

## ***Music and Economic Planning***

### Le Mardi Gras Listening Collective

We can immediately identify three supposed relationships between music and economic planning. First is the idea that music can be an inspiration for a plan, or more precisely, the planners. It can stimulate a plan by giving expression to thoughts that had yet to cohere into words, or in another version it can elevate the existing words of a plan to a higher plane of efficacy. This idea is part of a general posture that sees the arts as a catalyst to development, instrumental to improvement. Business schools are especially fond this idea – prescribing Russian novels to make you a better strategist. But it is widespread in self-help, that is self-development, culture, as common as playing Beethoven to your baby. Music serves thinking here. But this relationship also smuggles behaviourism into aesthetics, making plastic plans for everyone's brain. A second relationship is found in the management concept of implementation. Here the thinking goes that musicians can implement a plan because like all artists it turns out they know how to run programs. And they can run programs, because unlike bureaucrats, they have a practice, a practice they can bring to bear to make the plan work. This is also a practice that gives them, so the theory goes, extraordinary commitment to that program, because their sense of themselves is so bound up with that practice, and subsequently with that program. It is sometimes hard to say if this relationship puts artistic social practice to work, or whether social practice was applying for the position. Then there is a third and obvious way music relates to economic planning - as a product. This is the creative industries: the plan to make music make money. Like all ideas in the creative industries it presupposes some audience outside this plan, though how that audience enters the economy, and the plan, is anyone's guess (Harney & Sealy Thompson 2015).

Of course all three of these relationships presuppose an idea of politics, or better still presuppose the idea of politics, that is envisioned as a field of individuals who contain interests and desires, whether converging or

diverging. Moreover this politics implies an interiority housing those interests and desires amongst those putative individuals for which music is one exemplary piece of evidence of that interiority's existence, performing its cavernous sounding. And one might be justified therefore in saying what we have called planning here should really be called policy. By policy we mean the way *The Undercommons* (Harney & Moten 2013) tried to make a distinction between a form of thinking that imposes individuation by assuming it - policy - and a form of living that deposes individuation by failing it - planning. And it may be that it is not so much that the adjective economic determines the noun, but that the noun determines the adjective. If we speak of economic policy, it should be clear we are speaking of a conception of a market in which 'truck, barter and exchange' lead to credit and debt, which is then also enacted with the sovereign. Units and measurements are agreed, and agreed to be true.

But we have also tried to think of debt outside of units and measures (or out-size units and measures)... A measure under (air) pressure drops. That's the plan. And it might feel like music. In such a case we would not be talking about music's relations to something else. We would be talking about music as something else as itself, and man, that would be something else.

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"Love for Sale" (1958), from the Cannonball Adderley-led quintet cut, *Somethin Else*, is one of those standards (one of the few Cole Porter tunes, despite its lovely melody) that singers do not love to sing. Its opening lyrics: "Love for sale/ Advertising young love for sale/ Love that's fresh and still unspoiled/ Love that only slight soiled... Who will buy?/ Who would like to sample my supply?... Love for sale." Some learn the tune before these lyrics. In their case, title notwithstanding, the overblown romance of Hank Jones's piano intro could be read as heralding impossible love (impossible "you complete me" love) rather than the promise of that which can be procured in exchange. Jones plays heartstrings, pulling the listener in close, but keeping just enough distance to prevent an irrevocable fall into what is desired. This is no jingle. And what follows, a chirpy read of the head by

Miles Davis, is undoubtedly street, but a stroll, not a curb crawl. A trip, trilby tips to Sunday promenaders. "Love for Sale," the standard, despite Porter's show-tune lyrics taking us to the figure of the sex worker, to commodity and fetish, and to where the human and ordinary seem magical, is about the tradition working on/with love. Love is not for sale. Here, deception is not the supposed equality of the market. The trick occurs in production, in the musicians' working on the tradition. It is their play between the banality of a show-tune with questionable lyrics and the sublimity of the standard (the standard being the sum of its iterations) that something else, sometimes occurs. Their play lights up a "parallel montage," a coincidence of banal and sublime, borrowing from Alenka Zupančič (2004: 144). In illuminating a concerted heterophony, it brings to light, fleetingly, a love object; a "something else" shaped by the gap or discrepancy (141) between the show-tune (banal) and standard (sublime). Moments of love are announced and burnt up in their enunciation (the "but" in the phrase "You can't but complete me"). These expletives are like a sacrificial angel emblazoned by the one song it was created to sing.<sup>1</sup> True, while they last.

Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry sound like they are busking it. We hear this on the 1958 debut *Something Else!!!!*, and it is perhaps even more apparent a year later on *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959). To describe them as "busking it" is by no means to echo the denigration of the albums by certain journalists and musicians of the time. (Ornette and Cherry knew how to play changes. Listen to "Eventually," a ridiculously fast bebop original. This is not a deviation but, rather, loving protraction of Charlie Parker's preoccupations with the drive and shape of melodic line. Their break out from tonality simply demonstrating that consonance of melody and chord was not necessary to bebop). Rather it is to say that they sound out in the open. Like they are out, busking (it). We wouldn't know to request what they play. Ornette and Cherry busk, not for anyone

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<sup>1</sup> This is referring to Walter Benjamin's the angel of history. In particular, the component of the thought-image that refers to the Talmudic notion of sacrificial angels, in every moment created for the sole purpose of singing praises to God, before returning to nothingness. Also interesting is how this "but" of the phrase "you can't but complete me" comes close to Lacan's *ne*, what he terms an expletive, a word that "seems to introduce a certain hesitation, ambiguity, or uncertainty into the utterance." (Fink, Bruce. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton University Press, 1997, 39).

in particular, and perhaps for no-one but themselves, but they, in the refusal of a certain formal disposition (the finish or the brush of their phrases much more than any harmonic-melodic undergirding) that Davis and Adderley serve up so effortlessly, sing their hearts out. To say they sound vulnerable, exposed, doesn't get to it. They sound de-immunized, and one might wonder how they went about preparing to sound unprepared. What did they forget to maintain? Which booster did they neglect to administer? It's like they'd planned (preparing not to be ready) for an outbreak.

Buskers, street, community, itinerant musicians are incredibly versatile, free. Out on the street they can transform from wood-shedding introvert to jukebox (pay per listen) from one tune to the next, if they wish. They most often play not knowing whether they will be tipped. They play, not for pay (a tip is not a wage or payment for service, but a gratuity, given voluntary, without obligation). You can listen. They might woo you, they might drown you in love but you are not obliged to buy. In fact, they are not selling. Dropping coins and bills in a musician's case does not complete a transaction. These coins and bills are tokens, fugacious mementos, of the brief encounter. You are not obliged to stay or to stay to the end or to listen if you stay. But if you do, it is possible you catch something that sounds like love. How do we plan to get whatever the music is spreading?

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One way to conceive of the song is as an economic unit which acts as the holding point for labour processes that go into the production of music as a mode of value extraction (at least that's the customary Culture Industry take). Running alongside the extreme rationalism of this view of the song's functionality, is something we've been considering over for the past few months (and which really began to fall into place as we sat in the dark of Le Mardi Gras bar in Pittsburgh together, listening to the juke box). This being the song's capacity to operate as a porous form for mystification and compulsion. Or to put it another way, the song messes us up, we tend to want to get messed up repeatedly, and we go looking for new ways to get messed up. So the questions we're asking prompted especially by Fumi, as well as

by Amiri Baraka (2010), LKJ (1975), Greg Tate (1992), Kodwo Eshun (1998), David Toop (1995), and Richard Iton (2008) go along the following lines: Where does the song come from? What's being loaded into the song, which it then can't contain and leaks out? What's the relationship between this leaking or solvency and the idea that the song can function as a unit of economics? Or really, how can we pour a caustic substance over the types of flimsy analytical distinctions just mapped out and perhaps dissolve the demarcations between the social atmospheres surrounding and flowing through the song, the submarine depths of its surfaces, and the song as a production of collective labour. It's here where we can put what Stefano and Fred call planning might be in motion.

What if we tried to think about the song and economic planning through some artist we've been attuned to for a few years now (Klein, Yves Tumor, Dean Blunt), but then again maybe we are not ready for that yet. Instead, what if we deviate over to Carol Street in Camden, North London, 1977. Green Gartside and his friends are living in a squat, reading Marx, Bakunin, Gramsci, Lacan, Derrida, shell-shocked from the aftermath of punk, and soaked in the dread bass materialism of reggae. They decide to form a band, calling it Scritti Politti (an oblique nod to a line from *The Prison Notebooks*). Their first single, "Skank Bloc Bologna" (1978) is a brilliant synthesis-mutation of their commitment to dread and admiration for comrades in *Autonomia Operaia*. To make their commitments clear, the home-made paper-stapled record sleeve features nothing more than a list of all the production costs and labour time that went into the making of the object. Jump forward to 1981, and following a period of convalescence after a break-down, Green decides to tear up the Scritti Politti project and redesign it for a new purpose. The result is "The Sweetest Girl" (1981), a heavily electronically processed, sickly, neon glowing, slow burner, deploying a sentimental mode explicitly built for chart success (which it never really achieves). Inevitably, this leads to fallouts and recriminations from their radical scene. In all the furore, two vital dimensions of "The Sweetest Girl" are lost: one, the insistent density of the bass line (Scritti were still dread); two, the following run of lines from the third verse: "The weakest link in every chain / I always want to find it / The strongest words in each belief / Find out what's behind it

/ Politics is prior to the vagaries of science / She left because she understood / The value of defiance”.

