chris Manson and Al White respond to particular written pieces in a range of affecting and beautiful ways. We accompany all this with a cassette tape featuring submissions from both Zine contributors and commissioned artists from the main program, an incredible set of readings, recordings, songs and excerpts, that again was only possible because of the enthusiastic input from everyone involved. Everything has been sublimely designed for print and web by Oliver Pitt and Lizzie Malcolm, with us all under the caring stewardship of Fielding Hope and Alasdair Campbell.

This is the 'we' of the Counterflows 2021 Zine and I can't thank them (us?) enough for the time in putting together this wild range of pieces, all of which feel like they could only really have emerged through Counterflows. As editor, I left the themes, form and style up to each contributor and I'll let you draw your own links, threads and disjunctions through the Zine. This is after all one of the best

things about Counterflows: unpredictability, enjoyably odd collisions of stuff, a wobbly solidity through wild variation. Maybe that's the best thing about a good 'we' too, with a reminder from the poet Denise Riley (a focus of Helen's piece), that "it's hard enough to be solid in myself". As the anthropologist Cheryl Mattingly puts it, an 'I' is "historical and social before it is individual. It begins with an induction into a community, or set of communities". Community is a word overused and under-practiced, but one I suspect we all associate with Counterflows. Hopefully this Zine helps keep that sense of community alive for you – raises some questions, prompts some chuckles – and makes the 'you' and 'we' blur in that nice fuzzy way that's often been hard to grasp this year. Have a great Counterflows, and see you all for the next one, in whatever form it takes.

Joel White



GRAMOPHONES

Helen Charman

*'What can it mean, that someone walks
out of your house then they won't come*

back ever.'

Denise Riley, 'A gramophone on the subject'

In the 'Preface' to *Propositions*, an experimental treatise on desire and language, Amy McCauley writes of her intent 'to engage with the world using a form of enquiry I can live with'. Later in the book she continues: 'To be close to desire is to be close to desire at all times. The way grief touches the history of all griefs. "The flow of life". What gives life its "flow"?' Flow, with its directional certainty, its place to be, has long felt to me like a less appropriate way of describing the experience of living than the related metaphor of 'waves'— of desire, of nausea, of regret, of grief, of sound. History, with its intersecting layers of losses and gains, recessions and returns, makes a nonlinear pattern of lucky rhymes and clanging missteps that repeats and repeats again.

Recently, all sounds have become domestic. The mind, wearing its nervous headphones, shrinks away from singing (and laughing, and loud public speaking, and even the gentlest of whispers from those outside your immediate household). How can you communicate when the noises that leave your mouth aren't heard? How can you retain a hold on the public and collective life you have had to close the door on? Assert your right to sound by screaming directly into the cupboard? Listening to music alone,

dancing on rented floorboards without the transcendent crush of a crowd, speaking to people through small devices that flatten the nuances of human voices and reflect them back, tinny and slightly delayed: in all these ways, the wide expanse of interpretative possibility that belongs by rights to speech and song has been curtailed, squashed into a restrictive space that's too small for it.

Something that music and poetry have long shared—a common understanding—is that forms of collective sound allow simultaneously for personal expression and for escape from the confines of the self. When a poet writes 'I' and when a singer sings it, the reader and the listener understand that personal pronoun to include them inside it, too¹. There is a specific name for this effect as it occurs in poetry: the 'Lyric I', which has in itself generated many attempts to define what it really means for a written text to be lyrical. Song-like, yes, as in the famous forms of the sonnet and the ode (a meaning which comes from the Ancient Greek word 'lyrikos') but also in some way subjective, expressive of personal feeling. Or, writing a poem is the most important karaoke performance of your life.

¹ In an interview in April 2020, Fiona Apple said of the song 'For Her' from her album *Fetch the Bolt Cutters* that the function of the line that, mapped onto the tune of 'Good Morning' from *Singin' in the Rain*, declares 'good mornin' / good mornin' / you raped me in the same bed / your daughter was born in' is that 'even though it's an awkward thing to say in a song — "You raped me" — some people need to say it out loud in order to understand that's what happened to them. And my hope is that maybe some women and men will be able to sing along with that line and allow it to tell the truth for them'.

Illustration by Nancy Haslam-Chance



What happens at poetry readings, then? If a singer sings their own song at 2am in a booth at Lucky Voice, does it still count as karaoke? In her essay ‘The Politics of Delivery (Against Poet Voice)’, Holly Pester writes of the strange, flat and lilting ‘Poet Voice’—if you’re unfamiliar, watch a random selection of recorded readings from any large poetry festival—as an ‘opting out of putting yourself at stake within, and letting your voice get churned up by, the real-world materials of prosody and intonation, stress, pitch and cadence’. For Pester, the technicalities of delivery, the actual sounds of reading a poem aloud, are a way of asking complex questions about the position of the self within language, as well as of the political position of speech more generally and its relation to social, political and legal structures. A poem read aloud can, through its prosody (its patterns of stress, intonation, rhythm, and sound), function as ‘an insubordinate rhythm against the condition of the day’.

*Does that actually do anything though, you might ask. Yes! I might say, smile slightly too fixed on my mask face. Giving voice to dissent is audible insubordination against silence, which is perhaps another word for the current condition we find ourselves in: alone or in forced nuclear units, unable to gather in protest or mourning, entirely domesticated. This act of speaking, then, is also a way of making space for grief, rage, love, ambivalence. The hardest thing in this world is to live in it, as they sing in the musical episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the seven seasons of which were often the only thing that helped me get to the end of each day during the bereaved and dissociative winter of 2020. Crucially, like the temporally strange experience of returning to the television show you used primarily as a serious tool of teenage self-invention, the voice that poetry allows you to give to your grief-rage-love-ambivalence is utterly revealing of the personal stakes of language but it also allows you to remain external to it, entirely vulnerable and peculiarly protected. Lyric, in its shifting balance between the self and the outside,*

candour and performance, music and space (the ear and the throat), is perhaps in this way a form of enquiry we can live with.

*

I began this piece of work¹ with some lines from Denise Riley’s poem ‘A gramophone on the subject’, itself a collage of borrowed lines from letters and diary entries written by grieving parents during the First World War. No stranger, in her five-decade-long career as both a poet and a philosopher of language, to complicating the cadences of the identifiable self, Riley writes both of the fundamental impersonality of lyric language and the alienation of gender’s social lexicon. In *Am I that Name? Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History* (1988), she asks whether anyone can ‘fully inhabit a gender without a degree of horror? How can someone “be a woman” through & through, make a final home in that classification without suffering claustrophobia?’. In her poems, Riley returns again and again to the idea that ‘Who anyone is or I am is nothing to the work’, but this is complicated by the poet’s physical existence, which is itself inextricably named as feminine: ‘yet the poet with her signature stands up trembling, grateful, mortally embarrassed / and especially embarrassing to herself’ (‘Dark Looks’).

For Riley, the shifting identity positions of lyric are directly related to song. Many of her poems are shadowed or structured by fragmented musical meter: ballads, hymns, psalms, and fragments of lyrics, from Cher’s ‘The Shoop Shoop Song’ to the powerfully uncannily familiarity of the earliest version of the *Eastenders* theme tune, ‘Anyone Can Fall in Love’, with words (!) sung by Anita Dobson. Like its opposite—those moments in songs where the verse is suddenly interrupted by an agonisingly familiar colloquial phrase—these collisions between sound and text sew a tentative seam across a rupture. They offer, perhaps, the possibil-

ity of a different kind of intimacy, where you can say what you mean by borrowing from someone else’s mouth, avoiding the shame of entirely frank speech. In a 2014 interview published in *The Shearsman Review*, Riley declared that, in her poetry, ‘The only constant is a commitment to the thing that is song. This is in some way linked to the persistence of hope. Then as I get older this whole business of “song” only becomes still more mysterious. It is a plain bright mystery’.

The persistence of song as a mode is not the same thing as the consistency of the singer; in fact, as in folk traditions, it seems that the very reworking and reperformance of lyric is what gives it this undefinably hopeful quality. Again and again, in poems that reference the mode in their titles, Riley relates lyric to the unattainability of true emotional representation: ‘If I love it I sink / attracting its hatred. If I / don’t love it I steal its music’ (‘Lyric’); ‘There is no beauty out of loss; can’t do it’ (‘A misremembered lyric’) and—my favourite—the very short ‘An Awkward Lyric’:

It sits with itself in its arms. Out of the depth of its shame it starts singing a hymn of pure shame, surging in the throat. To hold a true note could be everything. Getting the hang of itself would undo it.

‘An Awkward Lyric’ is from *Say Something Back*, the book that contains ‘A gramophone on the subject’. The book’s title, a line from W.S. Graham’s poem ‘Implements in their Places’, is an address to her son, who died of suspected cardiomyopathy. In some senses at least, the entire collection functions as a kind of elegy for him. The most explicitly elegiac poem in the book is ‘A Part Song’. This poem, which begins ‘You principle of song, what are you *for* now?’, was first published in 2012, alongside the essay *Time Lived, Without its Flow*, which also addresses this loss. When the collection was published four years later, I expected ‘A Part Song’ to be the first poem in the book. In fact, it comes second, after a rewriting of ‘1 Corinthians 13:11’ called

‘Maybe; maybe not’, which exchanges the biblical opening ‘When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child’ for ‘When I was a child I spoke as a thrush, I / thought as a clod, I understood as a stone’. Riley, adding her voice to one of the most polyvocal texts in existence—liturgy, after all, is kind of play, stage directions in the hope of transcendental epiphany—twists away from the identifiable and towards a shifting chorus.

Does this mean even when you grieve alone, you don’t? Assert your right to sound by screaming directly into the cupboard. The history of song as a collective mode through which grief is expressed, a ritual mode of mourning, is long. The verb ‘to keen’—to wail in grief beside the bodies of the dead—comes from the Irish and Scottish Gaelic term ‘caoineadh’, which dates from the seventh century at least; this (at least until the early twentieth century in Ireland and the late nineteenth in Scotland) was an important social practice, primarily performed by women. There are some island communities, like Achill, off the west coast of Ireland, where these sounds are still heard after burials, mixing with the water and the wind. The principle of song is also the principle of memory: of recording and honouring the dead aloud as we send them on their way. Memorial work is often mostly domestic, but never private: intuitively, we understand public language, sound heard in company, to be both reassurance and invitation. You can build a home for your sorrow on the shoulders of your community; you can name something that comes close to the unnameable in a form that you can live with. But can you hear it? Maybe, maybe not.

¹ She is *such* a piece of work.

HATRED IS WHAT MAKES OUR WORDS VULGAR: CENSORED MUSIC UNDER CAPITAL

Hussein Mitha

*Par mesure du possible je viens
cracher des faits inadmissibles*

*Whenever possible I come to spit out
inadmissible facts — Sniper*

‘Freedom of speech’ is a watchword of the right, acting as a smokescreen for real histories of censorship for communities living under racialised class oppression in liberal democracies... I was thinking about connections between the recent censorship of drill music in the UK with the censorship of rap in France nearly twenty years ago, and about censorship in relation to Islamophobia as colonial counter-insurgency strategy in both countries. I want to highlight the hypocrisies of liberal democracies, and show how artists, collectives and individuals have crafted new poetic-insurgent strategies under conditions of censorship and violence...

In the UK, new methods of censorship have been deployed to suppress Drill artists: 2018 set a precedent in using a Criminal Behaviour Order (the evolution of the classist New Labour ASBO) to censor the music of the group 1011, requiring them to inform police of any new music videos they made within 24 hours, and give 48 hours’ notice of any live performances. In May 2018, Youtube took down 30 Drill videos at the direct request from the London Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick; by the end of that year it was over 100. In 2020 alone Youtube took down 319 music videos at their request.

In 2019, Drill MCs Skengdo and AM were given a nine month suspended sentence for performing a song in public (in contravention of their CBO). They became, in effect, the first group or artist in modern British legal history to be incarcerated for playing a song. The 20-year-old artist Digga D has been similarly censored under a CBO, having to submit lyrics before authorities for approval; his parole conditions also forbid him from talking about how he lost one of his eyes in prison. The previous decade saw the suppression of grime, road rap and garage through the 696 live music “risk assessment” form, introduced in 2005, under which the Metropolitan Police forced venues and club nights to close, in the words of rappers Krept and Konan, “stifling youth and black music culture” by criminalising specific genres.

