Evental Aesthetics

Aesthetic Intersections 1

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On Evolutionary Explanations of Musical Expressiveness

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Abstract

In this paper, I will examine an evolutionary hypothesis about musical expressiveness first proposed by Peter Kivy. I will first present the hypothesis and explain why I take it to be different from ordinary evolutionary explanations of musical expressiveness. I will then argue that Kivy's hypothesis is of crucial importance for most available resemblance-based accounts of musical expressiveness. For this reason, it is particularly important to assess its plausibility. After having reviewed the existing literature on the topic, I will list five challenges the hypothesis is supposed to meet. Although my list of challenges does not aim at exhaustiveness, I believe that the hypothesis must meet all of the challenges I suggest if it is to work as a cornerstone for a theory of musical expressiveness.

Keywords

Music
Expressiveness
Evolution
Resemblance
Animation

1. Introduction

Recent research on musical expressiveness has proposed a variety of evolutionary explanations to account for our propensity to hear music as expressive of emotions. In this paper I will focus on a particular explanation first proposed by Peter Kivy.[1] I will contend that this evolutionary hypothesis should be distinguished from scientific evolutionary accounts of the mechanisms responsible for the perception of emotional expression in music. A hypothesis similar to Kivy's is accepted, in one form or another, by various contemporary philosophers of music. However, some authors, starting with Kivy himself, have expressed skepticism as to its plausibility. I believe that these doubts are well founded. Given the importance of the proposal in the literature, it is necessary to examine more closely the problems it poses. I will outline five challenges, all of which seem difficult for Kivy's hypothesis to meet, at least at the present stage of elaboration. Although my list does not aim to be exhaustive, I believe that failing to meet these challenges is likely to represent a fatal flaw for the argument in question.

2. Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis

I shall first briefly introduce Peter Kivy's contour theory of musical expressiveness, for it is in response to the problems encountered by such a view that Kivy resorts to his evolutionary story. According to the contour theory of musical expressiveness, music is expressive in virtue of its resemblance to emotional prosody and other expressive behavior— such as the adoption of a certain gait, carriage, or countenance to express an emotional state. This general suggestion is not new; it is indeed as old as Plato, although Kivy prefers to identify the music theorist Johann Mattheson as a closer forerunner.[2]

Kivy's novelty lies in his intuition that the emotional quality of the music, i.e., its expressiveness, is logically distinct from any actual emotion in the listener or in the composer. That is, although music might arouse an emotion in the listener and/or have resulted from an emotional state the composer was in when he wrote it, the expressive character of the music is independent from both the aroused emotion and the emotion felt by the composer. In this way Kivy distinguishes the contour theory from both the arousal theory of musical expressiveness and the so-called expression theory, which respectively identify the music's expressive character with

the aroused emotion and the emotion expressed by the composer. Kivy's famous example to illustrate this is the Saint Bernard dog's sad expression: we readily perceive the sad look of the animal in virtue of its similarity to a sad human face; and yet this expressive character is independent of the actual emotional state of the dog as well as of anyone's intention to express one's emotion.[3]

At this point, Kivy has to face two kinds of worries. *Firstly*, one might argue that the experience of the resemblance in question is not ubiquitous and certainly is not always a conscious one. Although we might point out ways in which music is like people expressing emotions, we are not required to notice them when perceiving the emotions in the music. We do not normally experience music as resembling human behavior, and Kivy is surely not interested in producing a prescriptive account about how we should listen to expressive music.[4] *Secondly*, if we decide to ground the expressiveness of music in the music's resemblance to expressive utterances and expressive behavior, we must confront the objection according to which music does not resemble cries, moans, carriages and gaits any more than it resembles many other things, such as waves' motion, the fury of the elements during a storm, or "the rise and fall of the stock market or the spirit of capitalism."[5] But music is clearly not expressive of all these things—although it might in some cases be considered to represent some of them. An analysis resting only on resemblance might consequently miss the target, and clearly such an analysis is the one offered by Kivy so far.

The evolutionary story has the crucial task of defending the contour theory from these objections by (1) providing reasons to believe that there need not be any conscious perception of the resemblance between music and expressive behavior and (2) explaining why, among the many things music resembles, emotional expression is the one we hear in it.

Kivy's suggestion is that we are hard-wired to animate inanimate objects because of evolutionary reasons. As we are likely to mistake for a snake the stick we stumble upon while walking in a wood (we see the snake in the stick in virtue of their similarity), we have an unconscious tendency to animate music and perceive emotional expressiveness in it (we hear the expressive behavior in the music in virtue of their similarity). Because of the primacy of the sense of sight, Kivy argues, the perceptual error in the case of the stick/snake takes the form of a conscious experience. It is important to note how ambiguous Kivy is in the examples he offers for the visual case. In *The Corded Shell* he describes the experience of seeing a human figure

in a spoon or a face in a simplified drawing of a circle with horizontal traits constituting the eyes, nose, and mouth.[6] I will assume for the sake of the argument that there is no difference between these two cases, although this might be contested. However, in his *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* he offers the already mentioned example of the stick/snake, which strikes me as clearly representing a different sort of case from the other two situations.[7] This choice of examples is hardly irrelevant, as I hope to show later.

The sense of hearing, Kivy continues, is comparatively less important for us as a species, and this explains why the perception of emotions in music does not need to be conscious. Whereas we see the stick as a snake and are startled, the perception of the resemblance between music and the emotions does not produce an instinctive response. It might be that things were different for our ancestors: maybe they perceived threatening or friendly utterances in sounds as much as we see friendly or hostile gazes in the natural environment around us; but the course of evolution and the primacy of sight have turned sound animation into a sort of "vestigial relic."[8]

As we will see more clearly later, Kivy himself came to doubt the plausibility of his contour theory. The conjectural nature of the evolutionary argument is one of the reasons for this change of mind.[9]

3. Ordinary scientific evolutionary hypotheses and the specificity of Kivy's story

I do not question that expressiveness is related to some evolved mechanism. We have good reasons to believe that the perception of expressive qualities in inanimate objects is grounded in our evolved nature—as most universally shared psychological mechanisms and tendencies arguably are. Let us briefly consider two evolutionary hypotheses of this kind in order to illustrate this last point.

Norman D. Cook has proposed a suggestive ethological explanation for the expressive character of major and minor chords.[10] It is widely known that, at least in Western tonal harmony, major chords are described as cheerful, whereas minor chord are perceived as subdued or gloomy. Cook believes that, if we look at how major and minor chords are approached from situations of musical tension, we might be able to discover the source

of their expressive character. He observes, drawing on previous work by Leonard Meyer, that any triad made of equally spaced notes sounds tense.[11] If we accept this narrow notion of musical tension as triads composed of equidistant intervals, we can see how the resolution of the tension by means of a semitone increase or decrease in any of the notes is going to invariably produce a minor chord whenever the semitone increases, a major chord whenever it decreases. If we look at ethology, Cook continues, we see that humans share with other animals a sort of auditory code according to which increases in the fundamental frequency of a sound are linked with calls of defeat and submission—whereas decreases in frequency are typical of calls communicating victory, dominance, and strength. This frequency code carries over into human language—think of the rising tone of polite requests and of the descending tone of assertions and commands—and of course into music, where we see it operating in the expressive character of major and minor chords. I believe Cook's theory to be implausible for a number of reasons, although it is not my concern here to address the difficulties it faces.

Another evolutionary hypothesis about musical expressiveness is defended by Jaak Panksepp.[12] He proposes an evolutionary explanation for the sad/bittersweet quality of music containing features such as high-pitched crescendos or a solo instrument emerging from an orchestral background. These musical features are often associated with the sensation of chills or musical *frissons*. Panksepp suggests that the reason for this is the similarity between the separation calls typical of various mammals and the musical features under consideration. Listening to such music could therefore activate ancient emotional circuits deputed to the regulation of emotions of paramount importance for social life.

Neither Cook nor Panksepp argues for or against any particular phenomenology of music listening. It might be that, as James O. Young seems to believe, Panksepp's theory could be used to support a resemblance-based theory of musical expressiveness such as Kivy's—although I am skeptical about it.[13] My point here is merely that there is a way of theorizing the evolutionary mechanism grounding musical expressiveness without committing to phenomenological assumptions about music listening. It is true that both Cook and Panksepp accept some basic first-person characterizations of music—for instance, that we perceive the major mode as happy and the minor as sad. However, the main goal of these theories is to describe from a third-person perspective the connection between facts related to our evolved nature and facts related to our perception of

emotion in the music or to the music's power of emotional arousal. They leave unanswered many of the questions related to the phenomenology of expressive music.

The kind of argument proposed by Kivy is of a more specific sort. The main difference resides in the relation proposed by Kivy between evolved tendencies and the phenomenology of music listening. For Cook and Panksepp, phenomenology is a mere starting point for scientific explanations which do not of themselves amount to phenomenological claims. In contrast, Kivy's claim about the phenomenology of music listening is quite specific: our way of listening to music involves a reference to human expressive behavior, that is, to the sort of behavior that typically accompanies emotions in human beings. More precisely, Kivy believes that we perceive music as expressive because we perceive it—at least subliminally—as an instance of human emotional expression, bodily or vocal.

Kivy's argument would appeal to theorists who believe that the perceptual material provided by the music constitutes the input of a mechanism, the output of which is a phenomenal experience necessarily involving human expressive behavior. However, his hypothesis is not a mere placeholder for future empirical discoveries about the evolutionary links between musical expressiveness and the expression of emotions. It constitutes a specific claim as to how we should interpret those empirical findings: it is in other words a philosophical argument that can be questioned without doubting the relevant underlying scientific facts.

4. Who needs the evolutionary hypothesis?

Needless to say, Kivy's contour theory needs the evolutionary hypothesis if it intends to answer to the two problems presented earlier. As already anticipated, Kivy became skeptical about the viability of his contour theory, also because of the lack of support for the evolutionary hypothesis on which the theory is grounded. He observes: "What evidence, if any, is there for the claim that listeners subliminally hear the analogy, if indeed it exists, between the contour of music and human expression? And even if they do hear it, does that adequately explain our experience of hearing emotions in the music as perceptual qualities? As well, does the phenomenon of seeing things in ambiguous figures—seeing the stick as a snake, or the faces and figures in clouds—transfer to sounds and what we hear (if anything) in

them?"[14] To these doubts, some of which will be developed and amplified in my own challenges to the evolutionary hypothesis, Kivy adds more general methodological concerns about 'just so stories' lacking experimental support.

The interest in outlining challenges for the evolutionary hypothesis comes from the fact that various other philosophers need something akin to Kivy's concept of animation in order for their theory of musical expressiveness to work. As a first approximation, we could say that all resemblance-based theories of musical expressiveness require a story about animation such as Kivy's. We shall now examine this issue in more detail.

Jerrold Levinson observes that there is no way to answer the question as to how we come to hear emotion in music, rather than something else, except by appealing to "our disposition to aurally construe the music as an instance of personal expression, perceiving the human appearances in the musical ones, in effect animating the sounds in a certain manner, to use a phrase given currency by Peter Kivy."[15] A tendency to animate music is also essential to Levinson's theory of musical expressiveness—the so-called persona theory, according to which hearing expression in music is hearing it as an instance of expression by a musical persona. Moreover, we should notice that Levinson needs a hard-wired disposition such as the one described by Kivy for the same reasons Kivy needs it. On the one hand, Levinson believes that the resemblance between music and human emotional expression has a role in our perception of musical expressiveness. However, as everything resembles everything else, he has to justify why we hear emotions in the music rather than something else. On the other hand, Levinson is inclined to stress that the listener does not need to explicitly imagine a fictional persona expressing herself musically, as this might well only occur "in a back-grounded manner."[16] An evolved tendency to animate our perceptions could account for the subliminal character of this process, just as it did in Kivy's case.

Stephen Davies offers a somewhat more cautious and subtle analysis of Kivy's speculations.[17] He is inclined to think that Kivy demands from his evolutionary story more than is needed. In particular, Kivy struggles to justify an asymmetry between the visual and auditory domain. This asymmetry is not only implausible, but also unnecessary to his argument. It is implausible because perceptual errors such as the stick/ snake case happen in perfectly analogous fashion in the auditory case

too—one might be inclined to mistake a click in the dark for the cocking of a gun. It is unnecessary because animation, Davies argues, occurs in both visual and auditory cases in circumstances where there is no possible perceptual mistake involved. When we look at a portrait, we *animate* the portrait and say, for instance, that the portrayed person is looking to her left although we are perfectly aware of having in front of us nothing more than pigments on canvas.[18] Notice that Davies's revision of Kivy's argument is more detrimental to its original function than it might at first seem. From an argument that served, among other things, to distinguish expression from resemblance-based representation, we arrived here at a defense of the concept of animation that construes it exactly as a case of pictorial depiction, that is, a case of resemblance-based representation. Animation in the sense Kivy intends is clearly not just the *representation of things that are animate* but rather a genuine *experience of facing a perceptual content as we face something that is animate*.

I will finally note how Davies, who believes that music is expressive in virtue of its presentation of emotion-characteristics-in-appearance, seems to need something like Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis for the usual two reasons: 1) accounting for the fact that we perceive the music's expressive qualities without being aware of any resemblance between the music and human expressive behavior and 2) explaining the salient character of the resemblance between the music and human expressive comportment.

James O. Young, in a recent defense of an anti-formalist philosophy of music, has argued that Kivy's resemblance theory is obviously right and supported by both common sense and empirical research.[19] Although I think Young's theory is further away from Kivy's than Young realizes, it is worth noting that his account, at least to the extent that it actually is akin to Kivy's, needs the evolutionary hypothesis just as the original contour theory did.

5. Criticism of the evolutionary hypothesis

We have already seen how Kivy himself became skeptical about the plausibility of his own evolutionary hypothesis. I shall now briefly summarize the criticism found in the existing literature before going on to list the challenges the hypothesis should meet.

Anthony Newcomb has expressed two worries: firstly, a notion such as animation does not leave any space for the composer's intention, as it describes expression as a projection of the listener; secondly, Kivy's view cannot account for all the *inanimate* properties we ascribe to the music, such as "references we commonly hear in it to water, glass, fire"[20] In *Sound Sentiment*, the second, expanded edition of *The Corded Shell*, Kivy has convincingly dealt with these two objections.[21] As to the first worry, he rightly observes that the composer's intention is preserved, as the composer intentionally uses musical material that is going to provoke some particular expressive animation. In this sense, the link between the perception of expressive content and the composer's choice is no more problematic than a painter's choice of a cold palette to express a desolated, downcast mood. In answer to the second problem, Kivy observes that his story about how we animate music was meant to explain how we come to hear expression in the music; it is therefore pointless to remark that it cannot account for descriptions of music in terms of fire, glass, and other inanimate substances, for these are clearly not things that music or anything else could possibly express.