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Where music and economic planning are concerned, the first lines of Eric B & Rakim's (1987) 'Paid in Full' come immediately to mind: 'Thinkin' of a master plan / ain't nothin but sweat inside my hand / so I dig into my pocket but my money's spent / so I dig deeper still comin' up with lint'. While it's a lack of money that, put to music, calls for a plan here, later in the verse music itself will come to be a source of wealth, and in doing so, displaces the necessity of a past life of crime. Or, at least, Rakim implies that music amounts to a spiritual wealth that foreshadows the material wealth it will inevitably bring: '...cause I don't like to dream about getting paid / So I dig into the books of the rhymes I made'. Its noteworthy too that, in all this, a 9 to 5 job amounts to nothing more than a fleeting whim, put aside almost the instant it's considered.

In this triad of work/music/crime as Rakim presents it, might we not think of music and crime as somehow identical rather than disparate? This is a question prompted by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's text 'Locke Unloaded' (Harney & Moten, n.d.), and especially in the context of what's referred to there as Locke's "colonization of the posited body, the appointment of the posited mind and the manipulation – in various modalities of brutality – of their mutually enveloping redundancy." How might music be opposed to this process? How might it imply a mode of being beyond measure and beyond sovereignty, as our prompt suggests?

As Harney and Moten note, Locke enacts a double deduction of the self and private property. Étienne Balibar (2006; 2013) calls this Locke's unstable "anthropological doublet" between "being" and "having"; the "self" and the "own", where the constitution of identity is conceived as an act of self-appropriation. In *Clipped Coins*, his book on Locke, George Caffentzis (1989) argues that Locke's ontology of money is crucial to this intersection of possession and personhood: the indefinite circulation of commodities presupposes continuity in the identity of their owners. Moreover, money's capacity to store value leaves the subject morally 'free'

to limitless appropriation of that with which he mixes his labour or, implicitly, for his labour to be sold for a wage. In turn, this forms the basis for processes of enclosure founded upon money as a mechanism of exchange, as well as a dual injunction against those not working for a wage and land not 'improved' by waged labour.

Caffentzis further relates this notion to Locke's ontology of money. It's given that money doesn't spoil that it can be endlessly accumulated. Yet in doing so, it introduces a hiatus between the act of appropriation and the act of consumption: an insecure temporal zone implying fear, uncertainty, and criminality. This is especially since for Locke, money stimulates the 'evil' of easy gratification. That is, once the money economy generates a moral law of endless accumulation, then crime amounts to a transgression of its temporal discipline and logic. Crime, in other words, entails the refusal to consent to scarcity or the deferral of pleasure demanded by a capitalist economy.

The point here is to ask if music is not first a crime, a "form of living that deposes individuation", as our prompt suggests? Can music function as a rejection of capital's demand for a deferral of pleasure, not by implying immediacy in its place, but instead the experience of a different order of time altogether?

We might approach this question by looking to a historical moment where crime, music and the processes of enclosure legitimated by Locke intersect especially acutely. In *Dark Side of the Tune* Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan (2008) note that outlaw ballads exploded in response to the criminalisation of customary rights in 18th century England, thus inverting the logic of the public displays of punishment of that period documented by Peter Linebaugh in *The London Hanged* (2003). This implies one way of framing a long history of the figure of the outlaw in popular song, albeit with the proviso we disentangle it from its reactionary iterations.

To view the outlaw ballad as a rejection of the imposition of the law of property further suggests that conceiving music as crime might also be a way to hear all those rejections of capitalist time-discipline in the polysemy of music's invocations to 'work it' or assertions - Rakim's included - that one 'gets money'. The latter is usually interpreted as expressive of a false consciousness identifying with capital, but one might ask if it can't instead be thought in terms of what Black Study Group (2016) refer to as the "conflict internal to the song"? Can we not think of a criminal

detachment of 'work' from capital; a liberation of labour from compulsion where one 'works it' for the sake of it or of a detachment of wealth from toil where one 'gets', rather than exchanges labour for, money? Every slave was not just stolen but was a robbery in progress, a will that is criminal before it is criminalised, an exodus with the goods.