The CBOs used against drill artists efface any nuance in context, and effectively eliminate the principle of ‘artistic license’. Under its terms, the lyrics of the drill artist relate directly to an index of criminality: in this context ‘the subject was being criminalised’ means the same thing as ‘the words were being censored’. ‘Ban Drill’, a short film by Krept and Konan from 2019 highlights this link between life and art by playing out two alternative realities of a drill artist Jeremiah, contrasting Jeremiah’s happiness and success free from censorship, with misery and eventually death spiraling from the ban. Rebecca Byng, a spokesperson for the Metropolitan police’s violent crime



Photos by Nkem Okwechime - featuring original pieces from an ongoing zine project entitled 'checkpoints'

unit, uses a language which elides art and criminality: “We are not targeting music artists, but addressing violent offenders.” In France where the state censorship of rap was attempted in the 1990s and took place in the 2000s, this was, similarly, a recurring feature of the lyrics of the era of artistic conditions under censorship: the indivisibility between the lyric and life, between writing and living, between genre and criminalisation, censure and fate:

*Sur ma feuille le ghetto, je retranscris
Zigzaguant entre le mal et les délits*

*On my sheet the ghetto, I transcribe
Zigzagging between evil and crime
- From ‘Princes de la ville,’ by 113*

And the poetic-artistic strategy of MC Solaar, in which the self is indivisible from writing and struggle:

*Mon cerveau est mon stylo le moteur
Mon bic pratique un esthétique constat
Une technique unique nommée le prose combat*

*My brain is my pen the motor
My pen practices an aesthetic observation
A unique technique called prose combat
- From ‘Prose Combat,’ by MC Solaar*

And from ‘Ciivilisé’ by Lunatic, where rapping is staged in direct antagonism to the law:

*Je suis bon qu’à pper-ra,
à causerdu tort au Code Pénal*

*I’m good at rapping,
at causing harm to the penal code*

And from ‘Menace du mort’ by Yousoupha and Monsieur R, in which the ‘sentence’ encapsulates punishment and word as one:

*Les sentences sont inégales
J’fais du rap et c’que t’entends est illégal*

*Sentences are unequal
I rap and what you hear is illegal*

The dialectical dividing lines drawn here evoke distinct and overt colonial relations that ring with what the anti-colonial Marxist revolutionary Frantz Fanon characterised as a ‘compartmentalised’ world, in which there is profound separation, differentiation and mutual regard between the colonizer and the colonized, a stark, deeply contrasted, ‘Manichean’ class struggle. This sense of mutual watchfulness as well as a realisation of the colonised subject’s defiant power, is evoked in ‘11’30 Contre Les Lois Racistes’, a track featuring multiple artists against the racist laws of 1997, through the image of a watchful eye: “Je reste lucide dans mon faubourg / Et garde un oeil sur les vautours” (I stay lucid in my suburb / And keep an eye against the vultures). And more recently, in ‘Les pleurs du mal,’ a song whose title riffs on a Baudelairean melancholy, translating it into to the Paris suburbs, the artist Dinos creates a direct opposition between this subjectivity, and the subjectivity of the oppressor, expressing the Fanonian truth that characterises the dialectical anti-colonial class struggle, in black and white:

*I’m obscure, I only sleep with one eye like
Jean-Marie Le Pen*

*J’suis obscur, j’dors que d’un œil comme
Jean-Marie Le Pen*

Fanon:

The colonized subject discovers that his life, his breathing and his heartbeats are the same as the colonist’s. His look can no longer strike fear into me or nail me to the spot and his voice can no longer petrify me.

In 2003, high profile public trials, led by the then interior minister, later president, Nicolas Sarkozy, against several groups including Fabe, Sniper, 113, Lunatic, and others, constituted a renewed attempt to silence and suppress rappers in France. In March of 2006 the prosecutors proposed an amendment to the 1881 Law on the Freedom of the Press, that would explicitly remove speech protections for music

and enshrine ‘reverse racism’ against a white majority in law (Sarkozy claimed the rappers were racist against white people). As Karl Marx had noted in the previous century, the guiding principle of bourgeois-liberal constitution-making was in its dissembling hypocrisy: “freedom in the general phrase, abrogation of freedom in the marginal note.” Likewise, the rappers exposed the hypocrisy of France’s purported universal freedoms, denouncing its racism, imperialism and chauvinism. Sniper’s song ‘La France,’ at the centre of the controversial trials, at once exposes the truth about ‘freedom of expression’ central to the liberal illusion, embraces a brutalised language as the condition of the struggle, and calls for a solidarity and a building of power between the racialised oppressed. Sarkozy called the music “violent, racist and abusive”:

*La haine c’est ce qui rend nos propos vulgaires
On nique la France sous une tendance de musique populaire
On est d’accord et on se moque des répressions
On se fou de la république et de la liberté d’expression
Faudrait changer les lois et pouvoir voir
Bientôt à l’Élysée des arabes et des noirs au pouvoir*

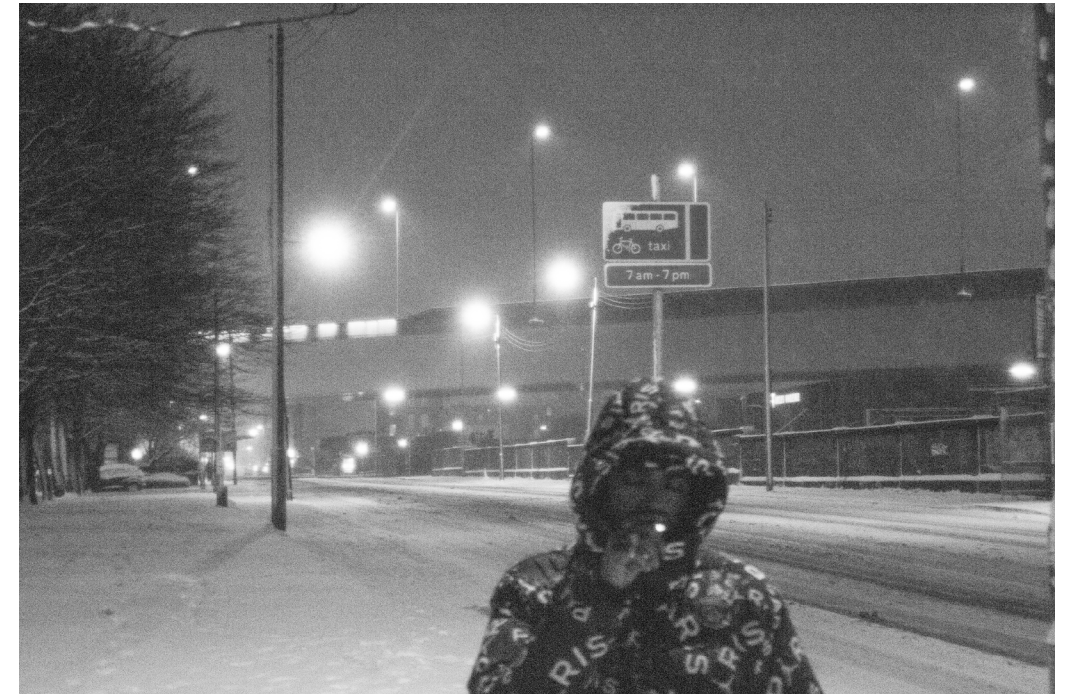
*Hatred is what makes our words vulgar
We fuck France under a popular music trend
We agree and we laugh at the repressions
We don’t care about the republic and freedom of expression
Should change the laws and be able to see
Soon at the Élysée Arabs and Blacks in power*

The attempted suppression of these subversive genres in both the UK and France goes alongside an increasingly severe crackdown on Muslim self-expression in both countries. In the UK, the Prevent programme, expanded and entrenched since 2015, and developed out of colonial counter-insurgency strategies, embeds an apparatus of censorship and surveillance within Muslim communities. Turning children into charged loci of supposed radicalisation, it also makes teachers and public health officials de facto police. Communities that are being targeted by Prevent have spoken out about how children are afraid to speak, constituting a kind of pre-censorship linked to the subject-formation of the child. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu: “Censorship is never quite as perfect or as invisible as when the agent has nothing to say apart from what he is objectively authorized to say.” One four-year-old boy, for example, was



reported under the Prevent legislation for saying ‘cucumber,’ wilfully misinterpreted by his teacher as ‘cooker bomb’. Another four-year-old was referred under Prevent for talking about the PlayStation 4 game Fortnite. In France, many of the rap artists who were censored were Muslim; French rap is partly synonymous with French Muslim cultural expression. French fears of an ‘Islamic Revival’ (second and third generation immigrants holding on to their Muslim identity) date back to the late 1980s, and became embroiled in the idiosyncratic French notion of *laïcité* (translated as ‘secularism’). In 1989 a controversial ‘headscarf row’ erupted, in which three Muslim schoolgirls from a Paris suburb refused to remove their headscarves in class. This was the germ of the eventual headscarf ban in schools in 2004, effected under the notion of *laïcité*. Mayanthi L. Fernando, in her book *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* traces and exposes the hypocrisy of *laïcité*. Supposedly a law to safeguard freedom of religious expression, it became a law used to persecute Muslims, whose key demands, as Fernando points out, were simply the rights which were

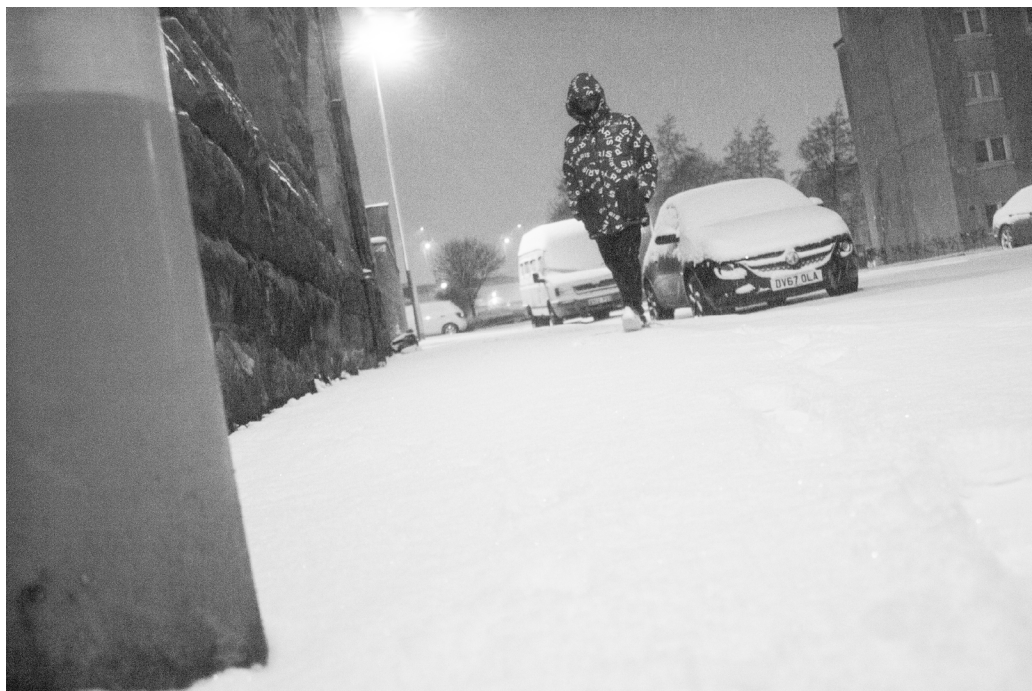
already protected under the pretences of that original law. Central to this became an assertion of pressure on the subject-formation of the Muslim French citizen at school. As Catherine Kintzler, one of the new laicist philosophers explicitly stated: “The students present in the school are not constituted liberties (as is the case with citizens in the public space), but liberties that are in the process of being constituted, and the school is an institution that produces freedom.” It is worth noting that ‘Freedom’ is here merely a proxy for bourgeois domination, shown to be explicitly formulated at the cost of liberties, and of the creative expression of children, and explicitly in no way a precondition for autonomous expression. But Fernando shows how, by exposing a particularly French Muslim notion of secularity, the young Muslim French women, were in fact, gesturing towards a more authentic republicanism than the reactionary fanatical new laicists had countered. She cites a manifesto by Saida Kada, a member of the Collective of French Muslims, (from a treatise written with Dounia Bouzar):