Geoffrey Madell has argued that the evolutionary hypothesis is not compatible with Kivy's claim that some musical elements are expressive in virtue of conventional association rather than because of their contour similarity with human expression—a case in point being the expressive character of major and minor chords.[22] Madell rightly observes that Kivy requires the notion of animation to distinguish expression from mere resemblance-based representation: music resembles many things, but our evolved tendency to animate makes its resemblance to human expression stand out, triggering our experience of expression in the music. The problem, Madell observes, is that whereas animation requires some sort of resemblance, conventional association does not require any. From Kivy's standpoint, then, it is hard to explain how we perceive the conventional expressive character of, say, major and minor harmonies just as we experience the expressiveness resulting from the animation process. According to Kivy's analysis, expressive conventions are strictly speaking no cases of musical expressiveness at all. Although I find Madell's objection quite compelling, I should note that it is dependent upon the acceptance of a theory of musical expressiveness that exploits both resemblance-based expression and expression based on conventional association. This latter aspect could be rejected and the former could be broadened to explain the cases that conventional association was meant to cover.

Derek Matravers does not offer any direct criticism of the evolutionary hypothesis itself. He notes, however, how Kivy's concept of animation forces him to downplay the role of resemblance in his account of musical expressiveness. If music resembles many things other than those it expresses, then the experience of expressive music is not the awareness of a resemblance but merely our own expressive animation of it.[23] I am unconvinced by this line of reasoning, as one could reply that the evolutionary hypothesis is nothing but a causal story to explain why we are prone to notice certain similarities rather than others. Animation does not need therefore to be severed from the awareness of a resemblance.

6. Five challenges for the evolutionary argument

Rather than offering a defense or a refutation of Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis, I will outline some challenges it should be able to meet in order to be plausible. I will be mostly concerned with Kivy's characterization of the argument, as he offers the most elaborate one. However, in light of the fact that Kivy no longer favors resemblance theories of musical expressiveness, it will be particularly important to assess the weight of the challenges for accounts such as Davies's and Levinson's.

The phenomenological challenge

We have already noticed how Kivy specifies that the perception of the animated content is subliminal in hearing: we do not hear expressiveness in music as we mistake the stick for the snake because sight has a primary adaptive importance for us—a fact that keeps the tendency to construe resemblances between visible things at the conscious level. It seems to me that denying any similarity or convergence between seeing and hearing is a way for Kivy to cover up the fact that he is actually dealing with two different kinds of experience, both of which involve perception but in very different ways.

Things are further complicated by the fact that the examples Kivy offers for the visual case do not fall into the same category as his auditory examples. In fact, I believe that the cases from which, according to Kivy, the evolved animation tendency stems are of a radically different kind from the ones in which we see something in something else (which is what he

takes musical animation to consist in). If animating the inanimate means seeing a snake where there is only a stick, I agree that there is a reason to think this ability might be an advantage. However, I do not believe this is what happens in the animation of music. Consider, on the one hand, the experience of seeing a snake where there is only a stick and, on the other hand, the experience of seeing a smiling face in the front of a car, a face in moss, or hearing sad human emotional behavior in music. There seems to be more than a mere difference in degree between the first kind of experience and the second. In the first case we are dealing with perception. Because perception is influenced by personal and cultural values, we might perceive one thing rather than another more readily—even to the point of committing perceptual mistakes. I am not seeing the snake in the object I am looking at, as when I see a figure in a moss pattern. I am simply believing that there is a snake, although the perceptual data informing that belief could be differently interpreted and lead me to the right conclusion that there is no snake.

We can further stress the difference between perceptual error and aesthetic animation if we consider when and how we attempt to justify our experiences of things. I can make sure the stick is not a snake by hitting it with my walking stick, throwing a stone at it, or stomping on the ground to make the snake/stick go away. But in seeing a face in the grille of a car or hearing emotion in music is not a mistake per se—therefore we need not do anything to try to justify our perception. The latter is an actual case of seeing- or hearing-in. Mistaking a stick for a snake is not. If there is something like a rationale for the seeing-in experience, it would consist in pointing out which perceptual aspects of the object (e.g., the grille of a car) are relevant to our experience of "seeing-in" (e.g., an upward curve)—albeit with the understanding that someone else could experience the same object quite differently. To sum up, one can objectively prove or disprove a perceptual error; but what I call "seeing- or hearing-in" is a 'double aspect' experience which can be more or less successfully supported by the perceptual qualities of the object under consideration but is otherwise subject to voluntary control.

Kivy is of course aware that we do not make any type of perceptual error when experiencing music as expressive. He is thus aware of the distinction just proposed although he seems to blur it by offering instances of *both kinds of perceptual act* as examples of animation. Once the difference is clouded in such a way, it is easy for him to conclude that the evolutionary tendency underlying perceptual mistakes straightforwardly applies to

seeing-in experiences in which we see something animate in something inanimate.

How is all this relevant to the evolutionary story? The crucial point is that Kivy seems to believe that it is the first kind of experience (stick/snake) which originates the latter (hearing sadness in music). But the two experiences exhibit the phenomenological differences which I have presented above. By conflating the two cases, Kivy masks his need to explain how the evolved tendency to commit certain kinds of perceptual errors rather than others has generated our seeing-in abilities. Accepting my line of reasoning does not amount to denying that the seeing-in experience could have some other evolutionary origin. But Kivy's failure to bridge the gap between perceptual error and seeing-in renders his evolutionary story incomplete.

One might reject my phenomenological challenge from two perspectives: 1) we may accept the phenomenological distinction between the two cases but find that the tendency to animate the inanimate could have developed in one type of situation and then, once established, work for the other situation as well in a by-product fashion; 2) we may believe the distinction is only a matter of degree.

It is hard know how to address the first position. The fact that Kivy offers examples of 'animation' so different from one another as the case of the stick/snake and the one of the spoon seen as a human figure might indicate that this is the strategy he would follow if he were to defend his evolutionary story from my phenomenological challenge. We should note that Kivy later admitted and discussed the ambiguity of his own stick/snake example.[24] He recognizes the difference between the case of the stick/snake and the case of music which invokes no startle mechanism. He then offers further reasons to treat the aural stimulus as something that results in a subconscious animation and because of its comparatively lower survival value—the startle mechanism is now in the background, as it were. But this clearly ignores the fact that the startle mechanism is still in place in aural perception (as in Davies's gun example). Therefore I maintain that the actual difference is not between aware and unaware startle mechanisms but between two different types of experience—as suggested by the phenomenological challenge. The abilities involved in perceptual errors (from which the tendency to animate plausibly evolved) are different from those involved in seeing-in and hearing-in; and this should be evident from my phenomenological description of the two experiences.

The adaptation challenge

If we reject the phenomenological challenge for the second reason and consider the distinction between the two cases only a matter of degree, we can then question the idea that the tendency Kivy described does indeed have an adaptive value. Thus far I have offered no reason to doubt that the tendency to animate the inanimate is valuable from an evolutionary point of view.

If we claimed that the two experiences are different only in degree, such that the animation in the stick/snake case and in the spoon/humanoid case are at opposite ends of a continuum, then we may reasonably hold that the stick and the snake resemble each other more than the front of a car and a smiling face or a wooden spoon and a human figure resemble each other, while still maintaining that the cases are not qualitatively different. However, if the 'animation tendency' is reinforced by natural selection to such an extreme degree that it begins to generate 'byproducts'—like seeing faces in the moss—then it could start to work against its own potential as an evolutionary adaptation. If there is no limit to how weak the resemblance can be between what we animate and the animation we perceive, then this 'wild animation' would only lower our chances of survival.

Kivy supposes that our ancestors heard emotional expression in sounds as we see snakes in sticks. But we clearly need to keep the animation under control if it is to be useful. If Kivy decided to defend his thesis by claiming that the animation tendency only works *up to a point*, the thesis would lose its purpose. For if the difference between the stick/snake and the musical case were only to be found in the relative strength of the resemblances between objects and animated perceptions; then because music bears nothing but weak resemblances to other things, the perception of expressiveness in music would be a very weak version of the stick/snake experience (closer to car/smile) and thus contribute little to survival. In sum, if the naturally selected tendency always works, we lose the tendency to animate; if it works only in clear cases like the stick/snake, we lose its power to explain the musical case.

Both the phenomenological challenge and the adaptation challenge are related to the phenomenology of expressive music. Do they represent a serious source of concern for Davies's appearance emotionalism and for Levinson's persona theory? An account such as Levinson's might be immune from such phenomenological worries, as it considers the music's

resemblance to expressive behaviors as one of the *grounds* of musical expressiveness rather than as part of its phenomenology. Davies, as we have seen, believes that Kivy's worries about the animation process are not justified. We animate things all the time, just as when we see a person painted on a flat surface. The problem with this comparison is that it eludes the worries about musical animation by pointing to experiences that are considerably different from musical ones: when we look at a picture, we are typically well aware of the depicted object, which normally is the main object of attention. Kivy's original goal was to provide an evolutionary explanation for the characteristically backgrounded, subliminal character of the experience of expressive behavior in music.

The sense modality challenge

Sound animation is relevant to evolutionary adaptation only insofar as animated sounds retain informational meanings in the life of an individual. It is clear how the tendency to perceive a growl in what is not a growl might be relevant for the survival of the individual. Recall also Davies's example of a click in the dark perceived as the cocking of a gun. To draw a connection with the visual stick/snake case: better to run away from a stick than to grab a snake thinking it is a stick.

However, in many musical cases the perceived resemblance is cross-modal: on Kivy's account, music can resemble salient *bodily movements* of people who express certain emotions.[25] How could such a case of synesthetic animation have adaptive value? In order to answer this question, proponents of the evolutionary hypothesis need to provide a more elaborate explanation than Kivy's. His hypothesis might be able to justify our propensity to perceive the similarity between music and vocal emotional expression; but it does not seem to be capable of explaining why we perceive resemblances between music and visual emotional correlates such as bodily movements. A sound can of course suggest a movement in the sense that the movement can be related to it as a physical cause, but this is of no help to Kivy's idea. The problem posed by this challenge could be particularly pressing for accounts such as Davies's, which stresses the analogy between music and bodily behavior rather than vocal behavior.

The obliquity challenge

It is commonly admitted—even by those who do not accept the cognitivist resemblance-based account of musical expressiveness—that descriptions of musical expressiveness which emphasize the resemblance between music and expressive gestures are legitimate. However, too close a resemblance to expressive behavior is normally considered deleterious to the purpose of musical expressiveness. The music may well be shaken by rhythmical variations and brisk tempo changes or leap through the tonal space. But when instrumentalists start to imitate notated gestures too closely or a singer's voice is broken by sadness or screams of pain, it is no longer musical expressiveness that we are dealing with but rather some sort of musical representation or theatrical device. The perception of musical expressiveness seems then to be inhibited by an extreme articulation of the resemblance between music and the expressive gesture. The music's analogy with expressive gesture is thus a subtle one, and needs, as it were, to be kept concealed. I call this the *obliquity condition* of musical expressiveness.

I will passingly note that Schopenhauer seems to have been the first philosopher to notice this. His account of musical expressiveness is deeply embedded in his metaphysics of the Will: it is because of music's relation with the Will that music acquires its capacity to embody feelings. The mystery of musical expressiveness is represented by the unintelligible possibility of music to represent what is by definition beyond any possibility of representation, namely the noumenal essence of the world, the Will. The fundamental source of musical meaning is therefore thoroughly different from the phenomenal world, hence Schopenhauer's skepticism about the use of 'painterly' tricks in music. He writes: "But the analogy discovered by the composer between these two [the music and the stirrings of the will] must have come from the immediate knowledge of the inner nature of the world unknown to his faculty of reason; it cannot be an imitation brought about with conscious intention by means of concepts, otherwise the music does not express the inner nature of the will itself, but merely imitates its phenomenon inadequately."[26]

This interpretation of musical expressiveness is bound to cast a further doubt on the role of animation. Resemblance is no foe to animation; it is actually its greatest ally. The animation of the stick, which becomes to our eyes a dangerous snake, is ultimately more vivid and convincing than the animation of the spoon/human, and this is because a stick can have a

considerable number of visual features in common with a snake. However, the obliquity condition implies that resemblance in the musical case has to be kept within precise limits if we are to avoid the risk of transforming music into the kind of expressive pantomime that seems to be at odds with musical expressiveness. A central feature of animation, namely the role resemblance plays in it, does not seem to fit well with the role resemblance has in musical expressiveness. This constitutes a further reason to doubt that animation plays a role in musical expressiveness, at least in the sense outlined by Kivy. Davies's and Levinson's accounts, to the extent to which they do not qualify the sort of resemblance that is supposed to ground the experience of expressive music, are also liable to these challenges.

The style challenge

An evolutionary hypothesis such as Kivy's stresses the role of the automatic animation of the musical contour. The hard-wired mechanism to which Kivy resorts would seem to predict a strong agreement among listeners from different musical cultures as to the expressive character of a given piece of music. However, Kivy warns us that things might be more complicated than that. He takes as an example the Indian tradition of *rāgas*. Each *rāga* is associated with a specific *rāsa*, that is, an emotional state that the *rāga* is supposed to evoke. Kivy has doubts about the expressive transparency of this style. He goes as far as to say that "To the uninitiated ear, every *rāga* presents about the same mood: a kind of exotic stupor."[27] Recent psychological results seem to show that he was wrong: untrained Western listeners are rather good at identifying the emotion a *rāga* is supposed to express and arouse.[28] Because of his pessimistic view about the cross-cultural transparency of expressive music, Kivy needs to explain how the hard-wired response could fail to produce common responses in human beings sharing the same evolved traits. His solution to this issue is ingenious: animating a musical contour might well be an automatic response, but the perception of the musical contour is not, as it requires experience with the musical system in question. Kivy suggests an elegant analogy with the visual domain: "We cannot expect the Western ear to hear, *ab initio*, the expressive contour in Indian music, any more than we can expect an Australian aborigine to see expression in Rembrandt's sketch of a face—not because he fails to read the expressive conventions, but because, to begin with, he fails to read the pictorial ones."[29] The problem with this solution is that it increases even more the distance between the hard-wired

case of the stick/snake and the musical case. Not only is the animation of the inanimate something different than the startle mechanism at work in the case of perceptual mistakes: it is also something that needs training to become operational.

I am not aware of any discussion devoted by Levinson to the issue of the cross-cultural transparency of musical expressiveness. Davies, on the other hand, has devoted considerable attention to the issue, suggesting that the expression of emotions is cross-culturally consistent to an extent that encourages a mild optimism as to its transparency, at least while we wait for further empirical research.[30]

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have described two main kinds of evolutionary arguments that can be offered in attempt to explain musical expressiveness. The first kind, which has not been my concern here, is represented by scientific hypotheses about the relationship between music as a perceptual object and the widespread human tendency to describe it as expressive as well as, in some cases, to be moved by it. The hypothesis considered in this paper is of a different sort, as it entails some constraints as to the phenomenology of music listening. Peter Kivy, who originally proposed it, became himself skeptical about its plausibility. However, it is important to assess its value, as the hypothesis surfaces in various ways in recent literature on musical expressiveness. I hope to have pointed to some challenges that the argument must meet if it is to work as a cornerstone for any theory of musical expressiveness. My list does not aim at exhaustiveness. I take it, however, that an evolutionary hypothesis such as the one considered here would have serious chances of being successful if it could meet all of the challenges I have presented.