Such a claim might merely amount to thinking in terms of an order of time what has already been articulated in other terms above, and what Fred has elsewhere called "the capacity or propensity to transgress the law as such, to challenge its mystical authority with a kind of improvisational rupture" (Moten 2018). This is a break one hears, I think, in the surprising cadences of Rakim's flow as much as in the Dennis Edwards (1984) sample upon which it swings.

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Radicals are fond of quoting Stéphane Mallarmé's *Music and Letters* (1895) aphorism that "in the end everything comes down to aesthetics and political economy."

Perhaps this is because it appears to unlock the most mystic statement of Marx: that communism will be realised when the senses become emancipated, when "the senses...become *theoreticians* in their immediate praxis" (1995: 352). More recently, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refreshed this formula when suggesting what the "world needs" — overrun by the global imperatives of financial capital, neoliberal policies and logistical protocols — is "an epistemological change that will rearrange desires" (2012: 2). But while the system of graduate education is overflowing with proposals to overturn and destabilise epistemologies of all kinds,



the separation between epistemic derangement and social rearrangement tends to be maintained by the cost of university admission.

The formulation of 'music as economic planning' suggests, then, something more invigorating than the late Marxist reverie that somehow someday aesthetics will cognitively map a new plan of attack. Instead of seeing music as ambient background, active inspiration or strategic model, what if music is the solvent which can dissolve the objective of private property: to produce the individual? And to understand what it would take for music to liquidate the terms of order and set the pattern of sociality, it makes sense to float this question in a place where the relationship between aesthetics, politics and economics has always been measured in musical units of atmospheric pressure. But before we get to Jamaica, let us consider how, in the wider Caribbean region, the impasse between music and planning was negotiated by a poet and an economist. Once again Mallarmé provides a point of departure....

In Haiti in 1944 Aimé Césaire gave a talk which redeployed Mallarmé's poetic engineering to launch a blistering counterattack on the colonial science which made Empire possible. As a political tract "Poetry and Knowledge" (1990) is a remarkable document; indifferent to the policy frame of mind, it takes a blowtorch to any intellectual protocol which "enumerates, measures, classifies, and kills". In place of technocracy, Césaire calls for the overthrow of "all laws of thought" to release an "astonishing mobilization of all human and cosmic forces." A few decades later in St. Augustine, Trinidad this principle was reformulated by the economist Lloyd Best (2009). Speaking to an assembly of secondary school teachers in 1971, Best set out the need for a "recasting of the entire method of teaching economics and social science". As without a fundamental deconstruction of economic reason, Best said, the ability of the people of the Caribbean to plan their own future would be forever held in check. Best's sober critique of method may appear to have little in common with the psychedelic vitalism of Césaire, but what they share is an intention "to abuse the political consciousness" (Robinson 2016: 6).

This was Cedric Robinson's statement of black radical intent: to dissolve the protocols which made politics the precondition of sociality. But to understand the valence of refusal which bonds each of these moments, everything turns on how we

interpret the method of abuse. For Césaire it was through the abuse of the French language — short-circuited via the sensual logic of surrealism — that the internal empire of knowledge could be liquidated. For Best, it was the need to disabuse economic theory (in all its radical, classical and neoclassical forms) of its metropolitan orientation, and thus its political force. What the abuse of linguistic and economic system could unleash, then, was something more than just the release of reactive force. More than just cold blooded revenge on the one thing which had abused so many for so long, the abuse of knowledge gives us *something else*. A rearrangement of the use we constitute for each other. In short a precise derangement of the sense of use-value.

The need to radicalize 'the economy' by playing with the notion of use is something we learn from Spivak's *An Aesthetic Education in an Era of Globalisation* (2012). In a spatiotemporal regime where use-value is financially determined not only by market price (as exchange-value) but also by interest rate (the time-value of money capital), then Spivak argues "that we learn to use the European Enlightenment from below" (2012: 3). The objective being not just to learn how we got to this point, nor even to redistribute the wealth of nations, but to explore possibilities wherein the conditions of knowledge can be ab-used.

Though Spivak hesitates over this formulation, given the connotations of cruelty and violence generally associated with 'abuse'. Nonetheless, there is something important in the idea of the improper use of knowledge. Spivak writes: "I used the expression ab-use because the Latin prefix 'ab' says much more than 'below', indicating both 'motion away' and 'agency, point of origin', 'supporting,' as well as 'the duties of slaves,' it nicely captures the double bind of the postcolonial and the metropolitan migrant regarding the Enlightenment" (2012: 3-4).