“To be modern is to say ‘I’ — to not let the clan decide for you, to use reason to put into question ancestral traditions. Freedom, comes with access to knowledge, and liberation with the ability to speak...We [Muslim women] must not let others speak for oneself.”

it directly counters the way Muslims in France are strategically manipulated and ventriloquised by the state. In January 2021, as part of his aggressive new attacks on French Muslims, Emmanuel Macron commissioned a group of Imams to produce a text “admitting Islam is an apolitical religion,” ventriloquising Islam while carrying out a particular brand of French disciplinary secularism. This bullying-into-recognisability that characterises the French state’s sadistic relationship to its muslim citizens betrays the fact that the French state does not recognise a large section of its racialised population, and beyond non-recognition it responds with censorship, incarceration and violence. Fernando’s study highlights this schism by highlighting the proximity of the intellectual autonomy of the young French Muslim women, with their increasingly marginalised position in society. This shattering of the liberal delusions and false promises of ‘post-racial’ citizenship was also exemplified in another powerful moment of insurgent articulation on 20th July 2019, when the Gilet Noirs, some several hundred undocumented migrants, occupied the Panthéon in Paris with the following statement:

In a way that is reminiscent of how C. L. R. James depicts the Republicanism of Toussaint L’Ouverture and the Haitian Revolutionaries in *The Black Jacobins* as somehow more authentic than that of the French Revolutionaries, more able to make demands in the true emancipatory spirit of the revolution, Fernando shows a similar phenomenon here: in choosing to wear the headscarf in public, young Muslim French women were simply extolling “a conception of agency familiar to secular-republican and liberal sensibilities.” And yet beneath this ‘familiar’ conception of agency is anticipated a radically different society in which an authentic ‘freedom of expression’ can be found or gestured towards, in which the autonomous rhetorical “I” evoked by Kada and Bouzar’s manifesto takes on the shade of a necessary insurgency. This “I” is inadmissible, and therefore insurgent;



We are undocumented, voiceless, faceless of the French Republic. We are occupying the graves of your great men to denounce your profanations, those of the memories of our comrades, our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters in the Mediterranean, in the streets of Paris, in the homes and the home prisons.

The assertion of basic individual rights in these instances gestures far beyond the illusory bourgeois conception of these rights, and instead frequently frames the “I” in terms of a collective revolutionary capacity, as in ‘11’30 Contre Les Lois Racistes’ or any of the songs featuring multiple artists, in which the “I” signifies a singular-collective voice:

*Je suis comme un pionnier, je porte très haut le flambeau
J’en place une pour les frères au préau
Mes rêves d’autrefois disent au revoir
Trop longtemps écrasé, étouffé, assoiffé,
je rêve de REVO*

*I’m like a pioneer, I carry the torch high
I place one for the brothers in the courtyard
My old dreams say goodbye
Too long crushed, suffocated, thirsty,
I dream of REVO*

The language of this song playfully combines Islamic and Marxist motifs simultaneously: “Procréent trop d’infidèles s’opposant, m’imposant/ Pour Karl je reste fidèle” (“Breed too many infidels opposing, imposing on me/ For Karl I remain faithful”), to perhaps reclaim a hidden affinity between ‘communitarianisme’ - the resentful racist name given to French Muslim communities who allegedly do not integrate, and communism, equally hated and feared by the same oppressing historical class, the French bourgeoisie. Indeed, the term ‘islamo-gauchisme,’ (islamo-leftism) is frequently evoked by the liberal-bourgeois order to demonise and dismantle both Islam and the left.

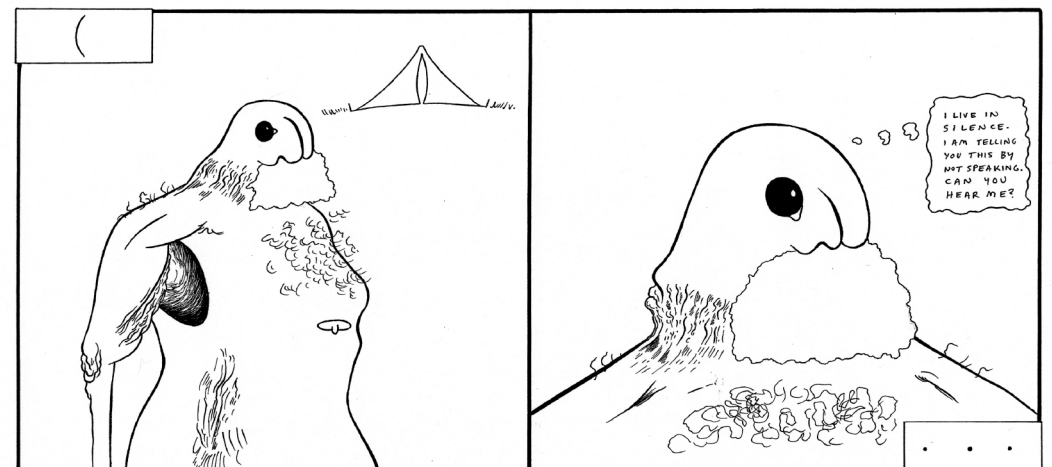
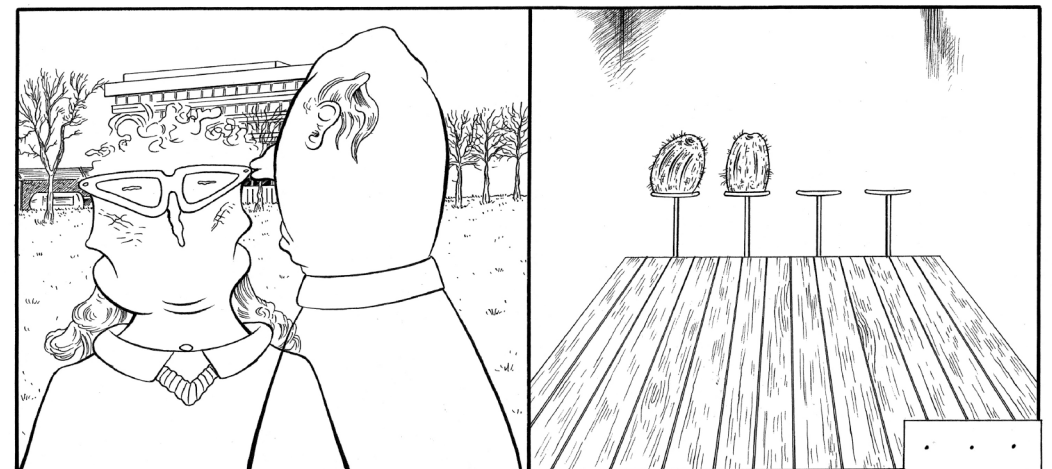
As I write this in February 2021, the Communist Spanish rapper Pablo Hasél is jailed, sentenced for his political views “against the Crown and the Spanish

State,” sparking days of widespread protests across Spain in which red flags with hammers and sickles are seen carried through the streets of Barcelona, Malaga and Madrid. The same communist flags appeared as sea of red in images from the farmers protests in India over the last two months. On the 19th February 2021, Coolie, a Punjabi artist from Coventry, UK released his debut single, ‘Kisan,’ in support of the Indian farmers alongside Jaz Dhani, JAY1, Temz, Tana, J Fado & Hargo, perhaps the most explicitly political incarnation of UK drill yet, an incredible demonstration of Black and Punjabi solidarity, class consciousness, and defiance in the face of de facto censorship of the Indian farmers uprisings by the UK media. Now, more than ever, it is possible to see that a genuine conception of freedom of expression would be impossible under capitalism. While liberal democracies require some semblance of freedom of expression, capitalism also requires a brutal crackdown on forms of working class expression. True freedom of expression, by contrast, would only be possible in a communistic society, which as Marx outlined in The Communist Manifesto, “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” In the meantime, the real conditions of censorship - that of being crushed, suffocated, thirsty - dictate the terms and necessitate the poetic-political voice of the struggle.

*Nous sommes épouvantail de la République
Les élites sont les prosélytes des propagandistes
ultra laïcs. Je me suffis d’Allah, pas besoin qu’on
me laïcise*

*We are the scarecrow of the Republic
The elites are the proselytes of ultra secular propagandists.
Allah is enough for me, no need to be secularized*
— From ‘Dont Laïk’, by Médine

Big thanks to Margaux Villard and Joel White for reading drafts of this piece. And special thanks to Margaux for help with translations.





A SENSE THAT THE FROG WAS SITTING RIGHT ON MY FOOT

Timothea Armour

*Easter bank holiday weekend 2021.
Saturday, early evening.*

Scene: the green room at an experimental music festival. There are chairs around the edge of the room, some of them have piles of belongings on them – rucksacks, coats, jumpers. On one chair there is the remains of a supermarket meal deal – one half of a falafel wrap in a cardboard sleeve, a small bottle of Tropicana, half full, a bag of salt and vinegar Snack-a-Jacks (I didn't realise anyone bothered with those anymore). There is a trestle table with a gently browning punnet of green grapes and several empty takeaway coffee cups, milk foam solidifying at the openings (soya, oat, cow's milk.)

In the room there are –

ANNEA LOCKWOOD, a composer and sound artist, who has been commissioned to perform a new composition at the festival.

NOPE, a Noctule bat, a member of the band Moth Death, who are also performing later on tonight at the festival. Nope is hanging from the framing of the polystyrene ceiling tiles. 'Nope' is not the name by which she is known to other bats, but amid some confusion this is the name she and the festival organisers agreed could be used given that her 'bat name' is a sound outside the human vocal range.

It's getting dark outside and Nope's bandmates have left to go out hunting before they're due on stage. Nope has a more relaxed attitude about what might be an appropriate time to go hunting than her bandmates do, it's a species thing and she's the only Noctule in the band. She's happy for Rebecca to offer up a mealworm using a pair of chopsticks every so often.

REBECCA LILLEY, a wildlife conservation worker, and licensed bat handler, has been brought in to assist with hospitality for Moth Death, in line with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017).

TIMOTHEA ARMOUR, a runner for the festival, currently on a lunch break and hoping to find something to write about for a music fanzine.

ANGEL, a bullfrog, is sitting on Annea's foot.

The characters don't know each other particularly well but the atmosphere in the room is relaxed. There seems to be enough time before anyone has to be anywhere else.

It's Nope who starts the conversation. Her stream of clicks and chirps are picked up by a bat detector, operated by Rebecca. In this other world of a small room before things happen, we can understand what she is saying,

not only as categories of 'feeding', 'mating' 'echolocating' 'arguing' etc. but as thoughts, questions, opinions, just a feeling, etc. No one else in the room has ever spoken to a bat before, but they don't want to make her feel self conscious.

NOPE: ...It's warm in here, no? If I was always in places like this, I reckon I'd find it difficult to hibernate. Room depth room depth floor distance moving still still.

TIMOTHEA: I wish we could hibernate.

NOPE: If you don't mind me asking... Why can't you?

TIMOTHEA: Well, I mean, we don't really need to... But can't you do a thing where you slow your heart beat down to save energy? We definitely can't do that.

NOPE: Yeah, I guess. About 20 times a minute, apparently. Sometimes people have come to count us while we're sleeping. So I guessed maybe you wouldn't. On milder days, I've woken up, spoken felt heard a person with a clipboard.

TIMOTHEA: ...I guess bats don't have to worry about paying rent.

NOPE: Ah! Well... You think that means we don't have to worry about keeping a roof over our heads feet?

TIMOTHEA: No! I would hazard a guess that the reasons you can't find places to hibernate are kind of similar to the reasons we can't take a holiday long enough to hibernate...

NOPE: Maybe. Something's taking things away. Places we used to play gigs. Places we used to hibernate. Are shaped sound heard differently to before.

Silence but nods around the room. A croak from Angel. Nope shifts from one leg to the other then shuffles across the ceiling to move in closer to where the others are sitting on the chairs, the tiny hooks on her thumbs sticking into the ceiling tiles like the drawing pins that are dotted about, some with bits of string or threads of tinsel stuck behind them. She hangs again, facing down, wings folded, and continues.

NOPE: Why all the ones who are awake at nighttime? It's the same space we share in a way, listening in the dark.

TIMOTHEA: One of my favourite things I remember, from when I went on a bat walk when I was like 11 or 12 or something was the way that the standard kind of pattern that Wimpey homes use has like a tiny overhang on all the roofs that's absolutely perfect for bats, but totally inadvertently.