Notes

1 Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

2 Peter Kivy, "Mattheson as Philosopher of Art," *The Musical Quarterly* 70, (1984): 248-265.

3 Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 12.

4 Ibid., 57.

5 Ibid., 62.

6 Ibid., 58.

7 Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

8 Ibid., 43.

9 Ibid., 46-47.

10 Norman D. Cook, *Tone of Voice and Mind: The Connections between Intonation, Emotion, Cognition and Consciousness* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2002).

11 Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

12 Jaak Panksepp, "The Emotional Sources of 'Chills' Induced by Music," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13 (1995): 171-207.

13 James O. Young, *Critique of Pure Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

14 Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 46.

15 Jerrold Levinson, "Musical Expressiveness as Hearability-as-xpression." In *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 192-204, at 197.

16 Ibid., 193.

17 Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 258.

18 Ibid., 260.

19 Young, *Critique of Pure Music*, 11.

20 Anthony Newcomb, "Sound and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1984): 614-643, at 618-619.

21 Peter Kivy, *Sound Sentiment: An Essay on the Musical Emotions* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 177-180.

22 Geoffrey Madell*, Philosophy, Music and Emotion* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 25.

23 Derek Matravers, *Art and Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 122.

24 Kivy, *Sound Sentiment*, 172.

25 Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 52-54.

26 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 263. A similar idea was previously expressed by Charles Avison in his *Essay on Musical Expression*, first published in 1752. Avison writes: "And, as Dissonance and shocking Sounds cannot be called Musical Expression; so neither do I think, can mere Imitation of several other Things be entitled to this Name, which, however, among the Generality of Mankind, hath often obtained it. Thus the gradual rising or falling of the Notes in a long Succession, is often used to denote Ascent or Descent, broken Intervals, to denote an interrupted Motion, a Number of quick Divisions, to describe Swiftness or Flying, Sounds resembling Laughter, to describe Laughter; with a Number of other contrivances of a parallel Kind, which it is here needless to mention. Now all these I should chuse to stile Imitation, rather than Expression; because, it seems to me, that their Tendency is rather to fix the Hearers Attention on the Similitude between the Sounds and the Things which they describe, and thereby to excite a reflex Act of the Understanding, than to affect the Heart and raise the Passions of the Soul." (Charles Avison, Pierre Dubois and William Hayes, *Charles*

Avison's Essay on Musical Expression. With Related Writings by William Hayes and Charles Avison [Farnham: Ashgate, 2004], 24). Notice how in this passage there seems to be, *in nuce*, a criticism of a cognitivist perspective on musical expressiveness, such as resemblance theories. The perception of a resemblance is only an "act of the Understanding," and expression is taken by Avison to require something more—or something different. A few pages later, Addison makes a similar point: "The power of Music is, in this respect, parallel to the power of Eloquence: if it works at all, it must work in a secret and unsuspected Manner" (Ibid., 28).

27 Kivy, *The Corded Shell*, 89.

28 Laura-Lee Balkwill and William Forde Thompson, "A Cross-cultural Investigation of the Perception of Emotion in Music: Psychophysical and cultural Cues," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 17 (1999): 43-64.

29 Ibid., 91.

30 Stephen Davies, "Cross-cultural Musical Expressiveness: Theory and the Empirical Program," in *Musical Understandings and other essays on the philosophy of music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 34-46.

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Musical Silhouette: resemblance, trace, occlusion, self-portraiture

James Rushford

Abstract

The silhouette is recognized in philosophy and art as a peculiar means of identification and knowledge, not just through its creation of a visual double (a concept often aesthetically unpacked through the terms 'image' and 'resemblance'), but by bridging a phenomenal space between past and future, absence and presence. Acknowledging an indebtedness to Pliny and Plato's famous myths, this paper attempts to re-build the image of the silhouette as a sonic phenomenon, using several examples of contemporary experimental music and sound art. The silhouette is used as a linguistic and visual metaphor for elucidating how some experimental music might be said to obscure itself, to obscure our perception of it, or, indeed, to be obscured by that very perception.

A brief discussion of photography and notation extrapolates from Pliny's symbolic image of the outline, uncovering an epistemological and hermeneutical complexity in the idea of capturing the ephemeral. At the same time, notation's unbreakable 'belongingness' to its interpreter through the act of 'tracing,' proposes a kind of performative self-portraiture.

The silhouette is then considered as cast by the *listener*, referencing Ceal Floyer's formal spatio-temporal 'negative' musical image, and overviewing key theories of temporal consciousness by Edmund Husserl, Henri Bergson and Robert Snyder. A re-imagined temporality of events through memory tracing is then located in key works by Sophie Calle and Alvin Lucier. Finally, in Graham Lambkin's idiosyncratic and self-reflexive approach to sound, we might locate a silhouette that conceptually and perceptually blurs the boundaries between subject, object and representation: self-portraiture as itself a form of occlusion.

Introduction

"A means or a medium, the trace is first and foremost our fragile link with *the certain place* where the sonorous was and the certain place whence it may be *brought forth* once again"
—François Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds*[1]

"Behind every real object there is a dream object"
—Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*[2]

"The duplication of the self produces the effect of the uncanny"
 —Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny"[3]

The philosopher and musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch writes of music's ability to transpose "actuality into the nocturnal dimension of becoming".[4] This description of music as inherently 'self-nocturnalizing' elegantly expresses music's processual kind of materiality, as well as (perhaps more notably) its *phenomenal obscurity*. Within the realm of experimental music (and, in some cases, its extension to sound art), such obscurity is at the conceptual core of certain works, exhibited in ever-shifting 'distances' and distortions between musical ideas, material, representation and audition.

This paper attempts to describe different manifestations of what I term 'musical silhouette', a sub-image of a broader research concept defined as 'musical shadow'. Artists and thinkers have often mined shadow's definitively obscuring properties and possibilities as a rich vein of metaphysics, myth and metaphor, exploiting the shadow's facility for evoking existentially and perspectively uncertain shades of presence and absence. While this author acknowledges that the silhouette's historical graphic depiction—as a figure that is backlit against a lighter background—may be viewed as distinct from that of shadow, I am using the term in a more general sense: as a dark shape and clear outline cast against its contrasting background. The silhouette thus retains a strong visual aspect but it also has important philosophical, psychological, artistic and literary castings and connotations, providing varied conceptual lenses through which I have viewed or thought through this image.

I will focus on a diverse set of experimental music/sound-based works (by Ceal Floyer, Alvin Lucier and Graham Lambkin, respectively) that arguably suggest my image of 'silhouette'. Although each work is approached

from different 'angles,' a commonality lies in their unusual *perspectival* properties, through their execution in performance and recording, and/or their manifestation in time. Preceding the discussion of these works, I also consider the way in which musical notation, broadly speaking, functions as kinds of 'tracings' of a musical event. In approaching these musical examples, I will refer to several visual art works (by Karen Knorr, Sophie Calle, Maarten Van Heemskerck) and/or to key philosophical and aesthetic concepts that deal with the image of shadow in temporal consciousness (for example, those of Immanuel Kant, Plato, Pliny the Elder, Edmund Husserl, Robert Snyder and Henri Bergson). The specific works of these non-musical artists and thinkers have been chosen to demonstrate some small part of the rich history of the silhouette as a symbol in aesthetics, psychology and phenomenology.

Absence and presence

Philosophically, the shadow is most famously instantiated in Plato's allegory of the cave. It has been understood that the allegory illuminates and epitomizes a rationalist standpoint, where "the effect of education" can free the human "prisoner" from the cave of illusion to finally experience truer forms of reality.[5] In Western visual art history, the shadow has been associated with the origins of painting and sculpture. Pliny's *Natural History* describes the "encircling [of] a shadow" in the following story, as the initial catalyst for both artistic mediums:

> It was through the service of that same earth that modelling portraits from clay was first invented by Butades, a potter from Sycion, at Corinth. He did this owing to his daughter, who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by the lamp. Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief.[6]

As we examine the appearance of the shadow within some cultural and aesthetic traditions, an elusive image of both absence and presence appears and reappears. Both Plato and Pliny use the shadow as a signifier— of knowledge, and of hermeneutics, respectively. Victor Stoichiță, in *A*

Short History of the Shadow, stresses the "mnemonic" function of Pliny's shadow.[7] In order to fill the absence of the lost loved one, the daughter in the myth makes a "living double", albeit a double that is 'frozen', stopped in time "like a photograph" (curiously, in its Greek etymology, photography means 'drawing with light'). By contrast, Gerhard Wolff's more classical interpretation of this shadow is that it operates as "the insubstantial eidol[on]" of the dead.[8] Here, the shadow as *representing* absence is connected to an idea of ontological dependency—the shadow must *belong* to someone/something which is now gone. However, Stoichiță sees a further ontological potential in Pliny's shadow—it "both resembles *and belongs* to the person whose image it is".[9]

In the history of photography, we can trace a further ontological transformation of the shadow. Henry Fox Talbot's early experiments with photography were an attempt to 'freeze' the ephemerality of shadow, "the proverbial emblem of all that is fleeting and momentary".[10] Hagi Kenaan suggests that Talbot, through photography, "uprooted" the shadow from its visuo-temporal contingency, enabling an ability to see it as a "code" of "self-sufficiency".[11] Karen Knorr's photograph *The Pencil of Nature* references Talbot's eponymous 1844 book (the first photographically illustrated book), and could be said to 'reframe' Pliny's myth. In this sense, it doubly refers to the origins of drawing and the origins of photography through the image of the silhouette. However, its depiction of the outline *not yet drawn* can also be interpreted as a commentary on the shadow's ephemerality versus its freezing via tracing, a temporal tension *between* the event and its representation.

Fig 1. Karen Knorr, *The Pencil of Nature* (1994), photograph print, 101 x 101 cm. Reproduced with the kind permission by the author.[12]

If we attempt to uncover a similar tension in music and the musical experience, we need to address several different ontological and experiential *loci* for the musical event, including notation, performance and listening, where the shadow operates in a temporal, linguistic and interpretive framework. The shadow phenomenon here can shift from its paradigmatic instantiation in space to that of time. The identification of the musical silhouette also works to re-situate the concept of tracing in a kind of musical portraiture. In the works and concepts discussed below, different forms of composition, and ways of listening and interpreting, are each, in this sense, forms of *resemblance*.

James Rushford

Notation and the extended temporal trace

Silhouettes are defined by their opacity as well as their outline. They appear as occultations, and, in this sense, their content remains unseen. It is thus their *outline* that provides the conditions of identification through form. Musical notation, by comparison, might be conceived as a codified 'image' of a musical work, only providing access to a work proper through its function as a mapping or tracing. That is, it outlines temporally extended musical events in a seemingly static, 'simultaneous', series of visual/spatial signs and symbols, and can also, to a degree, indicate specific elements or attributes of a possible musical event. But notation is also intrinsically *unfixed*, in its hermeneutic potential and its different presentations of temporality; one only has to consider the different degrees of 'specificity' in graphic or standard notation, audio scores, or any other multitude of notational forms, to defend this claim. Stoichiță's description of the silhouette-trace as both a form of 'belonging' and of 'resemblance' illuminates the apparent ambiguity of a musical score whose relation of similitude to a musical 'work' is equivocal in the face of interpretation, yet which is both uniquely and surely tethered to that particular work. This paper does not attempt to examine the vast diversity of notational systems, languages and modes of presentation of musical notation. Its treatment of notation will be fairly broad and diffuse.

Laurence Louppe explains the impossibility of notation to produce definitive figures, instead producing "*acts*".[13] The vital presence of the act in interpretation is, arguably, perceptually or epistemologically 'readable' by the viewer, but it cannot be reduced to a visual sign. The acts of reading and interpreting (as concept and percept) can be delineated, as the latter requires a resynthesis of the act through temporal and physical means. In this way, notation seems provisional, more 'hieroglyphic' than textual. Paul Virilio explains that it is not to be 'read', but to be 'traced', as if a spectre of movement rather than a grid:

> This is not the formulation of another language. It is a transformation of re-presentation itself. It is a *trajectory* between the real and the sign. The trajectory is *perturbed* by the presence of a living body, intervening as such. Representation supposes the absence of the object, the absence of being. Here, life inhabits what will never be its icon or its index.[14]
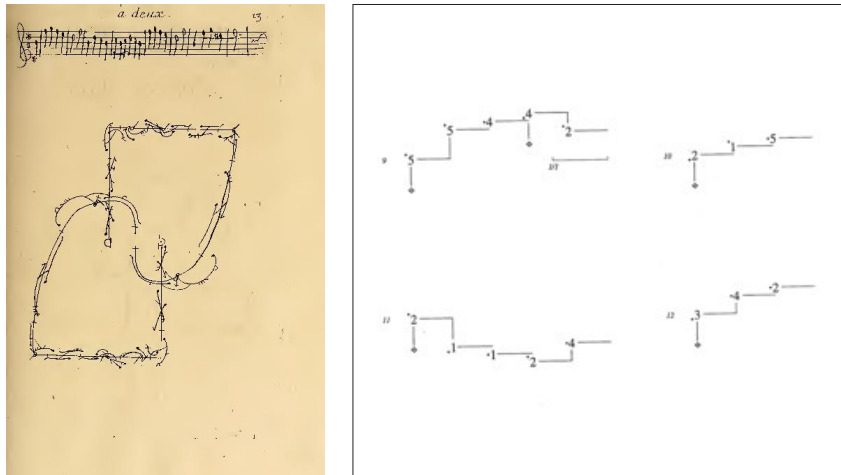
Fig. 2. Raoul Auger Feuillet, *Entrée à Deux* (1700), engraving.[15]

Fig. 3. Kunsu Shim, *Primary Piano* (2000), page 2, detail. Reproduced with the kind permission by the author.[16]

Can we then take it that the interpretation of notation is one of consciously 'writing,' or 'drawing'? This distinction can clarify how notation is not a 'freezing' of time, because, as a *representation*, it does not attempt to exist *in the same time* as the musical event itself. Instead, it proposes *images* of time distinct from the musical experience in time as we experience it phenomenologically. Alfred Schutz, in "Making Music Together," says that notation, as something existent in "the outer world" is "incomparable to the essential part of music … the flowing process of inner time."[17] Schutz's inner time is consistent with Bergson's 'unspatializable' duration, which emphasizes the impossibility of analyzing time as a homogeneous matrix of divisible instants. In phenomenological theories of temporal consciousness, both Kant and Husserl claim that we are able to experience a temporally extended object/event as being so through a "principle of simultaneous awareness", where "to be experienced as unified, contents must be presented … as a single momentary awareness".[18] Extrapolating from Virilio's earlier statement about the interpreter 'perturbing' notation's ephemeral, spectral trajectory, it seems there are many ways to imagine the interpretive act as a tracing via interference or 'occlusion' between notational and performative "sign systems".[19] Firstly, tracing can be 'preobjective', something the interpreter consciously draws out of the notation. Maurice Merleau-Ponty says that the "line" does not imitate the visible, but renders the visible; it

is a "blueprint of a genesis of things."[20] Albrecht Wellmer similarly reminds us that notation, moreover, is temporally-based, specifically *historically*, through its multiple interpretations. It is not 'read' as a static object, but 'written' and 're-written' by each interpreting subject:

> like the meaning of texts written in a language, the content of all that is notated in a musical text does not have any "being in itself" … the process of being interpreted is fundamental to their being … We thus find an analogy between the musical text and *writing*; both attain being from within a particular historical horizon.[21]

Conversely, we can consider interpretation as an *unravelling* of notation through the subjective filtering of musical ideas. Theodor Adorno, known for his idealism regarding the 'truth' of the musical score and its 'disintegration' through interpretation, agrees that notation is an object changing throughout history, but emphasizes that through this evolution something "has to escape"[22]—"it would be wrong to say that reproduction must 'awaken' the sedimented content in music, since the substance of music is not that content, but rather the process of its sedimentation."[23] Here, the interpreter can be seen to shape the evanescent notational silhouette through his/her own subjective tracing.