Where the policies of globalisation requires everybody to cultivate their intellectual faculties in order to compete on the same trajectory of improvement, Spivak calls for something alien to the logic of human capital. This kind of ab-use of Enlightenment values is what planning entails. And when applied to the realm of urban space, we are in a mode of planning which no longer separates social space out into radiant metropolis and colonial background, centre and periphery. Nor does it divide and banish social life from the urban core through

gentrification. Rather, as AbdouMaliq Simone (2018) says, the background radiance of urban sociality comes to the fore and does what it always was able to do, assemble without mediation, plan without representation. The ab-use/use from below of the metropolis makes the politician and intellectual what they always were — pure superfluity.

The proper 'ab-use' of the education system begins then, by paying attention to those conditions which are not meant to be attended to, those systems which are meant to be merely inhabited and not given a second thought. Played in the modality of 'ab-use' what planning, or study, comprises is the ability to untie a set of double binds by discovering and examining for the first time those habits which reproduce the economy which is killing us. And this is not an action of self-help because what is being invoked is a more general syndrome, a total institution which treats the social world as a concierge service for the individual. In the last analysis, then, the economy consists not at the level of nation-state, firm or household. But "the economy consists" Gregory Bateson says (quoted by Spivak) "precisely in not re-examining or rediscovering the premises of habit every time the habit is used. We may say that these premises are partly 'unconscious', or — if you please — a habit of not examining them is developed" (2012: p. 6)

Bateson's definition (emerging from a cybernetic study of alcoholism) is brilliantly lucid, as it provides a precise definition of what an 'aesthetic education' or 'economic planning' involves. Economic planning is, in the last analysis, not the understanding of marginal utility, estimating the rate of interest, accountancy frameworks, etc. To plan is to suddenly become sensitive to the processes of individuation which dictate society's principle of completion. And if the economy is the process of going through the motions —the sensory-motor terms of trade which treat the planet as if it was one vast human resource complex — then this suggests a different critique of political economy.

This was the point of Lloyd Best's high school assembly. To teach economics in the Caribbean it was necessary to study the system that turned the planet into an object that capital could inhabit. And to do that, to really know how to study the economy and do economic planning, then it was necessary to insert the story of the Caribbean into the core of economic theory. Hence, by making the

plantation system the critical reactor, Best's hope along with the rest of the plantation school — of George Beckford, Kari Polanyi Levitt, CY Thomas, Norman Girvan, et al. — was that a new modality of economic planning would be set in motion; a mode that would ab-use the infrastructure of global capitalism, dissolving what Césaire called this system's accursed complexity, releasing every soul's braid of rhythms.

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Marvin Gaye's wildcat strike at Motown (an event known to us as *What's Going On?*) put in place an alternative economic plan through his insistence that the song was already underway in the social gathering, and his commitment to the suite as an endless extension of the song (and hence the gathering). What then to make of Bobby Womack's almost immediate implementation and complication of Gaye's economic plan on a run of albums in the 1970s? What was it about Womack's adaptations which meant he was unable to stop talking and get the song started? Why, in his ecstatic inability to call his chatter to a halt and begin singing, is he always telling us about the working life of the Soul (man)?

It begins in 1971 on *Communication* with "Monologue / (They Long to Be) Close to You". Womack is in the studio, which is to say his workplace, and he is desperate to talk. What starts as a schematic outline of the working environment and an analysis of tensions with management, soon turns into a lecture on the nature of commercialism. As Fumi well knows, this is a type of lecture on the commercial functions of popular music which Adorno would have pre-emptively blocked his ears to, but Womack (and his producers) transform it into an echoing slide around the phrase. All of this occurs before finally, he launches into the song that has been ghosting the edges of his talk: the supposedly plastic immature romanticism of The Carpenters hit.

With "Fact of Life / He'll Be There When the Sun Goes Down" (1973), we encounter Womack, two years down the line, as the itinerant cultural labourer. As part of his self-conscious return to talking before the singing starts, it becomes clear that the process is not a preface to the song as the plan, it is the plan in and of itself.

Whatever we instinctively think of as the song-proper is an after-effect, an addendum, to this lecture, which is the real song. Therefore, whilst the theme of the song as after-effect might be the liminal areas between infidelity and domesticity, the real song Womack wants to talk-sing is that of the artist on the road, caught in the trap of nightly intimacy and extended loneliness.