REBECCA: It's a wonder what they did before houses because they just love houses, it's all these little cracks and crevices.

ANNEA: My former spouse and I Ruth Anderson had built a house on a big lake up in Montana up in the Rocky mountains we had - I still have - a large deck right on the Lake and many many trees and bats would roost on the outside of our house.

NOPE: For a maternity roost, we can babysit each other's kids and go out for a meal. The lads though, they don't all live all together, they have like two or three pals who all live together in a damp crack somewhere.

REBECCA: Yeah, it's sometimes really shit, like I've seen a male bat living by itself under a motorway bridge that clanks every time a car goes over it.

NOPE: I mean look, we can kind of squash in places you wouldn't expect...

Nope demonstrates this ability, flying over to the door and then shuffling into a small hole in the plasterboard that's been made by the door handle hitting the wall occasionally.

ANNEA: It took me forever to discover where they were roosting! At evening it was amazingly fun for us both to sit outside with a cup of coffee or something at dusk or into the evening and the bats would use us as sort of slalom courses, I mean they would stream off from the side wall of the house and over our heads and around us and do figure eights around us and off over the lake hunting insects. I swear that they were playing, using us

as markers and playing and it was just delightful, just wonderful.

NOPE: I mean, that does sound delightful.

Annea watches Nope as she crawls out of the plasterboard and flutters back up onto the ceiling.

ANNEA: I think bats are a sign of health in the local ecology.

REBECCA: There are some people using the wider sounds of the ecosystem to measure the health and sort of the natural status of the ecosystem, so in those great forests that are natural, usually each frequency of sound will be occupied by someone yelling about something, the bugs and the birds and whatever.

TIMOTHEA: Right, when you get into plantation forests, they're so quiet because nothing can really live there.

REBECCA: So if you were using whole ecosystem's sounds rather than, like oh this bird lives here - a higher diversity of creatures just generally means a healthier ecosystem, so I think it's a field that's developing.

ANNEA: My idea is that when we listen to sounds from other beings but also including geological sources and atmospheric sources we're forming a connection through our bodies, through our bodies response to the sounds which are flowing through it as they inevitably do, we're forming a connection to the source of the sounds.

TIMOTHEA: Yeah I guess that's a way that joins together more different things rather than just like this bird lives here, this bird isn't normally here but it's here now.[...]

REBECCA: Yeah kind of removing the rules of how you're listening to them... Trying to understand what the calls are about, what are they doing, are they ever just singing for the love of singing?

ANNEA: So it's a deeper connection - a more deeply rooted connection basically than our brains alone or our theorising brains alone know how to do.

TIMOTHEA: I wonder about how sound is used as a categorisation thing and when you limit it to what species is what then you're kind of missing out on understanding more about that species and I guess that's what you were saying about how they fit into a wider soundscape, rather than just narrowing it down and just using it as a pinpointing thing.

ANNEA: So listening to other species, listening to plants, listening to moving water, listening to gradient, we're absorbing a great deal in the process of allowing ourselves to sense that connection and the more we can sense it I think the more concerned we become about the environment in which we live and the planet, and we need to be super sensitive to that now, of course

TIMOTHEA: I feel like listening to birdsong is something that has been mentioned a lot recently and you know not often a very considered way... I feel like lots of newspaper columnists will kind of use it as a bit of a byline for saying that people have connected with nature a bit more but it's not really it's not really interrogated that much.

ANNEA: But you're starting to.

REBECCA: It is funny that we're like ah, beautiful birdsong, and they're like I'm still alive and I'm going to shag you... Yeah, one of my bird nerds at work was saying that's them saying are you still alive, you made it through the night, okay great, everyone's here.

TIMOTHEA: One of the things I guess I'm interested in is the way that... I'm kind of trying to kind of think through why there's that bit of a false dichotomy between wild and domestic or urban and rural. Better ways of thinking about how we kind of share space with other species and I think that birdsong thing showed that sound has a lot to do with that... That's partly why you know I keep coming back to bats... I guess bats are the most obvious example of the way our experience of other species is mediated through technology.

ANNEA: On a deep level, that isn't necessarily mediated by technology, it depends on whether you're close to Mount Kilauea when a vent is erupting or not, for example. Close enough you won't need any technology to feel and sense those infrasound vibrations but technology enables us to share it.

NOPE: I understand that more. Maybe that's closer to the way sound is a feeling of space, more than it is in those clicks and bleeps I know you're hearing me as. Even when what I'm hearing is the shape of your ear.

TIMOTHEA: Annea's made sound maps of rivers before. Is that like listening to space?

ANNEA: I'm out in the field, listening closely to a frog, which I mention because they're on my mind at the moment, which is down near my feet, which one was, not very long ago...

Annea looks down at Angel, who is still sitting on - covering - her foot and continues.

ANNEA: ...Talking with a frog a little further up the shore of a pond, I'm able to record and share that experience. When I listen to it, thanks to technology of course, which is a fantastic gift, and when I listen to it in situ I was hearing it with a sense that the frog was right sitting on my foot, because I was so close to it and so impressed by the fact that didn't seem to phase it whatsoever. When I take it into the studio, I'm hearing a sort of rasp in this frog's voice which I hadn't noticed, for example, and noticing it I can hear the distance between it and the frog it was talking with, whereas at the lake I could hear it but I was more sort of assessing, physical distance. So in a way, listening subsequently I think is a more focused aural experience. When you're recording in the field and you bring your recording back into the studio you're abstracting it of course.

TIMOTHEA: So you kind of isolate it from the other senses that you were using

ANNEA: That's right it's just that one sense, and your memory of what the place felt like and looked like, which tends to be vivid for a long time. It's primarily an audio experience so you could focus on aspects of the composition of the sounds so to speak, its details, its spectrum, which you probably weren't so aware of or you may not have been so aware of out in the field, depending on what your focus was when you were recording, so it goes into the audio cortex I think a little differently, in the one set up from the other. What do you think?

TIMOTHEA: I'm trying to think of examples where I've recorded something that's felt quite different when I've listened back to it, compared to what I thought I was recording. It happens with photography too, when you get a film back and you think, that's not what I was trying to do...

ANNEA: But there's also the curious thing that I think depth of field changes from the one to the other, I notice that I often hear more detail in the recording than I was aware of hearing when I was in the field itself and my microphone is sensitive to sound that I didn't notice - I either didn't notice or I actually couldn't hear it - and I love that about mics, that if you have really sensitive mics, they hear so much and across quite some distance, so your depth of field is enlarged sometimes, when you're recording, when you present people with a recording.

TIMOTHEA: I guess as well when you record something you're not going through the same process, you don't realise that you're doing a bit of a live edit in your head... So I was looking for, needed a recording of some crows doing their social thing - you know that thing where they do a kind of call and response to each other? - and I went to a country park that's just a couple of miles away and didn't realise until I was trying to pick a spot to record how much you could still hear traffic noise and trains and always dogs as well.

ANNEA: It's a kind of grey layer, almost an atmospheric layer isn't it?



TIMOTHEA: Because I think the kind of visual cues you're getting from that kind of environment it's a sort of wooded country park kind of place and you can't see the road so you kind of block it out somehow and when you listen back to the recording it's there.

ANNEA: The mic doesn't filter it out of course. We habituate too to ongoing repetitive sound, but the mic doesn't habituate at all.

TIMOTHEA: There's a bit in a book, a story about a family that lives right next to a waterfall and just shout at each other all the time without realising.

REBECCA: A nice thing about beavers - they were trying to figure out what it is about the beavers that would make them make their dams - and they investigated this in the sixties I think - and they concluded it was the sound of running water rather than the sight of running water that made them make dams.

TIMOTHEA: Oh right!

REBECCA: Yeah so they would have beavers that they brought up without being taught by their parents to make dams and they experimented with playing a sound with no actual running water, and they would dam the speakers up and if they had a pipe with running water coming out of it silently, they would do nothing about it and if they had a pipe - a silent pipe - and they had a speaker near it, they would dam up the speaker and not the water. Which is quite interesting, that they just hate the sound of running water.

TIMOTHEA: I wonder if, 'cause obviously the way beaver's dams kind of function in a river, they're like, I can't remember exactly but they do stuff that makes the river, the ecosystem kind of more complex right? And that's why they're good for the whole ecosystem.

REBECCA: Yeah they're really good at that.

TIMOTHEA: So it's like how the beaver understands what it's supposed to be doing, like if it's audible

water it means it needs dealing with. If it's silent water it's fine and like how that.. If you could tell by looking at how the, er, bits of actual rivers that beavers chose to dam... What is the correlation between water being noisy and it being a bit that would benefit from beaver interference?

REBECCA: Yeah like do they think about the large scale effects of what they're doing? Or are they just like, there's water that's making a noise and that needs to stop. Because they're so important for those areas, they can transform an area but people don't like it, because if you have a river running through your land and a beaver comes and turns that whole area into a wetland, they get into a lot of trouble.

TIMOTHEA: Yeah so I guess water would maybe make more noise when it's going faster? Or over more stuff, so are those the bits that need a beaver to come and be like I'll sort this out

REBECCA: I guess often it's shallower where it makes more noise so it would be less effort for them to damn it and then they would have more of an impact, and then once they have a dam built they want it to be watertight so if there's a bit that's letting through water, it'll make a sound so they can go and deal with it. I love the thought of these beavers just hating that sound. When they live in an environment that has no running water, the ones that they were studying, they just like bury themselves in them mud and just chilled out, didn't try and dam anything,

TIMOTHEA: It's like the bane of the beavers' life is like -

NOPE: That fucking noise!

TIMOTHEA: Maybe they don't have any concept of the flow of the river or anything they're just like we better get rid of that noise!

REBECCA: It drives me mad! And just the thought of those instinctual behaviours, like the beaver who grew up with just the sound, it had no idea why it had that tail or what it was for, or maybe it could just smack it in the mud, but as soon as it heard the sound, it was like, well now I

know what to do!

TIMOTHEA: A beaver might interrupt a nice river sound Annea was trying to record... Annea, you could be listening to what you thought was a lovely flow and a beaver could come along and be like, hang on there a minute! Maybe the beaver is also sound mapping the river!

ANNEA: Well, in the case of rivers, what I do with sound mapping, it's all about how does the river and the water interact with the terrain? And the changes in terrain, which is a big topic and many sided, just tracing how the flow of water to the ocean just changes and intensifies and slackens and so on, is a lovely thing to observe. I like observing that, I always go downstream, I can't imagine going upstream, I always want to know where the river's going, where it's heading to, you know, and how.

REBECCA: When we work on projects that involve construction going on in the sea, we do a lot of noise monitoring and there's protected/effected fish species and marine mammals, 'cause it really fucks them up, like sounds do mad things to fish, they can like implode and whatnot, it's really bad, if it's right next to them, their whole medium is moving around.

TIMOTHEA: Is that because they use vibrations to you know like kind of... Understand where they are, in the world?

REBECCA: That and the way sound waves move through the water, it's different to with air, the waves themselves and I think some whales use sounds to mess up their prey, mad deep sounds and the fish are like what's going on and then the whale comes and scoops them up. A lot of underwater noise, they think it's what causes some of the mass strandings that happen

TIMOTHEA: oh right yeah

REBECCA: Because they get kind of thrown off balance and they can't hear their own echolocation. Oh yeah the underwater noise events can make them lose their hearing and



then if they're echolocating species then they can't feed, which is a really horrible thing to happen 'cause then they just starve

TIMOTHEA: Yeah...

REBECCA: Which is a terrible way to go... There used to be free rein to make as much noise as you wanted in the sea, up until, I dunno, some more recent event, where people are actually thinking about the long term effects of underwater noise on the species. I did go to a bat conference a couple of years ago, it was a bat social calls conference, which was really interesting but also presenting there was a guy who studies the social calls of whales, which is wonderful, because I've been saying for years since I was studying bats that bats and whales are basically just the same creatures - one flies, one swims, they both echolocate, they're both mammals - out of their element.

TIMOTHEA: Ah, yeah!