So notation appears to have a paradoxical existence as both the catalyst for a 'trace' we follow, and something that is traced, i.e. outlined by the interpreter, indicating that it is itself not entirely temporally 'undistributed'. Revisiting Knorr's capturing of the silhouette's trace-act in her photograph, we can now draw a connection with how the interpretive act proceeds to trace or fix notation (conceived not as a fixed image, but a moving trajectory between image and event), and in doing so implicates *the interpreter* in the silhouette. Notation is not just an 'image'—or quasi-ontological entity—of a composer's artistic conception, it also *belongs* (in Stoichiță's sense) to the interpreter; indeed, it is shaped and outlined by the interpreter. Interpretation is not purely a tracing of indications in a score, but the tracing of the interpretation of those indications. Notation becomes a form of interpretive self-portraiture.

The silhouette of listening

This tension between the silhouette and its trace can also be postulated in the act of listening to music. The work of conceptual artist Ceal Floyer is principally engaged with "the idea of transition from the subjective to the real world".[24] Her sound/collage artwork, *Goldberg Variation*, takes thirty harpsichord recordings of an aria from Johann Sebastian Bach's famous *Goldberg Variations*, and layers them on top of each other as playback. Apparently, this constitutes all commercially available recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* at the time of the work's making. The first notes of the variations all sound at the same time, but quickly the work blisters into a mass of saturated polyphony, where tiny delays and echoes almost blur together. Much of the piece thus sounds chaotic, "a collective gray matter that lies out of reach for articulated consciousness,"[25] but one can still listen for (and perhaps perceive) a sense of Bach's original forward progression in the harmonic blur. Nearing the end of the work, we hear the thinning out of each layer, and the longer variations emerging in a clearing of the texture, until one final variation is left.

On the surface, *Goldberg Variation* may appear as a comment on subjectivity through the proliferation of interpretations of the 'masterwork'. It is also clearly a play on language, as Floyer makes a 'variation' of the variations through highlighting possible interpretive differences, particularly in their rhythmic displacement. However, Floyer also seems to highlight the ultimately asymmetrical nature of interpretation vis-à-vis the score, "disordering the reasoned structure" of Bach's original.[26] By formally 'spatializing' the works through layering, Floyer makes it difficult for the listener to focus on much other than the audible *differences* between interpretation, which one could hear as a kind of aural 'negative space' between the musical events.[27] So we are presented both with multiple possibilities of subjectivity through layering in real-time, and a flattening of the heterogeneous durations of various interpretations into a common 'spatial' dimension. In this way, Floyer's variation is deeply linguistic, presenting a kind of re-notation through the act of *listening*. By focusing on the now spatio-temporal variation between interpretations, the music inside is cast by both composer and listener as only an *image* of music, de-subjectivized, like a fuzzy projection.

The silhouette of remembering

Some theorists of temporal consciousness offer useful insights into the phenomenal experience of music, calling into question the ontological autonomy of the musical event[28] and challenging certain presuppositions about its objective linearity or measurability.

Barry Dainton's reading of Husserl takes the philosopher as employing a 'cinematic model' which proposes that, though our immediate awareness itself lacks any temporal extension, past phases of consciousness (within immediate or short-term memory) are somehow still retained in the 'specious present': "The past must be represented in this now as past, and this is accomplished through the continuity of adumbrations that in one direction terminates in the sensation-point and in the other direction becomes blurred and indeterminate."[29]

This idea of adumbration in memory extends from the Kantian 'retentional model' of explaining how we are aware of experience as an ongoing process. Both cinematic and retentional models of temporal consciousness invoke the 'principle of simultaneous awareness'. With this in mind, a succession of experience does not necessarily equal an experience of succession. More specifically, in the musical experience, it is the strange counterpoint between listening and remembering that most vividly presents the problem of musical experience in time, and the nature of the subject/listener's own 'projection' (or retrojection) of experience becomes a key consideration.

By contrast, Bergson's image of temporal experience is that of a "qualitative multiplicity" that permeates the subject, rather than a quantity that can be measured.[30] Here, time is fluidly changing and it is our experience of it that is 'unitary'. Our everyday perceptions are always *perfused* by our individual memory, and in this sense, the psychic intensity of previous states of experience could be imagined as a 'shadow' cast upon a multitude of perceptions and memories, altering their qualities without ever itself coming into view.

So the image of the silhouette significantly recasts the aesthetic notion of shadow as something ephemeral that memory attempts to trace. More than subjectively formed vestigial content and a crucial means of retrieval, the trace also has a tendency towards generating its own kind of obfuscation. Snyder, in *Music and Memory*, explains that the connections between elements of a memory (not the elements themselves) are what

constitute its accessibility and its uniqueness. A critical connection lies between the 'vivid perceptual aspect' (from short-term memory) and the 'conceptual aspect' (from long-term memory). A listener will perceptually categorize the music he/she hears through a process called 'chunking', consolidating small groups of associated memory elements. A single 'chunk' is considered a short-term memory, but groups of chunks can be further consolidated into larger chunks in hierarchical order (for example, the small chunking of a short musical motive or sonority can undergo 'event fusion' into a collection of motives forming a phrase, then even further 'chunked' into a broader structural outline etc.).

As different tiers of chunking are 'stored' in the mind, it is clear that long-term and short-term memory do not operate in the same temporal framework. Further, one can gain insight into the structural aspect of our long-term memory through looking at its recall in short-term memory. In recalling a familiar piece of music, we observe that the 'piece' does not appear in conscious memory as it originally appeared in conscious experience. In this sense, musical memory 'outlines' or 'silhouettes' real-time musical experience, with the piece appearing in fragments, 'jumping' from one sonic image or chunk to another like a curious Husserlian 'flicker'. This flickering, with its gaps between images, demonstrates that the chunking process is specifically retained, and indeed recalled, through its event *boundaries*. Here, Snyder gives a simple musical example:

[M]elodic and rhythmic groupings, which consist of multiple separate events in a time order, nonetheless have something of the character of all being available at once … we detect boundaries between *single* events, whereas at the melodic and rhythmic level, we detect temporally extended patterns consisting of *multiple* events.[31]

This 'bottom up'/'top down' distinction between event boundaries and patterns formed in memory has been phenomenologically expounded in Bergson's description of provisional and ultimate units in the act of listening. The latter are part of a present cognitive process, whereas the former occur in the memory. Bergson, in accord with Snyder, also demonstrates that in order to measure our own temporal experiences, we would have to give them some kind of 'numerical' representation, of which a necessary element is *space*:

The sounds of [a] bell certainly reach me one after the other; but one of two alternatives must be true. Either I retain each of these successive sensations in order to combine it with the others and form a group … in that case I do not *count* the sounds … gathering … the qualitative impression produced by the whole series. Or else I intend explicitly to count them … and this separation must take place within some homogenous medium in which the sounds, stripped of their qualities, and in a manner, emptied, leave traces of their presence which are absolutely alike. The question now is, whether the medium is time or space.[32]

The interchange between percept and concept in memory is not always fully 'conscious'. For example, implicit memory (such as automatic body movements) and 'priming' (recalling something without being consciously aware of it, such as "feeling that there is something familiar about a musical phrase") are not fully 'grasped' in consciousness,[33] and even episodic, or 'autobiographical', memories need not be fully consciously "revived perceptions" (in John Locke's words).[34] Snyder notes that "a large percentage of the long-term memory in use at a given time is only semiactivated [sic], and remains unconscious, although it has a large effect in guiding what we are conscious of—indeed, constitutes the meaning of what we are conscious".[35]

It must be noted here that in the context of music, implicit and episodic memory overlap and become co-dependent, for example, in the 'learning' of a musical score that involves the development of physical, implicit memories (e.g. fine-motor skills) as well as the episodic interpretation of information. An easily recognizable type of 'chunking' occurs in the general recall of melodic phrases in music, where the performer may only consciously remember the first and last note of a fast scale, or struggles to resume playing a work from the 'middle' of a phrase. In such instances, though, one may rely principally on the syntactical structures of one's implicit memory, without consciously using episodic memory (for example, remembering how to play a musical passage using 'muscle memory' alone). Marya Schechtman claims that personal identity *itself* does not even depend upon a "psychological continuity" in which the "precise recall" of past moments of consciousness connects with present ones. Rather, it is brought about by the "smoothing over the boundaries between different moments in our lives".[36]

These accounts of temporal consciousness by Husserl and Kant (by way of Dainton), Bergson and Snyder, each elucidate an image of 'tracing' as a function of memory. Here, the trace has two meanings, as something left behind in memory, and also as a kind of mnemonic action (i.e. a verbal tracing). Both senses allude to the silhouette in its double meaning via Pliny, as both an attempt to capture the fleeting, and an eidolon or vestige.

The trace of memory; the memory of a trace

The next two works discussed (of visual art and music respectively) overtly explore the two-fold trace of memory as a kind of working material. Sophie Calle's artwork series *Purloined* responds to the heists of five paintings by Wiliam Turner, Pablo Picasso, Lucian Freud and Titian from various European museums. In referring to each stolen painting, Calle presents a work where various photographs are set side by side—sometimes of the original paintings, or just their storage cabinets/frames—with a panel of text quoting museum staff speaking of either their relationship to the missing work or describing the work based on their memory of it. Calle is "creat[ing] an extended dialogue with history" through an attempt to re-trace (or even replace) the lost work through the interpretation of (possibly 'inaccurate') memories.[37] The tracing that informs and constitutes Calle's series is evoked by Georges Didi-Huberman in his aesthetic image of the *imprint*—"[t]he imprint may well touch us through the adherence from which it proceeds, but this contact ends up, almost fatally, being thought in the element of separation, of loss, of absence … the foot must sink into the sand … [b]ut in order for the imprint to *appear* as a result, the foot must also be lifted again."[38]

A significant aspect of Calle's piece is her attempt to resituate the material of the visual artworks in time—the original work is re-presented via the interpretive act of memory. The memory traces documented in *Purloined* are not simply functioning as 'eidola' (as Wolff interprets Pliny's silhouette myth). Their difference and individuality highlight the "influence of self-concept on memory" and, in turn, the influence memory has on life.[39] Additionally, the re-presentations of the artworks Calle presents in lieu of the work's images themselves are sorts of re-notations of the images—'blueprints', rather than translations or reproductions—that are then traced and ultimately 'filled in' by the viewer, with or without the aid of the original image.

In Alvin Lucier's 1970 text composition *Memory Space*,[40] the intention is, similarly, to re-trace a spatial (and temporal) environment, one already silhouetted in memory, but which must be 'prompted' into consciousness. The text score states that performers are required to "record" (by memory or a memory aid such as drawing or audio recording) the "sound situations of the environment", and then "recreate" them from memory at a later point on their instrument.[41] As in many of Lucier's works, *Memory Space* is an attempt to summon a physical space by the listening subject through sound. (Other works of Lucier's explore subjective listening more psychoacoustically, for example, 1965's *Music for Solo Performer*). Although Lucier explicitly states that the re-creation must be "without additions, deletions, improvisation, interpretation", the process becomes one of both clarifying a sound situation (i.e. the memory will, in a sense, filter out phenomenal 'excess' of the remembered situation in performance) and obscuring it (i.e. the very act of performance cannot avoid extraneous gesture).

Lucier says that he is specifically interested in the "time delay" between the listening and performing events.[42] Snyder's theory of priming is pertinent here, in particular the extensive temporal conditions in relation to the formation of memory. However, *Memory Space* presents specific and unusual conditions for the development of the performer's musical memory—he/she must undergo a process of *conscious* listening/ memorization (itself a kind of performance in the context of the work), and the sound event he/she is remembering can be construed as not implicitly 'musical'.[43] As the interpretive process unfolds, the material space Lucier wishes the performer to trace, comes from his/her conscious positions as listener and performer, and the critical 'time-delay' is another obstruction/ caesura between that which is heard and that which is performed. The lack of implicit memory developed through any practical memorization of the work means that the episodic memory is completely 'left alone'.

Both Lucier and Calle employ memory (in a sense not unlike Snyder's account of it) as the very *generative* material of their works' forms. From a representative realist viewpoint, Lucier's work does not simply call for the re-creation of an original sound situation—it essentially provokes the conditions for the tracing of a subjective *representation* (i.e. the memory, the silhouette) of a situation. Emmanuel Levinas describes something similar in his idea of "resemblance" in artistic images:

Must we then come back to taking the image as an independent reality which resembles the original? No, but on condition that we take resemblance not as the result of a comparison between an image and the original, but as the very movement that engenders this image. Reality would not be only what it is, what it is disclosed to be in truth, but would be also its double, its shadow, its image.[44]

For Levinas, the *act* of resemblance is the very relationship between some original thing and its image, but the image is not simply a sign or symbol, because of its "opacity". In performing *Memory Space*, one is filling in, even "insisting" on the absence of the original event with the "presence" of one's interpretative sonic material.[45] So memory does not trace the original event, but traces *its shadow*.

A final and important observation is that *Memory Space* presents to its audience the performer's subjective and isolated 're-creation' of an event, with no other indicators of its original form. This is a constant preoccupation for Lucier, that "physical phenomena are made explicit only through the participation of people and the activating of perception."[46] The trace has two characterizations: as both the prompted performative act, which is in turn always generated by, and in thrall to, the silhouette of memory.

'Overpainting'

We have begun to establish some possible conditions under which the musical silhouette emerges. A central condition has been the notion of self-projection—of performer, composer and/or listener—the self somehow 'occluding' the musical object (for example, through memory, writing and interpretation). The final works to be discussed reveal another dimension of the image of the silhouette shadow in visual art and music as *self-portraiture*, referencing its inescapably multi-perspectival nature and perceptibility.