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Let's ask about, by inhabiting, "the uninhabitable," recognizing that such a description could have only come from outside, though being outside doesn't require that such a description, such a perspective, such a position, be deployed. Did you know that position can not only be the site at, or from which, a weapon can be deployed but that it can also be deployed as a weapon? What if we inhabit the close quarters within which the dissident thinker, having refused the possibilities and impossibilities of the normative intellectual life that has been refused to him, makes cultural plans. It's not that we won't be fighting, it's just that we will be moving in these close quarters, where they say we can't move or live, a statement of our supposed inability that assumes that particular alignment of moving and living called settling. When we get together to inhabit the unsettlingly close quarters of Le Mardi Gras, our long night lounge, we try to put a range of figures into play again: the cell, say, or the hold, each of which evoke both voluntary sequestration and the racialized imposition of confinement. The city, too, is such a figure, as AbdouMaliq Simone (2016) asserts in his elaboration of "the uninhabitable." The cell and the hold are place names indicating placelessness, where placelessness implies the absence of spatiotemporal coordination, the cosmic hobo's haunt, as Frank Wilderson rightly has it. It's not that there's no point to that haunting; it's that there's no point for it. But there is, paradoxically, a place for our placelessness—a bar, a club, a joint, an Annie Mae's cafe. Let's call it The Realistic Spot, so we can partially articulate our topographical insurgency, where we make our placeless place by folding, twisting, and grinding every fat-assed Tuesday night. Nathaniel Mackey says the uninhabitable is a place name that comments, ultimately, on the cramped capacity of the placeless. He says it's one thing to ask whether and

how placelessness can be inhabited and another thing to declare that place-in-placelessness is uninhabitable. That's when the history of the empirical figure becomes figuration in denial of the empirical. Meanwhile, there's some erotics of contemplative life in the open-air cell. The erotics we have in mind are disruptive: a lyricism that breaks the hold, a lysis that breaks down the cell, which is manifests in the slit-like opening of an immeasurable musical moment—moment being about as good a word as one can muster to denote that which is both, and therefore neither, thing and event—that occurs about one minute and fifty seconds into the original studio recording of James Brown's "Get on the Good Foot" (1972). Another way to put it is that we're all constantly trying to understand what it is to have been touched by The Godfather. We have to live not only with, but through, what it is to have been beaten by him. This is Hortense Spillers' double, and doubly serrated, edge of touch.

So: a place for thinking is forged/inhabited in/out of the cell/hold. And the slit challenges predictability: the self is given as probability and emanation: just hold it right there, 'cause it's a mother, a heavy Egypt. The universal machine is a sex machine called the Kalakuta Republic, which is the erotic republic of the open air cell, as fleetingly and repetitively extra(geo)metrical as *tahrir*. We think of this place, or place/meant as rhythm, but it's manifest is anarhythmic touch, or touching, or some juba'd base communal bass-caress, as Ra Judy might say with Denise Da Silva. It's a mechanics, a brushing, a battering, that social preparation of the photon, the improbable, the pre-probable, which the Godfather had already beautifully, terribly introduced in his own inhabitation of the experiment, the lysis, the breakdown, the jam, when he jumps back, and wants to kiss himself, and falls.

The way songs form or carve out social space, which is place way past the point of abstraction called society, as W.E.B. Du Bois teaches us, is abandoned self-assertion. Sometimes lyrics describe it but there are also times when the music's structure builds that place by modeling it. The internal spatio-temporal constituency of the music becomes habitable when the point, which is the one, is made innumerable and the (bass) line spreads out of all compass in recursion. Maybe it's a kind of "Brigadoon" effect; perhaps a "[sur]reality effect" as Barthes all but describes it. Spike Lee, in one of his really brilliant moments, in his best film,

*Summer of Sam*, shows this place in and as an effect of music imposing a choreography on bodies which, in that imposition, become something more and less than that: flesh. It's when John Leguizamo and Mira Sorvino walk into the club and right out onto the dance floor and, in effect, become anarchitectural, making social space, or placeless place, in the close quarters of "Got to Give It Up," sharing an intimacy in public their private life could never bear that the camera spirals and blooms with, as if to hold it up in a fugue of fugue and petal. Or like this kind of punk/hiphop band that used to play all the time in San Francisco, MCM and the Monster. They did a kind of punk version of "Little Sister" and the sound—the emphatic imperative to dance held in the beat, held as something other than or more than the usual slam aggression—threw everybody off a little bit until the lead singer, Master of Ceremony Miles, held out his hands and said "everybody form a pit!" And everybody did, to their punked-out reversion to that proto-funk that Elvis steals but can't quite steal away on, where slam's connection to the rub of social dance is re-established, off the edge of some dock, or at Dockery's, or at just about every tavern on just about every west side, as something more than the negation that it still carries. And the Miles connection is almost apropos. Because so much of what was going on in the sixties, not just in popular music, but also in visual art and performance art, was this kind of minimalist re-organization of space, or this fleshly, earthly assertion of place through space, like a black cube's or a black man's ananthropomorphic morphing of the concept's abstraction, like some kind of boom-bip, a-boom-bipped alliterative literalization of the figure revealing portraiture to have always been abstraction. Miles got it in the late fifties, he says, from Ahmad Jamal but that way of breaking down the distinction between foreground and background is Ellington's instru/mentality, too. Clement Greenberg talked about it in terms of a flattening of pictorial space but that's not really it. Space gets thick on the move; it has dimension, which is also to say that it has air (soul). Michael Fried talks of the violence of being thrust into the presence of a monolith but he misrecognized. We wanna talk about while moving in the place that mugs, or the supposedly mugged, from the outside, from their perspective, or position, which is always only their radical incapacity to see—or as Aretha puts it in her analytic of soul, to feel—depth, can't feel or see. Their insensibility shows up