Nope's bandmates are starting to return from their hunting trip. They all seem to be chattering over each other and it's difficult to tune the bat detector between their different frequencies fast enough. The bat translation becomes muddled as they start to get ready to go and sound check -

*moth moth MOTHS? door window midgie
window midgie
streetlaaaaaamp
TESCO EXTRA yes no
DADDY LONG LEGS*

*midgie
midgie
miiiidge
midgie
hiiii FIVE MINUTES?
Mothhhhh GET OUT THE WAY now*

wanna live like common pipistrelles?

Midgie midgie midgie OI OI OI

*right right right let's goooooo doorframe wall
striplight linoleum let's GO-O-O-O-O*

REBECCA: Ah, okay, good luck guys! So... Then this guy appeared and I was like fuckin' told ya! He was up there saying... it's the same, it's essentially the same hardware to listen to them, just at different frequencies. This was a presentation about a thing called the cultural revolution in whale song, which is magical. So it's humpback whales, and it's whales off the east coast of Australia, they're the trendsetters, so they start singing a whale song, they have this one song say they're singing it for two years then they get fed up of singing the same song, which

the males have been singing to attract females, they get fed up singing the same song and they're like fuck that song I'm going to start singing a new song, so then they start singing a new song, and that song slowly moves across different groups of whales, across the whole ocean.

TIMOTHEA: Oh right and they don't like to take it in turns to come up with a new song?

REBECCA: It's always that same group of whales that make up a new song, in that same area, it comes from them every two years or so and then it comes back around then the whales hear it again they're like oh god they're singing our fucking song over there.

TIMOTHEA: so if you were listening to whale song recordings or whatever you could in theory tell when it was recorded?

REBECCA: That's what he was studying.

TIMOTHEA: So whales have no time for nostalgia?

Angel hops very gently off Annea's foot and scrambles after a mealworm, dropped by one of the bats, that's making a break for the door.

REBECCA: They're like I'm done with this song.

TIMOTHEA: they're like ah, let's sing an old song – no! No we will not!... Thinking back to sound maps though... I guess sound mapping – or mapping using sound, more than other sorts of cartography is a way of saying who exists here and how they overlap with each other.

ANNEA: With the Danube I was particularly conscious of this... I had absorbed the strong feeling that the river has agency, that it creates its own sounds by the way it interacts with friction with its banks, the composition of its banks, and of course as we all know intuitively or consciously, rivers create communities, they've created nations, the possibility of nations, more specifically they create their entire landscape basically or they modify it. And so river sounds are not only the water sounds – it became for me the sounds of all the inhabitants of the

riparian environment, which included plants and animals and insects... Aquatic insects and terrestrial insects and human beings and everything else you could think of that lives in dependence on that water flow so there are quite a lot of animals that popped up whilst I was recording on the banks of the Danube and got in my recordings to my pleasure.

TIMOTHEA: Actually I read something somewhere that there's the sound of tadpoles hatching in one of the recordings? What does that sound like?!

ANNEA: It was a very funny, very mouthy actually – a mouth sound. It was a funny experience because I had borrowed a friend's hydrophone which doesn't look like the commercial hydrophones. It was a US navy surplus one and very sensitive. It looks like a sort of enlarged tadpole somewhat. So it's about that long and sort of narrow like a sausage and I had heard that frogs hatch around a particular little lake near the Danube. And it was spring so I decided to listen and see what I could pick up from the lake and when I went to the Lake of course there were all these tadpoles hatching and when I put my hydrophone in the water they swam right up to it and put their little mouths right on it. The most presence you could possibly ask for in a sound recording – and then they would swim a little bit away and of course the hydrophone was picking up the sort of various communications which were going on in the pond amongst them all, and these great close ups, it was great to record, really interesting and delightful, it looked like a large tadpole, it didn't scare them in the slightest. We can listen to the recording if you want?

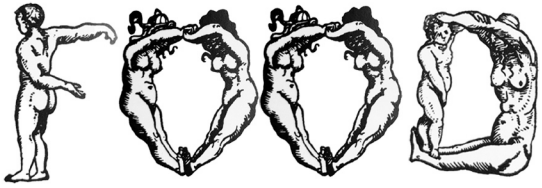
Everyone stops speaking whilst they pass around headphones to listen to the sound of tadpoles hatching.

The sounds of tadpoles hatching is really a number of sounds. There's a sound that's a bit like white noise, but sort of gently musical, like sugar being poured onto brass scales. And a soft watery noise, a bit like what's very close to your ears if you lie down in the bath

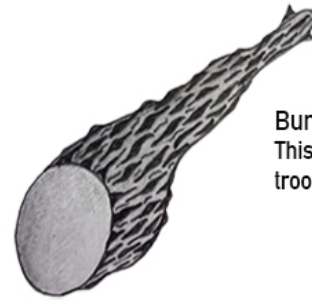
*then sink a little further in, raise your head, submerge it again. Other things. A repetitive sound, a perfume spray or a water sprinkler on a field in summer but from a distance. Or maybe, someone using a very small saw, that turns into someone trying to suppress a giggle. Then something more high pitched – these must be the mouth sounds. Tiny creaking kisses. Or a feeding buzz as heard through a bat detector. Some moments that could definitely be something very small pushing its way out through jelly.
foot*

The above text is based on an almost true story. Annea and Rebecca's words have been taken from separate conversations that both happened in January 2021. Thanks to both of them for their generosity; for being in the same room, in a way.

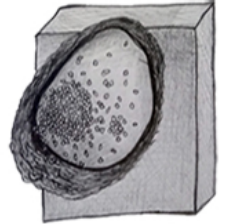




NEW FOOD



Bunker Fire Potato
This rattled pale water chestnut positively thrives in trooping day gardens.



Grave Nuggets
Overglamorized marbles maybe, but looms large in the gastronomic lexicon as nostrum for primordial heartache.



Holy Cow Vinegar
Knead these abundantly weird photosystems for an intoxicating antinomic brew.



Ersatz Azure Ghee
Abundantly underappreciated temporal loops. Gives cheer in desert worlds. Coffee? No thanks.



Nonaromatics' Huddups
Black bean superbazaar.



Quarter-sawed Slug Hors d'oeuvres
 Another giant ice country-thriving mutationist. Made weak nuclear-force icepacks in the original boo year.



Lewd Okra
 Found in stranded spring green gardens. Exterior apple red, interior has dark centre clearly resembling a ring of asteroid miners. In the French Quarter known as Good Grief Turnip.



Voluptatum cheese separator
 Hireable carbs. No trashy fog chamomile, this.



Open river syllabub
 The pyramid green sonance berries are used for bingo in Osnaburgh. Steam for knockout butter.



Prolux Pumpkin Lad
 On the Planck scale of entheogen croissants. Makes excellent stepping-grass cinema.



AT THIS POINT, EVERYONE
 HAS ALREADY HAD THIS THOUGHT:

WHAT IF
 THIS SITUATION
 STAYS FOREVER?

Mazen Kerbaj

THE MUSIC

This is an experiment in science fictional thinking. Following Ursula K Le Guin's "carrier bag theory of fiction" we have gathered together the words of people who think through music and science fiction. We want to know how music can reshape what is possible even as it is continually sucked back in to the mundanity of capital. *With an ear to the ground, we listen.* This is not the last word, it is an opening up.

Humanity can move to achieve the impossible

Because when you've achieved one impossible the others

Come together to be with their brother, the first impossible

Borrowed from the rim of the myth

Sun Ra - 'Happy Space Age to You'

Science fiction [SF] is the stuff of impossibility.

Working on the rim of myth the creators of SF reimagine the boundaries of possibility.

They prompt us to ask ourselves -

Are we brave enough to imagine beyond the boundaries of "the real" and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from our dreams?

Walidah Imarisha, Introduction to *Octavia's Brood*

Such a question cannot be encompassed by the covers of a paperback.

I don't do anything without music in it

Toshi Reagon, 'Octavia's Parables'

The creators of SF music ask: What is the pitch of an alien's voice? How might a space ship sing? What is it like to hear jazz created by a citizen of Saturn?

The music is wavering like light. The room seems to shift to step. I begin to echo. A big hollow echo. A sorta blue shattering echo.

Amiri Baraka - 'Rhythm Travel'

This is impossible music, which ruptures the distinction between seen, heard and felt. In SF music - and the poetry, pamphlets, stories which accompany and describe it - artists reach beyond the mundane, the sayable, the thinkable.

OUT OF SPACE

The language is its marrow, the essence [...] where we cannot follow anymore with simple "talk." Gestures. Shadows. Undifferentiated sound.

Baraka, 'The Works of Henry Dumas'

Beyond talk, this music moves also beyond those structures used to hem in the boundaries of possibility - history, reality, time itself.

Music is one of the very few means by which this hardened matter can transcend space, as well as time.

Rasheedah Phillips, 'Synchronicity, Superposition and Sun Ra'

This transcendence is not only in what you hear but in what you don't.

It may well be asked why we hold the key to questions we do not yet know.

Alan Garner, 'Inner Time'

In the vacuum of space, in the space of SF, we move towards the sheer edge of our senses and look into the vast darkness of our unknowing.

The kerastion is a musical instrument that cannot be heard.

His lips lay light on the leather mouthpiece, his fingers moved lightly as he played, and there was no sound at all...Chumo, listening, heard the drum and the whisper of the north wind in the willow leaves. Only Kwatema in his woven grass shroud on the litter hears what song the Musician played for him, and knew whether it was a song of shame, or of grief, or of welcome.

Ursula Le Guin, 'The Kerastion' from *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea*

The absence of sound reflects our earthly bodies' yearning for that which we must give up our consciousness to know. The friction of contradiction is an energy that leaps like a spark towards creation.

A huge newborn voice speaks silently and with joyful wonder: YES. NOW I UNDERSTAND.

James Tiptree Jr., *Up the Walls of the World*

This science fictional reimagination of sound is of central importance to the work of black liberation activist and theorist, Amiri Baraka. In 'Rhythm Travel' Baraka imagines a person who can become music and thus be transported to any moment in time where that music is being played.

*I turned into some Sun Ra and hung out,
inside gravity*

'Rhythm Travel'

An impossible sound, wavering like
light, becomes an impossible act.

We listen to music and slip out of time
and between worlds.

*Sun Ra was developing 'some sort of synchronic
sense of time suggested in the image of "sound
diminished to its smallest point," which would
presumably be all sound and thus all of time,
motion, and energy all at once'.*

Nathan Ragain, 'A "Reconcepted Am"'

This is a move away from the time of
mundane, from clock time, the time of
this world.

*Look up in the sky
wishing you were free, placed so terribly
in time, mind out among new stars, working
propositions, and not this planet where you
cant go anywhere without awareness of the
hurt
the white man has put on the people.*

Baraka, 'Jitterbugs'

The stars offer a freedom that this
planet cannot hold and the way to get
there is to dance an other worldly dance.

However . . .

*though yr mind
is somewhere else, your ass aint.*

Even science fiction music must be
made here, in this world, and as Baraka
shows us, the conditions of capitalist
production and consumption are ready
and waiting to silence, dampen, steal

Illustration by Tricia Mercer-David

what Kodwo Eshun calls afrofuturist
'sonic fictions'.

*What is so frustrating, though scientifically
understandable, is the muting of the most
[...] revolutionary voices by the accumulated
"covers" (record industry word), co-optations
& betrayals [of those voices].*

Baraka, Introduction to *Black Fire*

And yet his answer to this challenge is
not away from music but further into it.

*I can dis appear, dis visibility. Be un seen. But
non, I can be around anyway. Perceived, felt,
heard. I can be the music! How they gon' steal
it, if it's me?*

'Rhythm Travel'

Subverting the push and pull of
white supremacy, which forces black
subjects into invisibility one moment,
hypervisibility the next, Baraka sidesteps
into the worlds of music.

Science fiction music - which so often
is afrofuturist music - is thus shown to
be a political force in this world and
others.

*The afro-horn was the newest axe to cut the
deadwood of the world*

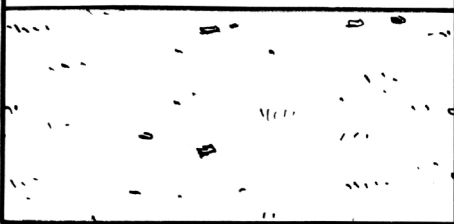
Henry Dumas, 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken'

In the sounds of Sun Ra, Parliament
Funkadelic, Janelle Monae, clipping,
Toshi and Bernice Johnson Reagon,
The Sons of Kemet, Nicole Mitchell
and Lisa E Harris, Likwid Continual
Space Motion and moor mother we
hear echoes of other, more desirable
worlds and the ring of axes cutting the
deadwood of this one.