Maarten van Heemskerck's *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin* provides an interesting example of the intrusion of the artist himself into his work. The artist actually painted two versions of the same theme, both paintings showing Saint Luke in the process of completing a half-formed portrait, at the stage of shading in the virgin's flesh tones. In the 1532 painting, the figure of an angel or muse stands behind Luke, purportedly 'guiding' the painter's hand (a not uncommon artistic theme at the time). The fact that the angel's face is a self-portrait of Heemskerck provides a *doubled* representation of the artist—the painter and his guide—increasing perspectival ambiguity and complexity. In the later painting of the same subject, Stoichiță observes that Saint Luke himself is now Heemskerck's self-portrait, a further complication of the artist/subject relation.

Another, more subtle, layer of intricacy into these codified portraits is represented by the shadow of Saint Luke's hand on his canvas, further underlining the artist's 'interference' with his subject, both from outside and inside the work. This shadow has significance, as it not only partly occludes the image depicted in the incomplete paintings-within-the-paintings, but, as Stoichiță notes, also bears a further cryptic symbolism of "the 'shadow of the hand' that runs over the 'shadow of the flesh'". In any case, in both versions of this well-known subject, Heemskerck "highlights what he should have concealed: the painter's hand".[47]
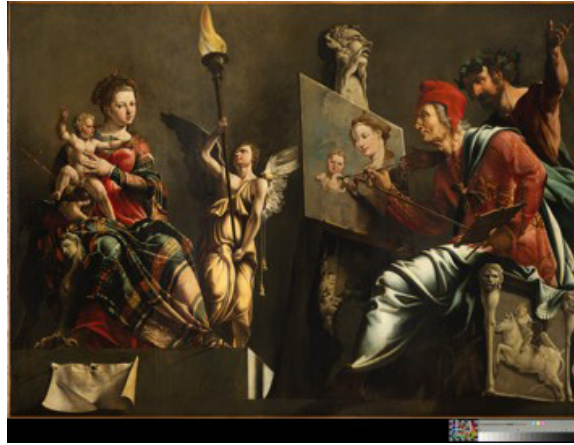
Fig. 4. Maarten van Heemskerck, Saint Luke Painting the Virgin (1532), oil on canvas, 168 x 235 cm. Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum. (Photograph by Margareta Svensson. 2014.)[48]

The Fluxus-inspired visual and sound artist Graham Lambkin also inserts 'himself' in his work, but, as in Heemskerck's painting, that self is distorting (and being distorted by) his environment. The work's perspective is similarly mediated and distorted by the insistent insertion of a 'Graham Lambkin,' as is that of the listener. Nearly forty years after Lucier, Lambkin reassesses the problem of the composer and listener's implication in a sonic environment, but in a radically different way, through the "heavily coded exploration of the psychological properties of shared spaces."[49] Two key examples can be found in his albums *Salmon Run* (2007) and *Amateur Doubles* (2011). In both albums, Lambkin records himself listening to other people's music and ambiguously interacting through incidental noises and discreet actions. *Amateur Doubles* documents a family car trip from inside the car itself, where we hear Lambkin playing two long-form French progressive rock records blending with the sound of the car engine and the occasional muffled sound of his son calling out from the back seat. *Salmon Run's* most substantial portion, titled "The Currency of Dreams", consists of a crude audio recording of Lambkin in his house, listening to a recording of Wyschnegradsky's *Meditation sur deux themes de la 'Journée de l'Existence*, whilst also taking photos of himself on a digital camera, laughing, breathing heavily and making various unidentifiable sounds. Lambkin derived this idea from the technique of the Austrian painter Arnulf Rainer in his

'overpaintings,' in which Rainer splashes abstract expressionist markings over famous historical artworks. However, the works themselves do not provide such descriptive cues; so, instead, one is struck by both the strange familiarity of certain sounds, as well as the difficulty of their decipherability.

Fig. 5. Graham Lambkin, Untitled Self Portrait (2004), acrylic and ink on plastic, 22.9 x 30.5 cm. Reproduced with kind permission of the author.[50]

Nicholas Croggon illuminates the complex subjectivity, experienced by both creator and audience, that results from such a creative process:

> As these self-reflexive cues attest, this track suggests that the act of forming and realizing the intertwinings and limitations of a sound world is always ultimately a task of subject-forming, of self-portraiture. And as Lambkin and Rainer have pointed out in a different way in their paintings, the face that appears in such portraits is always inescapably smeared and distorted by its surroundings.[51]

Lambkin confesses to a kind of "trespassing" in such work,[52] perhaps challenging the aesthetic and authorial boundaries of art-music and its commodification. This is similarly felt via a kind of voyeurism on the part of the listener, as if we are spying on Lambkin's domestic privacy, a vantage point made all the more 'strained' by its lack of visual context. This question of vantage point is important in our final interpretation of the silhouette, here particularly Lambkin's, placed in both 'inside' the work as performer (and listener) and 'outside' as composer. When listening to Lambkin's work, what and from where do we ourselves observe? Lambkin himself explains his work as "like looking at something through a window—there's something there that you can see but you can't completely put your hand on it".[53] Lambkin, however, is not the 'window' through which the environment (the lounge-room, the music, the car) is observed. Firstly, it is not clear what 'perspective' Lambkin adopts toward his environment. For example, it is felt that we as listeners are giving the sounds on the recording more attention than do the people on the recording, and, more importantly, Lambkin coheres the positions of performer/composer/listener. Secondly, his very *performativity* (i.e. the laughing and photo-taking in *The Currency of Dreams* or the whistling and turning off of the car music in *Amateur Doubles*) makes us acutely aware of his *interference* with the environment. Is it then the recording device itself that is the perspectival window?

Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, speaks of the photograph's "disorder" through its invisibility (i.e. its lack of distinction from its referent) and its "dispossess[ion]" of the subject.[54] In Lambkin's case, the window (or 'lens', if one prefers) is not transparent, and certainly not invisible. The crude audio quality of both pieces makes the recording device audible in itself (for example, tape hiss and crackle) but this also results in a blending with, and compromise of, the 'ambience' of the domestic situation (i.e. the sound of the room, the music playing etc.) and even blurs the more clear gestures by Graham (a laugh is "slackened to a textural slur", and various knocks and creaks become hard to discern in the distorted audio quality).[55] As listeners, we cannot view 'through' this window because of this lack of transparency, problematized further by the fact that this window is sonically *framed inside* the work itself.[56]

Lambkin's works, in their complex formal framing, can also be 'viewed' in multiple temporalities, and this is played out in the different perceptual layers in which we can conceive of the works. Firstly, the music captured *en scene* evokes an aesthetic of nostalgia, with *Amateur Doubles'* inclusion of generic, soundtrack-like, almost fetishized 1970's

progressive synthesizer music, and *Salmon Run's* histrionic interpretation of Wyschnegradsky's post-romantic microtonal work, which is shrouded in the warmth of vinyl crackle. Secondly, Lambkin's interaction with this 'diagetic' music discursively re-historicizes it, through its playful pairing with more contemporary technologies (digital camera clicks, the Honda Civic car engine etc.) and its contextual 'domestication' through a quasi-Fluxus conceptualism. Finally, the exposed nature of all the elements of the recorded situation (which are possibly discernible, if not quite decipherable) moves the listener's temporal perspective outside of the works' internal narratives into an awareness of them as aesthetic artefact. These categories are curiously similar to the institutional history of photography, as outlined by David Campany:

> Photography became art firstly as homage, then as imitation of the painterly and eventually became modern only within this new concept of art that was tacitly organised and regulated by reproduction. Since then photography has had two roles in modern art history: as an art itself, and as a mute, nameless mediator of all art … [t]hese aren't so much roles as poles of the general tension between the photograph's objectivity and its subjectivity.[57]

Levinas' earlier description of an inevitably opaque image has become further 'smeared' in Lambkin's overpainted self-portrait.

Ultimately, we are left to navigate the space between the shared spaces Lambkin traverses, which is where the shadow comes alive. If the recording device is that which sheds light upon the subject (albeit a somewhat diffuse light, more like "a prism" than the "lens of a camera")[58] and Lambkin the occluding object upon the 'surface' of his audible domestic environment, the framing or perspectival problem of the listener seems cinematic in its dimension. Robert Benayoun, in his essay "Remarks on Cinematic Oneirism", says the "screen … communicates a reality beyond its flat surface. But on the strength of the various artifices of lighting, of framing, of the very *choice* of its various elements, this reality can only be attained in its contingent aspect, one practically impossible to reproduce systematically."[59] Benayoun also reminds us that cinema is cinematic by virtue of its uncanniness—"unreal by nature, its only function should be to seek satisfaction in the unreal."[60]

Afterthoughts

This paper has put the concept of the silhouette to use in a new conceptual, perspectival and aesthetic positioning—in music—but the intention is not to limit its definition or role to any specific theoretical 'isms' of philosophy, psychology or aesthetics. Rather, the emergence of the musical silhouette is intended to elucidate a certain flexibility and ambiguity inherent in the concept of shadow. As the image of the silhouette is unpacked, it becomes clear that *perspective*, particularly that of the listener or interpreter/ performer, provides a catalyst for its emergence in certain contexts. This silhouette is, at times, defined by its very perspectival obscurity, which can result from a unique conscious positioning of the listening or interpreting subject, and/or a perceptual/conceptual obscuring within the musical work itself. The psychological, epistemological and even ontological positioning of the musical work and the interpreter are questioned through such investigation.

Notes

1 Francois J. Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago*, trans. Robin Mackay (S.l.: Urbanomic Media Ltd, 2016), 7.

2 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. J Benedict (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 117.

3 Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1990), 358.

4 Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003), 95.

5 Stephen Watt, "Introduction: The Theory of Forms (Books 5–7)," in Plato: *Republic* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), xiv—xvi.

6 Hagi Kenaan, "Tracing Shadows: Reflections on the Origins of Painting," in *Pictorial Languages and Their Meanings*, ed. C. Versar and G. Fishof (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Publishing, 2006), 20.

7 Stoichiță, Victor. *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 17.

8 Hagi Kenaan, "Photography and Its Shadow," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2015), 548.

9 Stoichiță, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 17 (emphasis mine).

10 Kenaan, "Photography and Its Shadow," 555.

11 Ibid., 570–571.

12 Karen Knorr, *The Pencil of Nature*, photograph print, 1994, http://www.research.ucreative.ac.uk/id/eprint/237.

13 Paul Virilio, *Traces Of Dance*, ed. Laurence Louppe (Paris: Dis Voir, 1994), 11.

14 Virilio, *Traces Of Dance*, 11., (emphasis mine).

15 Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Choregraphie, ou, L'art de décrire la dance, par caracteres, figures, et signes démonstratifs : avec lesquels on apprend facilement de soy-même toutes sortes de dances :*

ouvrage tres-utile aux maîtres à dancer & à toutes les personnes qui s'appliquent à la dance/Recueil de Danses (Paris : Chez l'auteur : et chez Michel Brunet, 1701). http://archive.org/details/choregraphieoula00feui.

16 Kunsu Shim, *Primary Piano* (Germany: UA Duisburg, 2000). Shim's piece, as a quasi-choreographic musical score, has a unique comparability with Feuillet's notation.

17 Michael Barber and Jochen Dreher, *The Interrelation of Phenomenology, Social Sciences and the Arts* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 235.

18 Barry Dainton, "Temporal Consciousness," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/consciousness-temporal/.

19 James Boros and Richard Toop, eds., *Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings* (Amsterdam: Routledge, 1995), 5. Ferneyhough asserts that notation is an explicit ideological vehicle, and its primary field of signification must always remain the respective "opposite" to the sound—itself another form of signification.

20 Henry Somers-Hall, "Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty: Aesthetics of Difference," in *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (UK: Continuum Press, 2009), 116.

21 Jonathan Cross et al., *Identity and Difference: Essays on Music, Language and Time* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 99.

22 Kristof Boucquet, "'Die Uninterpretierbarkeit der Musik': Adorno's Theory of Musical Reproduction," *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* 14, no. 1 (2009): 46.

23 Ibid.

24 "Ceal Floyer - ARTFORUM," accessed August 26, 2016, http://www.mutualart.com/OpenArticle/Ceal-Floyer/B7E1EE2E7176C8F3.

25 "Ceal Floyer - ARTFORUM."

26 Cate Rimmer, "The Sound I'm Looking For Part 2," *Charles H. Scott Gallery*, 2009, http://chscott.ecuad.ca/exhibitions/2008/the_sound_im_looking_for_p2.html.

27 I am here using the term 'negative space' as it is understood in visual art, meaning a notable shape around a subject or image that may itself form an artistic 'image'.

28 I am referring to the 'musical event' as an object in time (i.e. in performance or audition). Such events are indeed arguably 'measurable' (for example, in recording or notation), but the above statement merely proposes multiple methods, or perspectives, of its measurement.

29 Dainton, "Temporal Consciousness."

30 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, First Paperback Edition (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2001), 226.

31 Snyder, *Music and Memory*, 14.

32 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 86–87.

33 Snyder, *Music and Memory,* 74.

34 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 150.

35 Snyder, *Music and Memory*, 9.

36 John Sutton, "Memory," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2016, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/memory/.

37 "Paris—Sophie Calle: 'Dérobés' at Galerie Perrotin Through January 11th, 2014," accessed August 11, 2016, http://artobserved.com/2014/01/paris-sophie-calle-derobes-at-galerie-perrotin-through-january-11th-2014/.

38 Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Imprint* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1997), 181.; The 'imprint' is comparable to Peirce's index interpretant in his theory of signs.

39 Sutton, "Memory."

40 The title is also known as *(Hartford) Memory Space*, and each performance of the work is supposed to replace the bracketed place-name depending on the location of the 'memory'.

41 Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, *Chambers: Scores by Alvin Lucier* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 1980), 42.

42 Lucier and Simon, *Chambers*, 42.

43 Snyder does not discuss the application of his theories to listening outside of 'musical' contexts. Much might be said here about music vis-à-vis 'sound', a topic unaddressed in this paper.

44 Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand, 1st edition (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 135.

45 Ibid., 136.

46 Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 127.

47 Stoichiță, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 91.

48 Maarten van Heemskerck, *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin*, oil on canvas, 1532, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

49 Nick Cain, "Happy Accidents: Graham Lambkin," *The Wire: Adventures in Modern Music*, June 2009, 16.

50 Graham Lambkin, *Untitled Self Portrait*, acrylic and ink on plastic, 2004.

51 Nicholas Croggon, "Stroking Rough Minutes into Smooth Hours: A Short History of the Music of Graham Lambkin," *Discipline*, no. 1 (2011): 68.

52 Ibid.

53 Cain, "Happy Accidents: Graham Lambkin," 16.

54 Kasia Houlihan, "Annotation to Roland Barthes' 'Camera Lucida—Reflections on Photography,'" 2004, http://csmt.uchicago.edu/annotations/barthescamera.htm.

55 Cain, "Happy Accidents: Graham Lambkin," 16.

56 There is a suggestion here of the aesthetic form *mise en abyme*.

57 David Campany, "Museum and Medium: The Time of Karen Knorr's Imagery," *David Campany*, April 5, 2002, http://davidcampany.com/museum-and-medium-the-time-of-karen-knorrs-imagery/.

58 Philip Samartzis, "Captured Space," *Scan Journal of Media Arts Culture*, Sound.Music.Design, 6, no. 2 (September 2009), http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=137.