as brutally genocidal incredulity—"How can anybody live there?" "How can anyone live there?"—as if life could be subdivided into lives, as if the subdivision of life into lives weren't antisocial death, as if inhabitation were a private matter made public like somebody's fucked-up corporation. The aneventual nothing in question is that to which stereo could be said to respond by disseminating. One could even speak of the fantastic sociality of the headphone if one were ever one, which headphones can't confirm.

OK: It's the day after, and what's said just above is just too much re-cycling of the already said. I've just been thinking about this for a long time, ever since I heard someone say, "But isn't someone going to talk about how country he is?" They said it almost under their breath, as if too embarrassed to really say such a thing while thinking, but doesn't somebody urbane like me have to say it? I've been wanting to write about that while also getting at another thing that becomes clear in some amazing footage of the Godfather walking around the tore-up streets of D.C., around 1969, talking about planning, restating that range of black manifesto on the order of "Funky President" (1974) or "I Plan to Stay a Believer" (1971) in its intense relation to the disorderly arrangements given in party songs like "Get On The Good Foot" and "It's Alright" (1963). This interplay is given in a kind of fullness in "Say It Loud" (1968) and "We're A Winner" (1971). All these things are in my sights, so to speak, and the title of the mix could be "The Country and the City" or the "Country in the City," because Curtis Mayfield's projects bear James Brown's territory roughness. You could also call it "the atmosphere seem so clean now, we can really get together," which the Godfather said after a live version of "Say it Loud" in Dallas in August of 68. It's the liveness and, then, at the same time, the necessary simulation of the liveness which plays out in one way in *Mingus Presents Mingus* and in other ways, all throughout R & B, as the social situation of song, which is dis/place/meant—Mayfield, Marvin, Montell Jordan, Carmen McRae, Betty Carter, Esther Phillips, Erykah Badu and on and on. It has to do with the inside outness of the scene, the maintenance of the feel of it even when it's always being left, or flown, or rocked, or quaked when the ensemble comes out of itself like a noise-brought sheaf.



What Amiri Baraka calls the place, and place/meant of black people in the new world, the new city, the new country, folds into celebration the horror that mere critique can't reckon. Ronald talks about the curviness of Martinican culture, which he describes as an embrace of constant preparation, unmournfully refusing the impossibility of being finished, against the grain of the new, post-Fanonian (and also probably ante- and anti-Fanonian) consensus that assumes the normativity of completeness. Vicious modernism is a non-local archipelago. To speak of postponement is to speak from the imaginary position or perspective of that which can't happen; What if Frederick Douglass wasn't talking about some music he could only talk about having left the circle; what if he was talking about the way people in the circle talk about their music, their inhabitation of the circle having been a constant leaving of it, where living in it and leaving it are all entangled, so that when Douglass speaks of the music from outside the circle you know it's only because he's still all up in that shit. All up in the depths of it. We're talking about spiral and wormhole, now, planning their radiance and radiation. This continual twirling and flouncing and out-of-round celebration of and in the outskirts.

Black is (a) country, the urban countryness, the radical, underpolitical in and outskirts underneath the city. Village values bear a country-ass critique of value. The Godfather's Urban Plan, which he couldn't carry out himself, as a matter of policy. The Funky President echoes the terms and conditions of his impeachment, sent to fade by the baddest, passionate intensity of our preferential option.

...

What does it mean to miss the train of thought's worldview? What is it like to not arrive at some sort of designated place, to not show up when and where you're expected to make a point? What is it like for the point to wait for you, to count on you and eventually account for your omission? When your unavailability, enacted by way of jovial, ecstatic refusal, is all there is to announce, what does it say about those who believe they will see you again, unchanged? Failing at arriving at some sort of resolution is crucial for the analysis of the self in and as recursive solvency of the self from the premise and promise of its elseness.