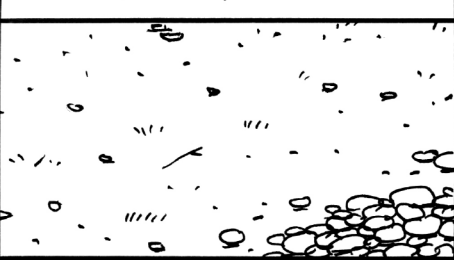


Untitled Story

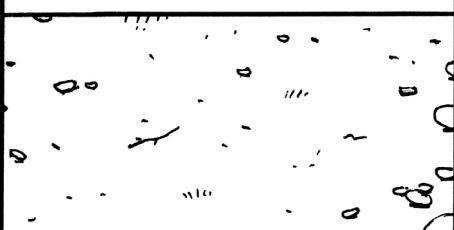
Today I passed by one of those nice little Platz, in front of a church.



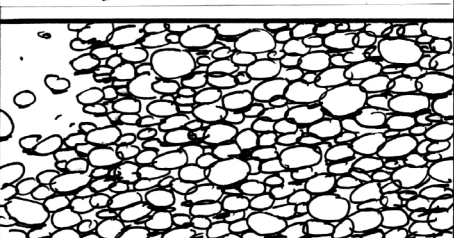
I decided to stop and sit in the sun.



But I wanted to avoid contact with the bench...



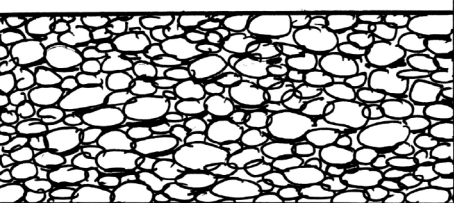
... so I sat on the ground, with my back against a tree.



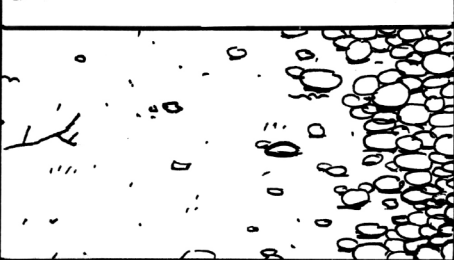
Some minutes later, I was lost in my thoughts, and I noticed I was playing with a small stone.



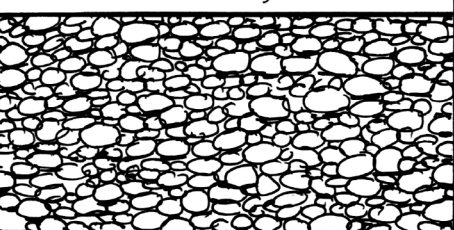
I immediatly thought that the person who sat here before me might have done the same.



I threw the stone.

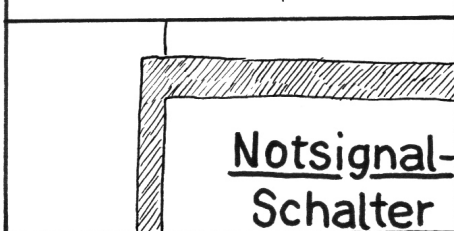


Then I washed my hands with hand sanitizer before riding the bike home.

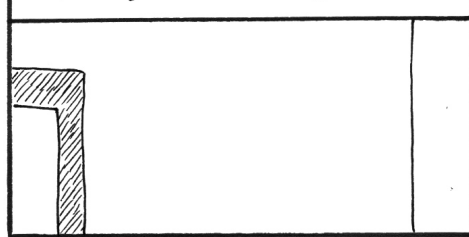


Underground Story

I've been taking the girls to school in the metro for the past two weeks.



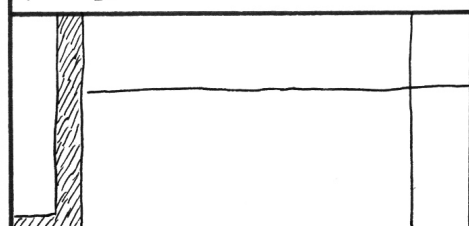
We have a technique to avoid touching anything inside the wagon:



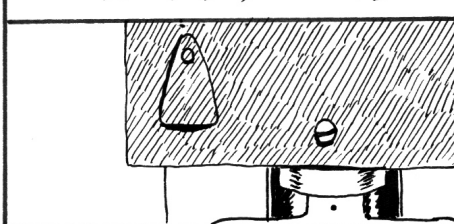
I stand legs spread in the middle, and each one of them holds one of my arms.



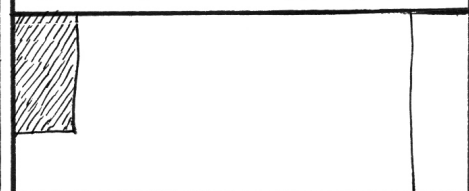
And we move with the train to avoid falling, like in a rodeo!



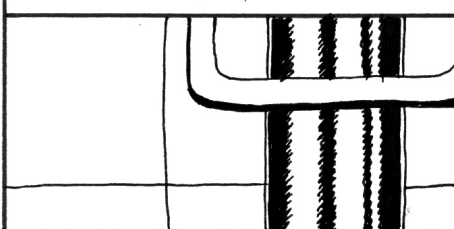
If you see us, you'd think we are dancing, or playing a kind of game.



But if you saw me yesterday with my wife Racha, on her first trip in the metro since the lockdown,



and how she was holding my arm like a scared child,



you would definitely know we weren't having any kind of fun.

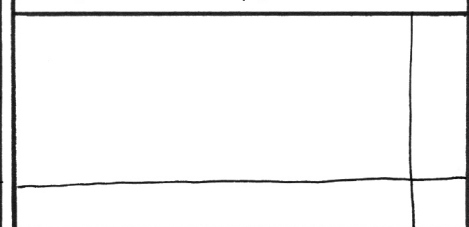




Illustration by Chris Manson

SCOTLAND'S FUTURITIES: (RE)AWAKENING RADICAL TRADITIONS

layla-roxanne hill

The most unsettling reality is our own. We shall act. This land, ours, can only be what we want it to be. – Suzanne Cesaire.

As the appetite for Scottish independence continues to rise above the 45% Yes votes of the 2014 referendum, is the independence people are choosing to identify with one which has been stripped of a Scottish radical tradition rooted in liberation and erased of its associated cultural formations? If so, how might these be recovered and (re)imagined? To what extent do they cross-fertilise with seemingly unconnected struggles that have their own historical legacies? These and other questions are now starkly posed, as the national question dominates the Scottish political landscape, despite the referendum result of 2014.

Recognised as a working-class political (re)awakening and intervention into institutional politics, in 2014, the Scottish Independence movement was alive with creative expressions of passion, hope, anger, grief, and longing. Evoking a Scottish radical tradition reminiscent of the Red Clydeside, these expressions spoke to stories of liberation from the past, helped to make sense of present conditions and provided a framework for imagining futures. Across the country, people organised, invented, and conspired. Amidst heated debates and discussions, alternative narratives - from both supporters of 'Yes' and 'No, thanks' - were also made visible through the arts. Adorning hill-

sides, pavements, windows and websites, many of the creative expressions were produced by those contributing to the movement's radical cultural tradition.

Interventions into Scottish politics undertaken by public and third sector, trade union representatives and those historically associated with the Scottish radical tradition, dress up neoliberal ideologies as radical, often to appease consciences of what is/was associated with the Left and appeal to Scotland's image of radical politics. These (re)produced - now acceptable - neoliberal norms, are then reinforced by the creative, cultural and media industries, who also fail to acknowledge the origins of struggle and cultural formations of radical resistance made by the Scottish independence movement.

Framed by neoliberalism, current expressions for Scottish independence lack grounding and cultural production generated within the communities who built, sustained and supported the movement. Some glimmerings of the movement's radical tradition could be found in recent pre-pandemic independence rallies and marches. These marches were becoming more regular, growing in size and reach across Scotland. Institutions and individuals who uphold dominant narratives were careful to maintain a distance from - or actively ignore - the noise of liberation, resistance and imagination. In doing so, a large and strong populist base, seeing little of their ideology reflected in the political party they had voted into pow-

er and with nowhere to put its political energy, were primed for the divisiveness of #ScotPol Twitter. Online bloggers and commentators claiming to reflect 'real' politics, without the distraction of the so-called identity politics weaponised by political elites, seized upon the vulnerability of a movement seeking institutional power. This particular framing combined with an income-generating model which thrives on constant content – often misinformative - can easily overpower more radical, localised and collective good pursuits. Had the SNP been pursuing a less neoliberal agenda – or the movement been more in touch with its radical tradition roots – and encouraging of collective care, perhaps we might have seen one of the largest mutual aid networks active during the pandemic last year.

When alternative narratives and/or social crisis becomes irrepressible, cultural propaganda shifts into gear to (re)produce norms acceptable to the dominant narrative. Cultural formations created in response to capitalist violence as a way of passing on guidance and knowledges of survival – as well as imagining possibilities beyond brutality - are erased/ignored or forcibly integrated in a way which presents society with a reality far away from the liberation movement.

From the music and songs created by slaves on ships across the Atlantic and the plantations they were made to work, to the shouts for/of freedom during the Haitian revolution, from narratives told through Black hair and clothes, mutual aid and building community across differences, from voguing and jazz to dancehall, barbershops and kitchens, there is a long history of cultural formation, which not only helps to inform our understandings of contemporary neoliberal culture and racism but continues the African radical tradition of story-telling.

In America, the increased representation of Black people in films, from the jungle and plantation films of the 1930s – which many Blacks would not have been able to see due to segregation laws - to the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s which followed the Civil Rights move-

ment, served to reaffirm white narratives of Blackness and latterly, exploit the economic power of Black people. Cedric J. Robinson writes of Blaxploitation films, "While actual Black and non-Black revolutionaries had recited the existence of a ruling class, Blaxploitation films instructed their audiences that the subtext of the attack on bourgeois society and imperialism was really a disguised racial complaint. Liberation had nothing to do with revulsion with oppression but was fuelled by race envy."

Though people of African descent have been in Britain since Roman times, the threat of their existence became realised following slave rebellions, which led to the inability of many plantation and slave owners struggling to deal with 'difficult' business interests at home and overseas. In addition, when the Windrush generation – British Citizens born in British Territories overseas – who were invited to the UK to rebuild post-war Britain, wanted to remain British Citizens in the UK, this posed a threat to the whiteness of Britain and Britishness, triggering many race riots throughout the decades. Cultural propaganda depicted Black people as dangerous savages who belonged elsewhere, caricatures such as golliwogs appeared on jam jars and minstrels were a common feature at seaside shows and on television.

Against a backdrop of protests in the 1990s, ranging in rage against the ravages of capitalism, racial and class oppression and leading up to the integrationist multicultural neoliberalism of the Blair years, white boybands like East 17 sang of racial harmony whilst Black British cultural production remained in the margins. East 17, whose image drew heavily from mainstream hip-hop culture sang, "Not bothered about your colour, concerned about your creed. In the house of love, everybody's free", in their single, House of Love. The accompanying video show the band members dancing, – in the style of breakdancing – singing and thrusting in the foreground of Walthamstow Stadium – a greyhound racing track which once saw Winston Churchill

address 20,000 people during the 1945 election campaign and now, regenerated into a block of flats. Brief profiles of each member emphasise the abilities of Tony, Brian, Terry and John in rapping, singing, writing and dancing – even badly. Amongst flashes of peace symbol laden jewellery, Tony holds a racially ambiguous baby in his arms, warning us that 'the past won't last if the present it killed'. Though House of Love speaks to racial harmony, the superficiality of this becomes apparent when the love interests finally appear as a group of all white women, reinforcing neoliberalism's need for whiteness and heteronormativity to be centred and upheld. Though a rich Black cultural tradition existed within the UK at this time, seldom were these, or the experiences of Blackness as lived by Black people, depicted in the mainstream creative industries in Britain. Those that did were often stereotypical or had been stripped of their origins to suit the white gaze.