59 Hammond, *The Shadow and Its Shadow*, 107.

60 Ibid., 108.

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The Necessary Pain
of Moral Imagination:
Lonely Delegation in Richard
Wright's Haiku and
White Man, Listen!

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Abstract

Richard Wright gave a series of lectures in Europe from 1950 to 1956, collected in the following year in the volume, *White Man, Listen!* One dominant theme in all four essays is that expanding the moral imagination is centrally important in repairing our racism-benighted globe. What makes Wright's version of this claim unique is his forthright admission that expanding the moral imagination necessarily involves pain and suffering. The best place to hear Wright in regard to the necessary pain of expanding the moral imagination, I would argue, is his poetry collection, *This Other World: Projections in the Haiku Manner*. To wit, for Wright the necessary pain of expanding one's moral imagination is the loneliness that results from delegating to others—in the etymological sense of "deputizing or committing"—one's whiteness qua privilege or social capital. In conclusion, lonely delegation constitutes an imperative template from Wright regarding the painful expansion of our own moral imagination, in the service of social justice for economically oppressed communities of color across the globe.

One of the most important African-American novelists of the twentieth century, Richard Wright, gave a series of lectures in Europe from 1950 to 1956. The following year, these lectures—entitled "The Psychological Reactions of Oppressed People," "Tradition and Industrialization," "The Literature of the Negro in the United States" and "The Miracle of Nationalism in the Gold Coast"—were collected in the volume, *White Man, Listen!* One dominant theme in all four essays is that expanding the moral imagination is important in repairing our racism-benighted globe.[1] While this claim about the moral imagination's role in ethics and politics is admittedly identifiable in multiple other theorists (such as Edmund Burke and Richard Rorty), what makes Wright's contribution unique is his forthright admission that expanding the moral imagination necessarily involves pain and suffering.

The best place, I would suggest, to listen to Wright in regard to the necessary pain of expanding the moral imagination, is his poetry collection, *This Other World: Projections in the Haiku Manner*.[2] And what resounds most loudly in listening to this poetry is what I term "lonely delegation." What I mean by this phrase is that, for Wright, the necessary pain of expanding one's moral imagination is the loneliness that results from delegating to others—in the etymological sense of "deputizing or committing"—one's whiteness qua privilege or social capital. In the case of Wright himself, this lonely delegation takes the form of his painfully allocating what little privilege he has—compared to the disempowered communities of color about which he writes—to imaginary fictional delegates from those communities. And these delegates, in turn, trigger the painful divesting of the much greater privilege of Wright's white audience. In his haiku in particular (as opposed to his fiction), these imaginary delegates take the form of humans, nonhumans, and other ecological entities and forces.

To arrive at this new conception of lonely delegation, my article traces the following path. In my first section, I offer a brief consideration of *White Man, Listen!* with an emphasis on the moral imagination and its painful expansion. In my second section, I then perform a close reading of *This Other World*, revealing a dual theme in that poetry collection which I term "lonely delegation." In my third section, I provide supporting evidence for my readings in the secondary literature on Wright. And in my conclusion, I weave together the foregoing themes in order to flesh out how lonely delegation constitutes an imperative template from Wright regarding the painful expansion of our own moral imagination.

Before I begin, however, I wish to offer one piece of evidence that Wright viewed the expansion of the moral imagination as painful. In a speech to a predominantly white audience, included in *White Man, Listen!*, Wright claimed he could singlehandedly accomplish this imagination-broadening pain and suffering in just six months with the willing participation of any supportive white person. The key to this method and its result? To transform the white person into a black person:

> Indeed, I'd say to you here who listen to my words that I could convert any of you into Negroes, in a psychological sense, in a period of six months. That is, I could, by subjecting you to certain restrictions, hatreds, hostilities, etc., make you express yourselves as the American Negro formerly did.[3]

I. White Man Listening to Haiku-Mannered Projections

Wright diagnoses one of the chief causes of global racial injustice as the imaginative poverty of white Westerners. The latter, he notes, are "always expressing astonishment" at being named "aggressors" in Asia and Africa, which in Wright's view "reveals a singular poverty of imagination."[4] That is, according to Wright, most white people cannot imagine their shared worlds from the perspectives of black people inhabiting them because white people remain (on average) unable to concretely imagine black people as full human beings. By this Wright means something analogous to the surprise that homophobic straight people often exhibit when they first realize that queer people also like to just hold hands or that some of them enjoy watching American football. That is, like anti-black racist people, such homophobic people cannot imagine—in rich, full, concrete, complex, and specific ways—the humanity of those whom they fear. This is not, of course, to suggest that the struggle of black and LGBT+ people are strictly equivalent but only that there are relevant similarities (as, for example, President Obama suggested by categorizing the 1969 Stonewall Riots as part of a broader civil rights movement).[5]

Wright articulates the psychological basis of the contracted white imagination by offering the following characterization of the typical Westerner of his day:

> The emotionally thin-skinned cannot imagine, even in the middle of our twentieth century, a world without external

emotional props to keep them buttressed to a stance of constant meaning and justification, a world filled with overpowering mother and father and child images to anchor them in emotional security, to keep a sense of the warm, intimate, sustaining influence of the family alive.[6]

Note the causal implication Wright is making here. To wit, it takes "thick skin," psychological toughness—or more precisely resilience—for the materially privileged to be able (perhaps in terms of courage) to imagine beyond the boundaries of our own comfort zones.

For Wright, what is even worse than this unconscious unimaginative torpor in Westerners is our colonizers' explicit and conscious exportation of said torpor to the Afro-Asian colonized. "The imperialist," Wright claims, "wanted the natives to sleep on in their beautiful poetic dreams so that the ruling of them could be more easily done."[7] In other words, those in Wright's "West," who unintentionally imagine poorly from fear, have compounded that vice by trying to sustain imaginative poverty in his "East." This colonial project has not been completely successful according to Wright, however, and has even produced the seeds of its own destruction.

Wright's foremost example of the latter phenomenon is the founder and first president of Ghana (formerly "The Gold Coast"), Kwame Nkrumah. Wright offers a complex genealogy of the rise to power of Nkrumah and others like him. The West, according to Wright, when trying to educate an Eastern elite to be micromanagers of their indigenous societies, made one crucial mistake. Westerners "had no thought of how those Westernized Asians and Africans would fare when cast, like fishes out of water, back into their poetic cultures."[8] In short, Westerners created a new kind of people whom Wright characterizes as hybrid beings. These new people, including Nkrumah, found themselves unmoored from their origins, lost in their own homes, and thus "had to sink or swim with no guides, no counsel."[9]

As the case of Nkrumah and his self-transformative education already suggests, the remedy for this contractedness of white Western imaginations begins with imagining ourselves more broadly. The "West must accept its responsibility for colonization and its effects," Wright claims, in order to "create the means by which white men can liberate themselves from their fears."[10] To anticipate Wright's elaboration of this point below, those who are white must imagine themselves differently, namely as those responsible for global injustice against worlds of color, in order—among other things—to heal the white people's minds (including, ironically, their

imaginations). In other words, white people must grow their imaginations bigger than their current identities—painful though it be to have their boundaries stretched, as Wright suggests in the quote above—in order to occupy psyches at harmony with themselves and with their worlds.

Wright's central example of one such broadly imaginative white Westerner is Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist and sociologist. Myrdal is most famous in the U.S. for his landmark study of race relations, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*, which the Supreme Court cited in their *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision ending formal segregation in the public schools. In a section of *White Man, Listen!* entitled "Acting," in the context of discussing how black people have "an almost unconscious tendency to hide their deepest reactions from those who they fear would penalize them if they suspected what they felt," Wright notes that in the U.S. "this acting is a perfected system; it is almost impossible for the white man to determine just what a Negro is really feeling, unless that white man, like a Gunnar Myrdal, is gifted with a superb imagination."[11] Note the parallelism here: white outsiders must use *imaginative* perception to see through the *imaginative* acting performance of black insiders. Moreover, in neither case does this imaginative power entail pure fiction or artistic creation. In the case of Myrdal, his imagination is part of his scientific creativity, and for black people under anti-black racism, their imaginations consist of stylized subterfuges based on their actual feelings.

The cost of failing to do this painful work of imaginative expansion, according to Wright, is the possibility that the very concept of truth as such will disappear from the world, since for him the imagination is a necessary condition for truth. "To imagine that straight communication is no longer possible is to declare," Wright claims, "that the world we seek to defend is no longer worth defending, that the battle for human freedom is already lost." Put differently, Wright views the inability to imagine truth as hastening truth's exodus from our shared world. In order to resist this loss, Wright himself imagines the following: that "man, when he has the chance to speak and act without fear, still wishes to be a man, this is, he harbors the dream of being a free and creative agent." The reason that the stakes of these two different kinds of imagining are so high is that, according to Wright, "there is no such thing as objectivity". Instead, he continues, "objectivity is a fabricated concept, a synthetic intellectual construction."[12] In other words, since there is no independent bedrock or bulwark for our constructions, if we imagine ourselves unfree we will become so.

In pursuit of this freedom through imagining truth, Wright constructs a kind of spectrum or continuum of imaginativeness extending from imaginative poverty to imaginative richness. "Let us *imagine* an abstract line," Wright begins, "and at one end of the line let us *imagine* a simple, organic culture—call it Catholic, feudal, religious, tribal, or what you will."[13] This, then, is the locus of the "poetic cultures" that Wright describes in the second essay, the cultures such as the one from which Nkrumah rose to power. "At the opposite end of the line, let us *imagine* another culture," Wright continues, "such as the one in which we live"[14]. With this in imaginary line in place, Wright graphs a number of the most important Africana poets along it, proceeding historically from (his) "simple" to "complex." Although this schema is deeply problematic, my point in drawing attention to it is that Wright explicitly presents it as an imaginary construct. In that light, and in conjunction with my prior observation (from *White Man, Listen!*'s first essay) that Wright rejects any notion of objectivity in general, a more sophisticated and laudable image appears. To wit, since our world for Wright is merely a collective imagining, it will be a better one to the degree that we imagine more broadly, which in turn requires the kind of pain and suffering that mark the lives of creative figures such as Nkrumah, Hughes, and Claude McKay.[15]

It is in the context of this imaginative spectrum of imagination that Wright offers the aforementioned hypothetical scenario of transforming the white person into a black person:

> Indeed, I'd say to you here who listen to my words that I could convert any of you into Negroes, in a psychological sense, in a period of six months. That is, I could, by subjecting you to certain restrictions, hatreds, hostilities, etc., make you express yourselves as the American Negro formerly did.[16]

Perhaps even more surprisingly, I would argue that this is not a hypothetical for Wright. Instead, it is a result that he is exhorting his white audience to help him co-create. That is, Wright is suggesting that they freely imagine him as actually performing this transformation on them as white people. To do so amounts to a process—less painful than black people's actual experiences of discrimination and oppression but painful nonetheless—in which along with Wright they expand their moral imagination by doing what Myrdal did and what Faulkner denied his ability to do: try to imagine themselves as (psychologically undergoing the sufferings of) black people. To be clear, by "imagining themselves as black people" here, I mean imagining themselves

as subject to the kinds of "certain restrictions, hatreds, and hostilities" that Wright describes in the quote above.

That this is actually Wright's intention and program is clear from his aforementioned account of Nkrumah. "To understand how they saw life," Wrights writes of leaders like Nkrumah, "you must open your minds and imagination."[17] A few pages later, Wright reiterates this strategy. "What makes other men seem outlandish to us," he complains, "is our lack of imagination."[18] But with their imaginations enriched, white people could be ready to carry out the mission that Wright has delegated to them. The "greatest aid that any white Westerner can give Africa," he explains, "is by becoming a missionary right in the heart of the Western world, explaining to his own people what they have done to Africa."[19] Although proselytizing is of course a problematic concept, particularly in some of its historical and contemporary religious contexts, I would argue that Wright's use of the term is strategic, as a creative redirecting of white Westerner's religious missionary zeal into a secular cause in "this other world" of the black West. In short, white people must utilize their expanded moral imaginations to empower other white people to make their own, analogous expansion of moral imagination. To see how this crucial Wright-inspired mission might be accomplished, I now turn to Wright's poems.

II. Lonely Delegation in This Other World

The most important characteristic of Wright's haiku, compared to other poets working in this genre, is that they are filled with political rhetoric and the subjectivity of the speaker of the poem. This is already evident in the first poem as follows:

> I am nobody:
> A red sinking autumn
> Took my name away.[20]

One could interpret this poem as announcing Wright's asymptotic goal for the entire collection, namely to disappear into the perfect loneliness—symbolized by namelessness—that results from having delegated the entirety of one's privilege to others. In other words, this first poem telescopes the entire volume, showing us the final result. In his fiction, this amounts to the point at which Richard Wright as author and person loses his identity vis-à-vis the reading public by having it absorbed into his

archetype—protagonists such as "Bigger" and "Black Boy." In short, in his fiction, Wright becomes just another anonymous young African-American male, while in these poems, he becomes the poems' ever-shifting speaker.

In support of my politicized reading, political rhetoric comes to the fore early in the collection—a point that Wright scholar Anthony Brink also observes. In the second poem, the speaker describes giving an "order" to the sea, followed immediately by poem 3's confident act of giving directions to the very cosmos, poem 4's dual orders to "Sweep away the clouds" and "Give this sea a name!", and poem 5's giving "permission" for the very falling of the rain. I would argue that there is an intimate connection between (a) these latter moments of political rhetoric and (b) the first poem's aforementioned treatment of identity theft. I write "theft" here because, as Brink observes below, the speaker's name is forcefully "taken" away, as opposed to something like the name's evanescing in a kind of nirvana. More specifically, the silver lining of the speaker's identity being robbed is that it empowers her/him to command the cosmos. This power, though, is not without responsibility—as revealed in poem 8 in the speaker's plea for forgiveness from a cat for "this spring rain."

As numerous scholars have rightly insisted, this tone of power, permission, etc., is foreign to classical haiku, which approach the natural world in a detached, observing, and declarative mode—as contrasted with Wright's dominant mode, which is the imperative.[21] The question arises, therefore, as to why Wright made this departure. What, in other words, does the speaker desire to accomplish with such imaginatively-assumed power? The first hint of an answer can be found in a later poem which, like poem 1, is frequently cited by critics.

> Burning autumn leaves,
> I yearn to make the bonfire
> Bigger and bigger.[22]

The speaker's acquired power is thus directed toward violence and destruction; perhaps connected in some way, given the dual repetition of "bigger" in the third line, to the famous protagonist of *Native Son*, "Bigger Thomas." Contra those interpreters who see these poems as Wright's abandonment of racism in favor of apolitical transcendence, sparks remain of Wright's burning (albeit in quick conflagrations of seventeen syllables).