To miss the train of thought's training is not only to be beside the point but to miss it, to dwell in the whateverness of the earth, already evading and anticipating the occasion of the world. This missed opportunity is a chance to curve with the indefinite. So, in a way, what you dis/miss when you stop to perceive the earth at a distance is nothing; you long for nothing in particular. For what you relinquish is you; is your ego; called into the tendential as a prepositional concern or engagement with the ontological roundness of the earth. This prefix or rather remove is the matter of (our) concern, of conviviality; a mutual response-ability which is always a claim to an and, with, otherwise, to serve in the pre. All in the service given to the uncreated, to what has not arrived yet, to what's only been leaning, curving, curling. But to reinitialize a long and short story: it (something else) is not ready yet, not even getting there, we just have to let it brew under the constellation of the irresolute but doing.

Such quivering or queering (irresolute but doing) is what seduces us, leads us astray – the preparation or maceration of which is always palpable and delectable, like the cake batter my mom used to work at home. You couldn't not want to dip your finger in that noise, that rumor or inconsequential commerce, as the latter translates into *konmes* in Martinican creole (amphibious word for trade but also mess). The crude aeration (aka *Recrudescence*) of what we might invoke as the amorous, the capacity to feel densely – before it's baked. An unmanageable flow, emollient pressure that continues to express the militancy beneath the functional and disposable: a practice of whatever else moves, recycles the amalgam, a devotion to the bastardness of life, some type of "commitment to the suite" (*Danvheer*), or as we like to hear-say *tout de suite* – without delay. And this stuff can only get fluffier because of the air, the nutrient soul that inspires the amateur, the improvisateur folded in the amorous; the almateriality, the ground provision, the errant commitment that professionalism (i.e. colonialism) is campaigning against but that people like Marius 'Mayo' Cultier try to preserve and release in the beguine.<sup>2</sup>

It is as though in Cultier's song "Dachin' la" (The Taro) the refrain built around his onomatopoeic riff on the sound of boiling taro "gloudou gloudou" goes beyond mere mimicry in order to make felt the music-of-something-else-as-something-else and around which him and his friends socialize. In a sense, the preparation or planning of the food is indiscernible from the preparation or planning of the beguine which isn't really started somewhere because the boiling of taro is a lure not an event, a ritual practice that continues to sound as unprepared as it does throughout the song; it's the concoction of assembly, the grounding of laughter that has to be jammed again and over again. And we find it difficult to not be teased by the beguining, the weird habit of the curve—hesitant to punctuate the inseparable. For us that hesitation to locate and delineate the contours of whatever else is doing (boiling) queers the finitude that one is often expected to be. Taro is edible, is drinkable, is cantabile, is imaginable, a capacious ensemble. 'Mayo' is the plan, and it's us too, queering the beguine.

If it sounds like we don't really know how to parse the nostalgic from topology (anarchipelagic) it's because we already forgot how we came to sing this melody. We know this song to be invaluable because of how messy the rehearsal of what's not arrived yet is. Is this what Fred calls the "pre-probable"? Re: Fumi's quest(ion): "and I'm wondering how they went about preparing to sound unprepared." And we want to linger with something that Dhanveer wrote, by way of Bobby Womack's pre-probable, flirtatious singing ("that the process is not a preface to the song as the plan, it is the plan in and of itself"), and ask: what if the prefatory and the planning just sound the same (as else)? What if flirt sounds juicy to/"as" itself? Re: re: how the inappropriate sounds. But there's a digression that requires our listening, and it may have happened just now:

a centrifugitive experimentation of what it means to inhabit not the interstitial, not the in-between but the concoction whose inclination to ruin each and every settlement gleans its own pre-perfection, gathers (in) its own apostasy. Such attunement to gone (gooey, anexact placeness) has the texture of an appetite that hasn't determined the function or taste-value of what it tends to. Maybe what we

are trying to say is that the beguine is all about that tease, that moment of recursivity (maybe the “prophetic vision of the past” Édouard Glissant delves into) before it’s all done-and-begun; oozing away from the prepared and the apprehension of air which we know you know is a succulent word-element to talk about consistency and the boundless transmission of whatever else. Which makes me think that beguine might be some kind of chorus for be-gone, for flight-presence – sublime and subliminal presence. It’s like when Marius Cultier bubbles “gloudou gloudou” and then all you keep thinking-hearing is the bouillon, the brouillon, the prefatory or preparatory; intrication cantic whose lyrics or sinusoids keep bending and breaking like water.

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