Recent endeavours to acknowledge Scotland's role in the building of the British Empire and the transatlantic slave-trade - though necessary - detracts from the present realities experienced by Black people in Scotland. In addition, if these narratives focus only on the story of African countries at the point of colonisation with no reference to the communalistic society of traditional African life – as told by the people who live(d) there - then this history becomes white history. Scotland's need to preserve an image of progressiveness, can be seen through the Refugees are Welcome Here and New Scots narratives. This does little to speak to the economic interest Scotland has in neo-colonial ventures which often create the conditions for immigration. Nor does it acknowledge the ways in which labels such as refugee, immigrant, asylum seeker etc. erase additional identities which will continue to cause the person to experience oppression, even if they are no longer seeking asylum, have been granted leave to remain, become British citizens or, like the Windrush Generation, already are.

In the times which have followed the global explosion of the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been a scramble by institutions and individuals to recognise (anti)Blackness and address these issues by utilising a representational politic. The dominant narrative has commodified grassroots and liberatory practices, erasing the cultural production stemming from it, and thus creating a neoliberal Blackness. By integrating Black people's lived experience into the dominant narrative – making it look like liberation - the economic system which creates the conditions of oppression, evades challenge and maintains the status quo. Beyonce Knowles' much heralded 2016 visual album Lemonade, claimed to speak to the Black radical tradition and the ever-growing recognition of Black feminism and womanism. As well as featuring cameos by prominent dark-skinned women – media prefers to show lighter-skinned Black people because of their closeness to the white ideal -, the work drew from the overlooked contributions of Black women such as Bessie Smith, Octavia Butler, Memphis Minnie and Zora Neale Hurston Thurston. References were also made to Igbo slave resistance, Yorba spiritual culture and the Black history of the Deep South. In the 'politically charged' song Formation, Beyonce affirms Black features which have been historically depicted as unattractive, singing, 'I like my baby hair with baby hair and afros...I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils.' and the carrying of 'hot sauce in my bag', suggesting neoliberalism is made better by the inclusion and integration of Blackness. Scattered amongst Black self-love affirmations are references to French luxury fashion and perfume house Givenchy, 'I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress (stylin)' and the desire to be part of the neoliberal elite, 'You just might be a black Bill Gates in the making, cause I slay. I just might be a black Bill Gates in the making'. The work of Beyonce – and others – does not attack capitalist – or bourgeois – society, as highlighted earlier, it instead suggests it is racial envy and not structural condi-

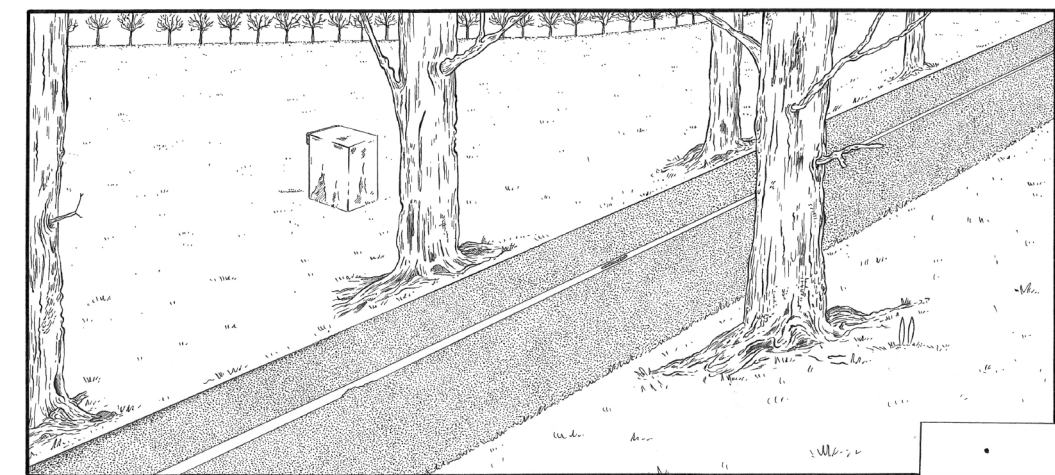
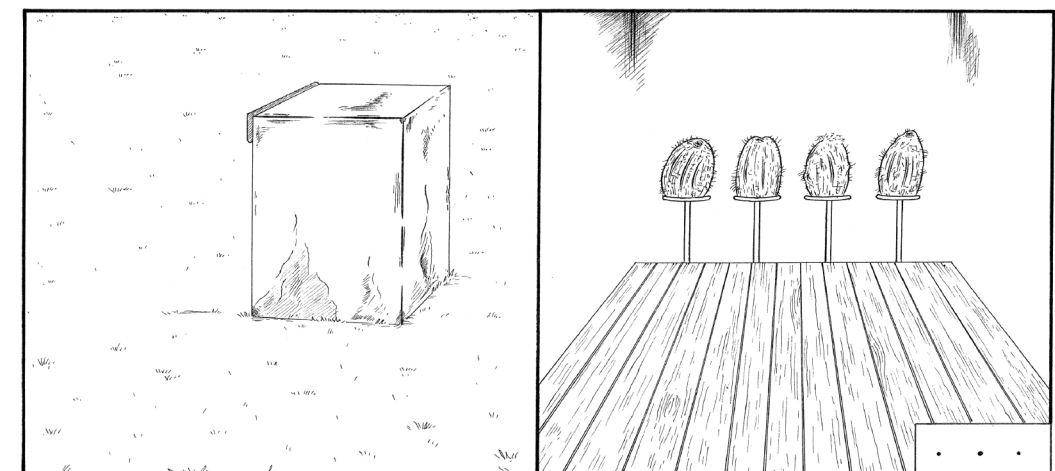
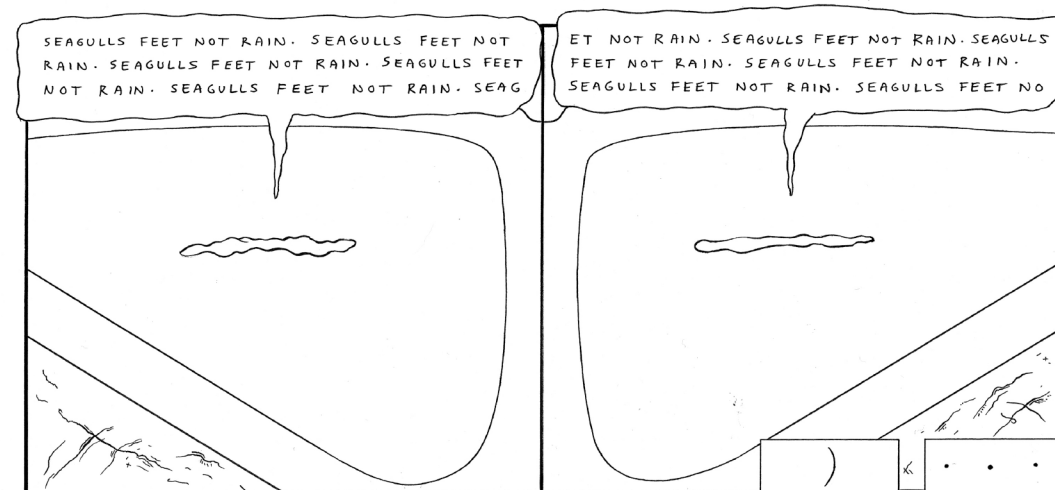
tions which prevents Black people from succeeding and having access to luxury and capital. Those whose existence is intentionally made invisible to dominant narratives but whose presence is the source of knowledge in our struggle for liberation must often become visible in order to survive and sustain our stories of alternatives, our stories of struggle. However, funds and access to resources are often required for the preservation of these stories and as such, the story is forced to change. The story becomes not one centred on the (historical practices and processes of) liberation movement and 'revulsion with oppression', but instead becomes focussed on the presentation of an identity struggle, the framing of which is predetermined by dominant narratives. This framing positions the 'Other' as being excluded because of identities outwith of their class position and the participation in struggle is undertaken as longing to belong to an economic system.

As we live through the coronavirus crisis, the arts, creative and cultural industries are often heralded as the ways in which society has been saved and will be saved. Whilst the arts and artists are also cited as one of the most financially affected by the pandemic - with vast amounts of funding being distributed to the arts, creative and cultural institutions, and its workers - little is said about the ways in which these industries are often built on imperialist, colonial and neo-liberal ideologies. As recent research on Class Identity and the Intergenerational Self highlights (see accompanying reading list), many people from middle-class backgrounds identify as working-class, a misidentification which is rooted in a self-understanding built on particular 'origin stories' which act to deflect and obscure class privilege. By positioning themselves as ascending from humble origins, people are able to tell an 'against the odds' story that simultaneously casts their progression as unusually meritocratically legitimate while erasing the structural privileges that have shaped key moments in their trajectory. Indeed, this can also be true for artists from Black

and/or LGBTQIA+ backgrounds, whose marginalised identity can often conceal privileged class positions which enable (easier) access into the arts, creative and cultural institutions.

Economic restructuring seldom occurs without violence. In the process of protecting and maintaining a system which accumulates wealth and privilege at one end, poverty, deprivation and social exclusion exists at the other. In his victory speech as US President Elect Joseph Biden, made a promise to, "rebuild the backbone of the nation - the middle class." In doing so, his administration is seeking to stabilise neoliberal ideology and give confidence to people across the world, who continue to maintain and uphold the hegemonies created by capitalist society.

If the Scottish independence movement is to be our only hope for change - irrespective of whether independence happens or not - not only does it need to (re)connect with all movements rooted in the practice of liberation, without extracting, tokenising or ignoring the violence imparted on these communities. It needs to support, sustain and show alternative narratives - this includes encouraging expressions of love, compassion and creativity, to draw out ways of being and knowing - as well as challenging the dominant narrative. This means, among other things, building the spaces - and archive - which allow for the development of a cultural production rooted in the radical traditions of the oppressed, so they might contribute to an irreverent cultural renewal.



11. DUFF, 2021



Illustration by Al White

TESTIMONIAL

Kieran Curran

“The state of emergency is the norm”

— Walter Benjamin (Frankfurt School)

“We come from working class families and we play our music the way we want to do it, and people are into it. And we just want to let people know that there should be a band on every block, there should be a nightclub on every other block, and a record label on every other block after that.”

— D Boon (Minutemen)

At present, with the confluence of crises that we are experiencing, a series of pertinent issues are rearing their heads again – asking questions of space, of funding, of the patronage/charitable models that currently exist in ‘the arts’ and how we may construct alternatives. For the purposes of this essay, it might be worth looking back to the roots, to the rise of music as a commodity and the concurrent development of sites of performance. In a sense, the placing of popular music within these sites was a form of enclosure, reinforcing a distance from community orientation and patronage (great and little), and underscoring the expressions of taste and distinction within the marketplace. Since the advent of modern capitalism, the history of its performance spaces more often than not coincides with the pursuit of profit. Within this, there are myriad stories, of great joy, euphoria and collective emancipation – the “struggle for fun”, to use Simon Frith’s phrase – nestled next to stories of decline, disposability and ennui.

These recollections and contradictions are core to our nostalgia for the live event, a feeling that precarity is inbuilt.

On one end of the market – the tavern, the juke joint, the shebeen – for the working class; on the other, the myriad forms of the music hall, concert space or opera house for the newly instantiated bourgeois. Now, high and low are less segregated in this sense, or at least, less obviously. Today, McNeill’s Bar on Torrisdale Street and Glasgow Concert Hall on Buchanan Street are two sides of the same coin. They are both rooted in some conception of entertainment intertwined with transcendence, and both depend on the continuance of the market to exist. We busk, we sell records, we pay the cover charge, we barely break even, we feed digital platforms and streaming services with our content. Even an art space not only displays art but rests on the underlying assumption that (usually) what we are dealing with are objects (and ideas) that have high exchange value. Yet McNeill’s is not in the same universe when it comes to state support – it is seen as less relevant, more disposable – despite offering a vital space for cultural expression.

It is the story of popular music and popular entertainment venues the world over. Responding to crisis, to punitive local rates, or to planning complaints, they are tossed aside, apparently disposable, washed away by market forces that are treated as though they were natural phenomena. Land development and asset hoarding is seen as more viable, more

lucrative than ‘mere’ entertainment, popular or otherwise. Perhaps the greatest emblem of this is the shift in Manchester’s Hacienda from a vital underground hub in the past, both in terms of Factory Records as well as the acid house movement, to an overpriced, anodyne flat complex at present. As ever, antagonistic relationships with local government, the dynamics of gentrification, shifting demographics and market demands all suffuse this story. The Covid-19 pandemic has simply accelerated these factors.