The next logical question, then, is "Why does the speaker desire to use this power for violence and destruction?" The answer emerges roughly 100 poems into the collection, which marks a thematic shift to the ills and injustices of the community—insofar as anger is a common reaction to suffering especially on the part of men socialized in patriarchal societies. Initially, the problems are not obviously political. If one reconsiders these images in the context of black communities historically and contemporaneous with Wright, it becomes even clearer that anger of the speaker of the poems is justified. [23] These poems of suffering and injustice begin with a "consumptive man," "A drunken girl vomiting," and a "blindman."[24] This pattern is also duplicated with images from nature, beginning with "one blue glass eye," a sunflower that "looks blankly," and "other eyes" that "can see no more."[25] Continuing this pattern in natural images, after blindness comes the emptiness of death. After "That road is empty," one encounters a "dead girl" under a spring pond, a buzzard "not flapping its wings," a "wounded sparrow," icy hail that "lie[s] still" on the ground, a "dead man's room," "tombstones," "death," and "a corpse in the coffin."[26] The point here is that there is a serial progression in this section of increasing human suffering which culminates in death.

As this section continues, politics comes closer to the surface by way of the same recurring rhetoric of blackness and whiteness that Wright uses to such powerful effect in his prose writings. This new pattern begins in poem 149 with: "black railroad tracks" that "bring down" white snow followed by a scarecrow "gobbling down slabs of meat"; trees that have been rendered black from "distant hills [and] / Have been bought by" the white clouds; and the "stance" of a hitchhiker that "nobody trusts."[27] Again, "With indignation / A little girl spanks her doll."[28] And finally, from poem 172:

> The scarecrow's old hat
> Was flung by the winter wind
> Into a graveyard.

In each case, an entity that is literally black—or that occupies a position more typical of black than white people in Wright's era—is depicted as being unjustly treated by something that is literally white or that occupies a more typical white position.

With the racial political dimension of the speakers' anger coming closer to the surface, Wright's next section features a chorus of several dozen reactions to these symbols of racist violence. The dominant strain in these reactions is sadness along with what might be termed a restless

preparation for revolt. Examples include: "her sad face / in its last autumn"; "long points of icicles…sharpening the wind"; "Little boys tossing / Stones at a guilty scarecrow"; blacksmiths who "hot and hard" pound "to change this cold wind" and beat "the silver moon thin"; and a crow who "opens its sharp beak / And creates a sky."[29] Here the literal or figurative black figure either endures bravely the suffering or strikes back against the white injustice.

To unite these variations of melancholy revolt, Wright introduces two central themes in the form of mantras repeated throughout the collection. The first I wish to discuss is "As my delegate." By invoking the human subject and explicitly situating the natural scene in terms of that subjectivity, this mantra would be entirely out of place in a traditional haiku. The reason is that, as an explicitly Zen Buddhist literary form, the goal of a haiku is for the poet to remove her subjectivity entirely from the composition, becoming an empty container for the natural world to inhabit and manifest itself. The "As my delegate" mantra is thus a good example of the kind of content that causes some interpreters to argue that these poems are not properly classified as haiku at all despite the poems' superficial structural similarities with haiku.[30]

The first appearance of this first mantra is in poem 205, whose delegate is the "first ant of spring." Following it are the delegates which are: the "spring wind" with "its fingers / In a young girl's hair"; the shadow that, says the speaker, "imitates me"; and a scarecrow that "looks pensively / Into spring moonlight."[31] Thus, the speakers of these poems delegate primarily quasi-persons (ants, shadows, and scarecrows) to experience the spring, touch the spring—like hair of a youth, act like the speaker, and even begin to think, respectively. Analogies can easily be found in Wright's fiction, as for example when *Native Son*'s protagonist "Bigger Thomas"—the delegate of Wright himself—experiences youth, reaches out awkwardly to various women, and acts out in ways reminiscent of Wright's own worst youthful behavior.[32]

The second and more prevalent of these two themes or mantras is the exclamation "How lonely it is!" Like "as my delegate," this "loneliness" mantra is also highly unusual for the haiku form. In fact, it is deeply inappropriate from an orthodox perspective, as it focuses on the speaker and directly states the speaker's feelings. What I wish to suggest is that this loneliness constitutes Wright's poetic phenomenology of delegating to one's deputized others whatever privilege one possesses in our anti-black

racist global society—which privilege is coded as "whiteness." The phrase appears eleven times in total, and the things it describes as lonely include a "winter world full of rain," a "valley village" "in the grip of moonlight," and a "grate fire" which, after the speaker's "guests have now gone," now "burns to white ashes."[33]

One can already see Wright accomplishing this delegation in his fiction and personal life; so this work in the poetry collection is merely one more incarnation of his phenomenological performance. In support of this interpretation, the OED traces the etymology of "delegate" from the Latin *lēgāre*, which means "to send with a commission, depute, commit, etc." This etymology is also manifest in the following three (of its four) definitions for "delegate": (1) to send or commission (a person) as a deputy or representative, with power to transact business for another; to depute or appoint to act; (3) "To assign, deliver"; and (4) "To assign (one who is debtor to oneself) to a creditor as debtor in one's place."[34]

Lingering with the first of these definitions: "depute" derives from the Latin *dēputāre*, meaning "to consider as, destine, allot," from the root *putare*, meaning "to think, count, consider." From definition (1), therefore, one could understand Wright's poems' speakers as deputizing various beings in the world like a sheriff who has such a large job to do that s/he must deputize others to help her/him carry it out. Moreover, definition (3) could be applied to the committing of one's letters to the postal carriers as delegates representing oneself as deliverers to the letters' final destination. This also resonates with Wright's own brief career with the U.S. Post Office, which Wright scholar Arnold Rampersad notes was the most common middle-class career for African-American Chicagoans in Wright's era, and dramatized in Wright's posthumously-published novel, *Lawd Today!*.[35] Finally on this point, definition (4) could be understood in terms of the people alive today who are in a sense stand-ins for Wright: namely those to whom Wright as author has bequeathed (since he was near death when he wrote these poems) the credit for the debts owed to him by his and our racist society.

If one telescopes these elaborations on the three definitions of "delegate" from the OED, the result is the triple figure of the deputy-postal carrier-replacement debtor. And this in turn implies that the first mantra's "loneliness" could be understood as an amalgamation of the kinds of loneliness customary for sheriffs, senders, and original debtors. That is, the speaker in one of Wright's poems—and at a meta-level, perhaps Wright

himself—is like a sheriff who has sent away his power, giving up his right to be compensated for what his community owes him, by deputizing an indefinitely large force of deputies.

Further support for this interpretation can be found in Wright's striking line from *12 Million Black Voices:* "The law is white." [36] In this way, the speaker becomes like a paradigmatic white sheriff (such as John Wayne, Andy Griffith, or the Lone Ranger), increasingly replaced, due in part to increasing urbanization, by predominantly multiracial police forces especially in large cities. Just as predominantly white sheriffs have historically been forced into the lonely position of delegating their white authoritative political privilege to non-white police officers, so the speakers of Wright's poems, along with Wright himself, endure the loneliness of delegating their authoritative political privilege to the disempowered subjects of the poems including the non-human beings who constitute a majority of the earth's population. The crucial differences, however, are that Wright performs this delegating freely and does so even though he possessed far less privilege to begin with than white sheriffs in the U.S. For this reason, the loneliness for Wright resulting from the delegation of that limited privilege (vis-à-vis average people of color) cannot have failed to be exponentially more intense. I will now consider, as supporting evidence for my interpretation of Wright, the work of several other scholars who preceded me in accepting his lonely delegation.

III. Listening to White People Listening

Sadly, the number of such deputies in my own home discipline of philosophy so far is vanishingly small. As for its sister-discipline of English, though there is considerable secondary scholarship on Wright (with over 1,400 entries in the MLA International Bibliography alone, and 483 on *Native Son*) only three publications are dedicated to *White Man, Listen!*. Even an anthology that considers two of the other three books collected in Wright's collection of four (entitled *Three Books from Exile*) not only leaves out *White Man, Listen!*, but also includes Wright's book *Pagan Spain* (which was written in the same year, 1957, as *White Man, Listen!*). In contrast to this limited discussion of *White Man, Listen!*, Wright's haiku have recently enjoyed some scholarly attention, most notably a 2011 anthology entitled *The Other World of Richard Wright*.

Beginning with the aforementioned three exceptions to the MLA neglect of *White Man, Listen!*, all three are from authors living at the edge of white European cultural empires (specifically two from South Africa and one from Turkey). Of these three scholarly studies, one focuses exclusively on South African theater and does not intersect with my concerns here. A second study, however, E. Lâle Demirtürk's "Mapping the Interstitial Spaces of 'Black' and 'Western': Richard Wright's *White Man, Listen!*" is relevant to my concerns in that it offers a summary of the latter book.[37]

Early on in her article, Demirtürk cites the respected Wright scholar and biographer Virginia Whatley Smith to the effect that *White Man, Listen!*'s collection of lectures-turned-essays "had a positive reception by the black American press, but was largely ignored or reproached by the white 'establishment'."[38] Demirtürk asserts that Wright in that text "uses his agency to carve out an interstitial space [in Homi Bhabha's sense] within a predominantly Western social order based on the ideology of whiteness."[39] As a result, for Demirtürk, Wright "deconstructs the imperial configurations of selfhood" in general and also "develops a critical perspective based on the inner ambivalences of his hybrid identity" for himself in particular.[40] Demirtürk acknowledges that this process and its two stated results are problematic. To wit, Wright in her view "displays a typically Western attitude toward the colonized African people"—and worse—"almost interiorizes the racial conceptions of the white spectator."[41] Nevertheless, Demirtürk still affirms how Wright, in her words, "names his location as 'black Western intellectual' and politicizes that very space." Also admirable in Wright, for Demirtürk, is his "questioning where his discursive experiences" align with his surrounding.[42] In other words, though burdened by his own prejudices, he at least allows his environment the opportunity to undermine them.

The last of the three MLA studies on *White Man, Listen!*, by Mikko Tuhkanen, situates Wright's text in the context of Tuhkanen's larger project on queer strategies in Wright's oeuvre.[43] More specifically, this article emphasizes the scene during which Wright reveals to a white English intellectual, at lunch with a black West Indian social scientist, the ultimate secret of people of color to the white English intellectual—namely, that there is no secret—thus infuriating the West Indian scientist. Tuhkanen's article is structured around the following question he asks of this Wright-narrated episode: what exactly is going on in the distinct rhetorical strategies of Wright, the West Indian scientist, and the white Englishman, respectively?

Tuhkanen's initial interpretation is that Wright unilaterally critiques deception and subterfuge (which Tuhkanen terms "queerness") on the grounds that deception/subterfuge is ultimately "self-defeating and emasculating"; and that Wright instead favors open and honest "straight talk"—which Tuhkanen terms "straightness."[44] Tuhkanen then concedes, however, that Wright himself engages in queer/subversive practices especially in regard to the female protagonists in his fiction—such as "Aunt Sue" from his short story "Bright and Morning Star." According to Tuhkanen, Wright's justification for this gendered exception to his own norm of "straight talk" is that he views women as able to somehow "queer and pass without losing themselves in their labyrinthine strategies"—while for men the danger is that, in Tuhkanen's words, "the game takes control of the player."[45]

Tuhkanen's essay later takes an abrupt turn, however, and in a way revealing that he, too, is playing the role of queer trickster. Perhaps, he argues, Wright is only pretending (queerly) to advocate straight talk. In this way, Tuhkanen takes his turn at the age-old and notoriously difficult if not impossible game of the ironic interpretation of irony. Tuhkanen finds evidence for this elsewhere in *White Man, Listen!*, for example in Wright's claim that queer tactics have in fact facilitated revolutionary violence, and even "eventually bring about the downfall of the oppressor."[46] What this boils down to, for Tuhkanen, is that Wright's feigned naïve call for straight talk is actually a kind of queer performance in itself. That is, straight talk from the oppressed, in the historical context of global racism, constitutes what Tuhkanen terms a new kind of queering. In short, Wright's new queering is an improvisational break from out of the racist past and into a creative new future.

Turning to the secondary literature on Wright's haiku, I begin with the two most recent contributions. First is Dean Anthony Brink's article, "Richard Wright's Search for a Counter-hegemonic Genre: The Anamorphic and Matrixial Potential of Haiku," which anticipates my own combinatorial investigation by invoking *White Man, Listen!* as well.[47] Beginning with the issue of form, Brink argues that "critics have projected back on Wright the aesthetic values popular in haiku today" onto "a time when haiku was still an exotic exception to English literary practices, while Wright himself projected *forward* through haiku a new approach to the form itself." Thus, while Wright "has been treated as a follower who went astray," he should instead be read as "an innovator who has been unjustly ignored for decades."[48]

In what Brink presents as support for the latter contention, he points out that Wright "tested and retested the overall composition of sequences of haiku as well as revised individual haiku before settling on his final manuscript."[49] Most importantly, in Brink's view, the final version of Wright's poetry collection "was not published according to Wright's intentions, with the basic order of the haiku misinterpreted by the editors of the book" forty years later, in 1998.[50] In fact, Wright even "painstakingly arranged his penultimate draft of the final manuscript on cardboard sheets, cutting typed haiku intro strips pasted into place and then amended with new insertions and arrows drawn to indicate arrangement."[51] Brink's point appears to be that the extent of Wright's revising indicates that his authorial vision for the haiku collection was the product of thoughtful artistic deliberation—as opposed to careless experimentation with an unfamiliar form—while any infelicity is due to editorial error.

The final and most important claim in Brink's complex analysis is that Wright creates a new organizational matrix of anamorphic images in his haiku. By "anamorphic images," Brink means something like distorted projections of higher quality, which he later parses as Du Bois' "double consciousness." More precisely, Wright's haiku "often present allegories of social tensions transposed into personified snapshots of nature," which Brink condenses into the phrase "political ecology."[52] Brink sees Wright as having created thematic motifs from the politics of anti-racist social justice and deployed these anti-racist motifs in the form of images and concepts which are normally organized according to nature and its seasons. For example, Brink observes that the word, concept, or image of "winter" is for Wright "a symbol of hegemonic control by whites throughout the haiku," and that in this function "winter" thereby joins other, related words (such as "snow") to help constitute "Wright's extensive repetitions of similar images and variations of nearly identical haiku."[53] That is, through the repetition, across multiple haiku, of words such as "winter" and "snow," Wright "establish[es] an association between anything white and oppressive hegemonic forces."[54]

Brink names this strategy after the original subtitle of Wright's poetry collection "Projections in the Haiku Manner." Brink traces the concept of projection back to Sartre's conception thereof, which was ultimately drawn from Nietzsche. While Nietzsche's relationship to liberational politics remains a point of considerable controversy, it is clear that at least some Marxian thinkers utilize his work for liberating purposes.[55] On Brink's reading, "projection" in Nietzsche, Sartre, and Wright "can be

understood as an active production in response to the passive reflection of social circumstance."[56] In line with the political commitments of both Sartre and Wright, Brink sees Wright's poems as Marxist. However, rather than being "programmatically or propagandistically Marxist," Brink claims they are "spontaneously Marxist."[57] Brink then elaborates on this distinction as follows: "It is certainly not activist poetry in a narrow sense, since it anamorphically allows readers who think of haiku as nature poetry to ignore the conflicts Wright is addressing."[58] Brink appears to believe that the Marxism of Wright's haiku is too subtle to function as effective Marxist propaganda—as evidenced by the near-consensus in Wright scholarship that the haiku are apolitical.