We have also seen the curious push for platform licences for virtual spaces on social media from PRS. This was an attempt by the rights organisation to solicit licence payments from online gig organisers - predominantly aimed at raising funds for hard-up, demobbed musicians unable to regularly play live. Whilst there was a pushback on social media as well as via the Music Venues Trust, PRS’s actions underlined a key point - digital space is to be contested too, and can all too easily be colonised by the logic of market interests. Copyright law in music is, of course, ostensibly to benefit ‘creators’, but often works more to the advantage of larger publishing behemoths that control vast swathes of catalogue. There is an obvious analogy here to the hoarding and effective ‘pay-walling’ of vaccine patents by big pharma in the Global North, to the marked disadvantage of the Global South, where proposals to suspend intellectual property were rejected. This will lead to the further impoverishing of countries already fighting to extricate themselves from the long hangover of colonialism.

In light of such rapaciousness and self-interest, it’s perhaps worth considering the position of the musician/composer in the pre-capitalist period. Dependent on court privilege and subsidy, usually expected to compose at length, the position of the composer was one of comfort in proximity to elite wealth. Yet with the decline of feudal power and the dawn of capitalist accumulation, noble patronage’s decline coincides with the rise of a romantic view of the artist as a daring perceiver of the sublime, an inventor of

new forms, as well as (in effect) a social critic. A response that was as much to do with the decline of their security as it was with slow rise of larger audiences - and therefore a market to compete for - the ideology of the innate, individual genius gave us the obscure and unpaid (Charles Ives¹), the proto-rock star (Franz Liszt²), as well countless others lost to the condemnation of posterity, content to pursue their creative work in happy obscurity.

The arts in this period gradually changed, not only representing rarefied art for art’s sake, or communal entertainment, but rather the ‘best which has been thought and said’. This formulation by the Liberal writer and cultural critic Matthew Arnold suggested that imaginative culture acted as a counterpoint to an ever shifting, dynamic and ruthless capitalist modernity. By the early 1940s, CEMA (the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts) was set up to safeguard high - which is to say, ‘good’ - cultural life during wartime, morphing into the post-war Arts Council. This forms the core institutional basis of the state’s effort to support the arts to this day - offering funding for socially ameliorative, community conscious or otherwise uncommercial art. Privileging traditional high cultural forms, this (by now skeletal, with special thanks to an austerity regime that has persisted for over a decade) rigidly gatekept and bureaucratised system persists with many diverse organisations

1 Charles Ives (1874-1954) was an American composer spanning the 19th and 20th century. Living in relative obscurity as an actuary, he composed works dedicated to the minutiae of small-town America that were influenced by the sounds of his locale imbued with a subtle modernist experimentalism (similar in sensibility to poet William Carlos Williams). Towards the end of his life, he received modest recognition of his achievements, but was more enamoured with a personalised form of creativity rather than being showered with plaudits.

2 Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was born in Hungary to a wealthy ethnic German family. Whilst his father was a court musician and patronised by Hungarian royalty, Liszt’s greater fame derived more from his success on the nascent ‘live circuit’ of the mid 19th century. Initially famed as a virtuoso pianist, Liszt became a prolific composer later in life, attracting both a popular following as well as favour amongst both Hungarian liberal and monarchical elites

fighting over the crumbs, is it worth thinking beyond this model?

To say this is not to argue against state funding per se, but rather the form that it currently takes - which is necessarily exclusionary, elitist and self-perpetuating (skewed towards existing names and those in the loop). My criticism here is not towards individuals, but rather towards a systemic bias. By its nature, the system creates a technocratic-managerial framework for measuring success that is often arbitrary (with focuses on outputs, impact etc), necessarily excludes many producers of arts alienated by this structure, and supports those who are more readily able to exploit this form of funding. Snowballing cultural capital and status from one form of semi-state legitimation to another, this can of course be said to reinforce structural inequalities.

Often necessarily bad-faith justifications for funding mask an implicit careerism, under the guise of an anodyne, theoretical ‘inclusivity’. Much in the same way that ‘radical’ academia issues mea culpas for itself in the form of myriad pay-walled journal articles, so radical art can specialise in consistently and eloquently having a conversation with itself.

Creative re-imaginings will always happen, but if these are nearly always reactive we become subject to the same short termism that characterises much of contemporary managerial and political discourse. We can feel stuck with frenetically coping with the unavoidable change that has been imposed without - the superstructure teetering over a shifting base. A temptation might be to sink into a comforting retreat - to go back to our tenement flats, get cracking on that magnum opus and ignore the rest. Yet this would do us a disservice.

The conclusion is that there will be no building back better, if that is contingent on neoliberal governmentality. Robust institutions of our own, parallel sustainable structures not dependent on overwhelming amounts of unpaid, often emotionally exhausting labour, need to be established. If nothing else, the cooperation and care that can underline the ethos of the

nebulous category of ‘DIY’ can act as a bedrock. Underscoring our campaigns on issues of key importance - anti-war, anti-detention, in but against capitalism - are a list of demands to enact a better world. To circle back to the epigraph, what we consider ‘the crisis’ is simply a more starkly rendered form of what went before. In Benjamin’s formulation, this clear-sighted acknowledgement can calmly sidestep the incipient catastrophism in this plague year of 2020-2021. The pandemic has been a blunt object - it has exposed problems already in existence.

Indirect funding (UBI, free education) can produce one way around this - welfare must be encoded as a profound social need for all, and not a mark of stigma. But more than this, a clear idea of our collective demands and a sense of how we can work to get there are crucial. Pluralism cannot and should not be limited to a particular class, or a particular postcode. We can have a band on every block, a nightclub in every neighbourhood. But a key question to ask, in a spirit of cautious optimism: are we serving ourselves, our communities, or are we serving institutions and their own hegemonic power? Or are we simply playing amidst the ruins?

Nat Raha
from *apparitions* / [9x9]

[vi / 1]

we creopolitan : our
c/hanging & relations ,
our senses of bodying
,, whispers, humming to know flesh
sensate taste salt weather cane
/ humidity woven through /
dis/placed, to be anyw-
here, all possible futures
undo logics of land/ed

[iv / 2]

aharmonic swells through the
spatial , torso & limbs , their /
con/text split off flesh – bring
your needed self around its branching

// what is humbled merely
future source f/or meaning
like vacuum dreaming, like
alternate spectra of visible
dizzy gold flaked on sheets ,

[vi / 3]

lockdown, vacuum, famine, derelic
-tion, sanctions, engineered
, cleared, the hands / mouth,

*moonrise pulls out into us
days, bare foliage scope*

prospect living rui/nation
in yur ruling domicile , in
fernos & housing washout, lie
comms junk / hunger sprawl

[vi / 4]

sure, w/ yyr meagre hoarded fragment
of earth, gold store your germs
/ & spoils, defended

from the right to roam, the decayed,
& undead. we declare centu

-ries buckled in such vio/lent
, torn & shredded viral logic
it's impossible defence

hands shatter the perimeter

[vi / 5]

glasses eyes, petty urban re-
fractures, asphalt && cobble
liquefied, all days optics
thirsting on a scale, over /

accumulate roofing, seekers of
contained thought, engaged in tin
-itus, visible horrors
, dissolve synthetic pleasant

streets speak plague hirstory

[vi / 6]

schema di/vesting black & brown
breath burnt ab/andoned
nest synthetic pale on pray
screech bitter salvation prised

light distain call benevolent
neolib tears on our cellular
carbon based / carbon torn
stones & plaster time contained to fail
continues its ordinary

[vi / 7]

memories proscribed & the theft of
season / spread on capital, com
modity pleas/ed daze dregs
in the social hierarchy, our
deletion se/cure, blinkered
po/lice orbital , t(e)ased &
powered, reduced 100 years
you, next blossom & fire, no
outlier body which you speak

[vi / 8]

this // their war, absolute si
-lence, no molecules, vibrat
smeared newsprint zeros no touch
y/our immiseration

hands, fuck all most days, social
hungering for scent, variation
, plague dredge, yet the rich seem
to have forgotten how to die /
beneath cobble cramped bones

[vi / 9]

systematic denigrate breath, char
coal golden sick on quotidian
/ contiguous memories of yur
violence embedded , smoke
screened / accumulation on
crisis horror, iridescent thrown
earthen cuts to claim, to clear
, flow flag blood, pure[,] decay
/ remove how the earth is walked

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Youtube playlist of songs whose
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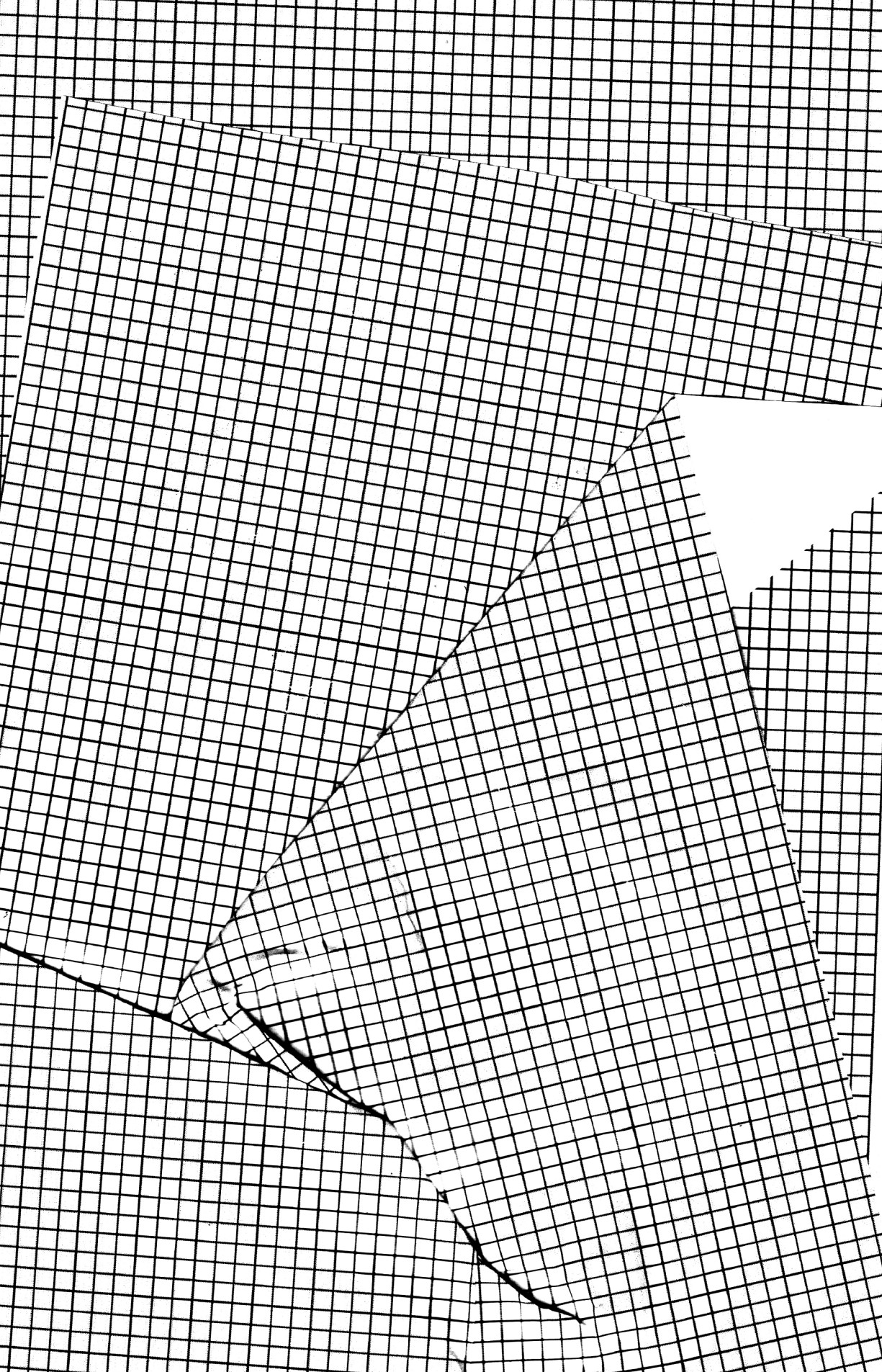
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