The second more recent MLA study is Sandy Alexandre's "Culmination in Miniature: Late Style and the Essence of Richard Wright's Haiku."[59] Like Brink, Alexandre's orientation is broadly Marxist, but in her case it is a Marxism of Adorno and the Frankfurt School rather than Brink's Marxism of Sartre and existentialism. Alexandre argues that Wright's haiku are paradigmatic of Adorno's concept of "late style," according to which an author, when near death, can become sufficiently liberated to imagine in her work an imminent utopia: in Alexandre's words a "last-ditch fantasy."[60] In Wright's case, for Alexandre, this utopian fantasy takes the form of a vision of "universal humanism" and "ecological holism."[61] It is here that *White Man, Listen!* becomes relevant, specifically in its third essay, "The Literature of the Negro in the United States." There, as Alexandre observes, Wright prophesies that, if black writing takes "a sharp turn toward strictly racial themes," then racism remains entrenched; whereas if black "expression broadens," then "a human attitude prevails in America toward" black people.[62] For Alexandre, this is Wright's "dream," in a "subjunctive" mode, of "African-American literature's obsolescence."[63]

Zooming in on Wright's haiku as the unique new medium of his late work, Alexandre sees an example of how imminent death "propels the dying artist"—and following Adorno, she means all artists here—"into a different world, thereby granting him a more farsighted perspective than, say, his hale contemporaries who may have been rendered imaginatively lax" by anticipating another day to live. In short, for Alexandre, Wright creates these late haiku "by 'passing'—in both senses of the term": (1) "into another world through death" and (2) "as a writer of what would seem on the face of it to be African-American literature."[64]

In Alexandre's discussion of the secondary literature on Wright's haiku, specifically the aforementioned anthology *Richard Wright's Other World*, she agrees with several of the contributing authors that Wright's haiku constitute "therapy" for him. But Alexandre's unique reason for thinking this is that "he used this poetic form to imagine the implications of Jim Crow's abolishment for fearless African American artists such as himself."[65] Thus, Alexandre, like Brink, finds a politicized imagination at the center of Wright's haiku. "His haiku make world citizens out of his readers," she writes. That is, in a time when most American readers were unfamiliar with haiku (and Japanese literature generally), Wright expanded their literary horizons. "In the Andersonian vein of 'imagined communities,' Wright imagines community through a literary form."[66]

But Alexandre goes astray, in my view, when she describes the speaker of Wright's haiku in the following way: "Wright imagines an unidentified observer whose main concerns center on the exterior world outside of himself."[67] On the contrary, I would observe that Wright (a) often names the observer in the poems; (b) that observer is in some cases explicitly non-human; (c) it is not clear that the observer is not (in at least some cases) Wright himself; and (d) for a socially-conscious thinker such as Wright, everyone's concerns lie in the external world (whether we realize it or not). This first arguable misstep on Alexandre's part precedes a much more serious one, namely her unsubstantiated claim that in these poems Wright strips from the act of seeing "all its ideological bases, including race."[68] Counterexamples in the poems include Wright's continuing obsession with the black/white binary, in a variety of contexts.

To close my discussion of Alexandre's essay on a more affirming note, she anticipates my analysis of Wright's haiku in claiming that he "bequeaths himself to (ecological) things."[69] I disagree with her subsequent claim, though, namely that these ecological things are "more important than his mere mortal self" either subjectively or objectively. Thus, what Alexandre renders as Wright's knowing "how to make himself small—to become self-effacing," I would call, instead, his becoming-larger—expanding his moral imagination to the point that it encompasses even the most distant cosmic minutiae.[70] I agree with Alexandre, though, that Wright's becoming in this area constitutes "a lesson for the living to adopt."[71]

Turning to the anthology *The Other World of Richard Wright*, I will focus on just the most relevant chapter. Richard Iadonisi claims that "Wright radically reinvents the haiku form, making of it a revolutionary

poetry that offers and then savagely undercuts the possibility of Zen oneness."[72] One source of evidence for Iadonisi's thesis is that Wright wrote the haiku contemporaneously with other of his late works, all of which are explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonialist (including *White Man, Listen!*). And whereas the first three chapters in the anthology see peaceful union with nature in Wright's poems, Iadonisi instead sees "disjunction between self and nature."[73] In support of his reading, Iadonisi offers close and insightful readings of individual poems, including poem 5:

> I give permission
> For this slow spring rain to soak
> The violet beds.

This rhetoric of "giving," Iadonisi notes (like the rhetoric of "ordering" and "granting" from poems 2 and 14, respectively), suggests that the poems' "speaker seems more at odds than at ease with his surroundings as he is 'giving' something that he does not really own to begin with."[74] Iadonisi then connects this speaker/surroundings disjunction to J. L. Austin's concept of "speech acts," specifically by inventing a new category of speech acts not present in Austin's own classification. Iadonisi describes the poems' speech acts as "mock gestures" that suggest—"simply yet elegantly"—to Wright's "predominantly white audience" that "control is illusory."[75]

A second source of evidence lies in Iadonisi's reinterpretations of prior, apolitical interpretations of specific haiku, revealing layers invisible without a political lens. Examples of said revelations include (a) the exploitation suggested in poem 459's oft-quoted idea of the speaker paying rent for the moonlight and lice in his room, (b) the aesthetic self-loathing of black people in poem 455's green cockleburs in a boy's wooly hair, and (c) the implication of a "dominant 'snow-white' society" in poem 609's black sweepers' being "absorbed by flakes."[76]

The final source of evidence in Iadonisi's reading is found at a meta-level, in an anchoring of Iadonisi's antagonistic approach in Wright's own thought. To begin, and to return to *White Man, Listen!*, Iadonisi quotes Wright as follows: "The imperialistic influence" of the West on the East "is, in large part, discursive, as the linguistic designation 'savage' implies."[77] In this context, Iadonisi then quotes Abdul R. JanMohammed to the effect that Wright uses his poems to "reflect the negation back at the hegemony."[78] In short, Iadonisi concludes, "like Bigger's dreamed-of-airplane" in *Native Son*, "Wright loads his haiku with linguistic 'bombs' that he drops to remind his readers of social inequalities."[79] Though Bigger's airplane dream

represented a nondestructive alternative to the destructive actuality of his life, and thus clashes with Iadonisi's destructive image of bombs, they share the imagination of a more socially just future.

IV. Conclusion: Deputizing the Lonely Delegation of White Privilege

Two themes resound from the secondary literature in the previous section. First, Wright's authorial strategies in *White Man Listen!* and *This Other World* are complex and multilayered, including irony and queering, which complicate the genres deployed in those texts. And second, as a result of these strategic complications, his writing in even as traditionally anti-political a genre as haiku manifests a broadly Marxian critique and advocacy for racial justice. Against this background, one can more easily see how *This Other World* and *White Man, Listen!* might be meaningfully connected, namely by recognizing the former's theme of lonely delegation as precisely the point of the latter text. That is, the titular "Listen!" is not, as some critics have argued, primarily a plea or a wish. It is the Austinian speech act of deputizing. With this act, Wright is appointing his intended audience of white readers as his deputies. He is altruistically discharging his power to white people so that they might extend past his death his life's work—part of which was to expand the moral imagination of white communities within larger communities the world over.

Admittedly, the idea of hierarchy per se, as implied by the relationship between sheriffs and deputies, is potentially problematic with regard to promoting the kind of democratic freedom associated with racial justice. It is worth noting, however, that the specific hierarchy of deputizing does not involve exploitation or coercion, insofar as the potential deputy is not forced to exercise the conferred power. Instead, the deputy is merely required, should s/he choose to exert that power, to exert it under the guiding authority of the sheriff. In other words, the sheriff is merely offering to outsource her power to the deputy, who has the option to refuse to exercise that power, on the condition that s/he will not exert it independently of her oversight. In the case of racial justice, it seems clear that this is a beneficial rather than unjust arrangement. Consider the contrast case, in which white people attempt to promote racial justice by channeling the perspective of people of color without accepting the guidance of, and responsibility to, those people of color. That arrangement is both problematic, and unfortunately common.

The power of Wright's poems from this perspective is that their lonely delegations makes vivid the painful cost of this crucial work, the unavoidable pain that Wright chose to endure, and the comparatively miniscule amount of pain that white people should choose to endure if they choose to accept this crucial deputizing. I would urge my fellow white people to be Wright's peacemakers, the keepers of the peace in majority-white communities, in the noble spirit of peacemaking to which actual law enforcement has tragically and unjustly failed to rise for a majority of African-Americans. And the white people from those communities must pay the political debt which white people globally owe, in truth, to Wright himself.

Though this link between Wright's texts and global racial justice might seem a reach, I would ask the reader to recall Wright's aforementioned claim about white Westerners becoming "missionaries" to the West. Initially addressed to one live audience of predominantly white Europeans, the speech's publication in *White Man, Listen!* enabled it to reach his white audience worldwide. Clearly, and especially in terms of political economics, the West continues to exert a massive influence on racial injustice, and there is much that Westerners could do to help empower racial justice instead.

I now conclude with poem 382, exhorting my white readers to join me in accepting Wright's deputizing. Please, help us—black, white, and beyond—to extend his lonely delegating sacrifice, by performing further lonely delegations of your own privilege, as the present essay has attempted to do with that of its author, in the pursuit of global racial justice.

> A valley village
> Lies in the grip of moonlight:
> How lonely it is.

Notes

1 Richard Wright, Black Power: *Three Books from Exile: Black Power; The Color Curtain; and White Man, Listen!* (New York: Harper, 2008).

2 Richard Wright, Haiku: *The Last Poems of an American Icon* (New York: Arcade, 2012).

3 Wright 2008, 772.

4 Ibid 660.

5 This contractedness of the imagination is not limited to white Westerners, according to Wright. He describes the irony of how Gandhi, by trying to resist Britain's attempted industrialization of India, thereby set that industrialization in motion. In this effort, according to Wright, "Gandhi was dealing with processes that far outstripped his own imagination" (Wright 2008, 691).

6 Wright 2008, 710.

7 Ibid 718.

8 Ibid 719.

9 Ibid 719.

10 Ibid 653.

11 Ibid 670, 671.

12 Ibid 703.

13 Ibid 734, emphasis added.

14 Ibid 734, emphasis added.

15 Ibid 766, 763.

16 Ibid 772.

17 Ibid 787.

18 Ibid 795.

19 Ibid 809.

20 Wright 2012, poem 1.

21 This point is made by numerous contributors to *The Other World of Richard Wright: Perspectives on His Haiku*, ed. Jianqing Zheng (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011).

22 Wright 2012, poem 49.

23 My claim that the speaker's anger is justified might appear counterintuitive given my above invocation of Nietzsche, since he is often interpreted as a relativist. I, however, interpret Nietzsche as a perspectivalist, the relevant difference from a relativist being an emphasis on perspectives rather than perceivers and a consequent potential for a hierarchy of perspectives with, for example, the most expansive being the best. In this light, there is arguably an overlap between Nietzsche's work and the social justice advocacy of the Marxian school of standpoint epistemology theory. For more, see Joshua M. Hall, "Toward a New Conception of Socially-Just Peace," *Peace, Culture and Violence* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); and Joshua M. Hall, "Slanted Truths: *The Gay Science* as Nietzsche's *Ars Poetica*," *Evental Aesthetics* 5(1): 2016, 98-117.

24 Wright 2012, poems 121, 123, 127.

25 Ibid, poems 124, 125, 128.

26 Ibid, poems 126, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 148, 152.

27 Ibid, poems 150, 151, 154.

28 Ibid, poem 171.

29 Ibid, poems 186, 187, 191, 195, 197, 200.

30 See, for example, Tukhanen's discussion of this issue below.

31 Wright 2012, poems 209, 532, 684.

32 See Hazel Rowley, *Richard Wright: The Life and Times* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 11.

33 Wright 2012, poems 319, 322, 382, 491, 498, 569, 574, 584, 608, 636, 770.

34 "delegate, n.". OED Online. January 2018. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.qbcc.ezproxy.cuny.edu/view/ Entry/49311?rskey=GGH1zJ&result=1 (accessed February 22, 2018).

35 Richard Wright, *Lawd Today!*, ed. Arnold Rampersad (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

36 Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices* (New York: Basic, 2008), 44.

37 Virginia Whatley Smith, "'French West Africa': Behind the Scenes with Richard Wright, the Travel Writer." *Richard Wright's Travel Writings: New Reflections*, ed. Virginia Whatley Smith (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 190-191, quoted on page 46 of E. Lâle Demirtürk's "Mapping the Interstitial Spaces of 'Black' and 'Western': Richard Wright's *White Man, Listen!*" *CLA Journal* 49(1): 2005, 45-55.

38 Virginia Whatley Smith, "'French West Africa': Behind the Scenes with Richard Wright, the Travel Writer." *Richard Wright's Travel Writings: New Reflections*, ed. Virginia Whatley Smith (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 190-191.

39 Demirtürk, 46.

40 Ibid., 47.

41 Ibid., 47, 49.

42 Ibid., 52.

43 Mikko Tukhanen, "Queer Guerrillas: On Richard Wright's and Frantz Fanon's Dissembling Revolutionaries," *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Cultures* 61(4): 2008, 615-642.

44 Tuhkanen, 616.

45 Ibid., 625.

46 Wright, 21, quoted in Tuhkanen 634.

47 Dean Anthony Brink, "Richard Wright's Search for a Counter-hegemonic Genre: The Anamorphic and Matrixial Potential of Haiku," *Textual Practice* 28(6): 2014, 1077-1102, 1097.

48 Brink, 1078.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 1078, 1079.

51 Ibid., 1080.

52 Ibid., 1080, 1088.

53 Ibid., 1083.

54 Ibid., 1091.

55 For a critical assessment, see Geoff Waite's *Nietzsche's Corps/e*; and for a positive assessment, see Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Geoff Waite, *Nietzsche's Corps/e*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1966; Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson New York: Columbia, 1983.

56 Brink, 1082.

57 Ibid., 1087.

58 Ibid., 1094.

59 Sandy Alexandre, "Culmination in Miniature: Late Style and the Essence of Richard Wright's Haiku," in *Richard Wright in a Post-Racial Imaginary*, ed. Alice Mikal Craven and William E. Dow (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 245-262.

60 Alexandre, 246.

61 Ibid., 247.

62 Wright, 105, quoted in Alexandre, 247.

63 Alexandre, 247.

64 Ibid., 248.

65 Ibid., 249.

66 Anderson, 6, quoted in Alexandre, 249.

67 Alexandre, 251.

68 Ibid., 252.

69 Ibid 256.

70 Ibid., 256.

71 Ibid., 257.

72 Richard A. Iadonisi, "'I am Nobody': The Haiku of Richard Wright," *The Other World of Richard Wright: Perspectives on His Haiku*, ed. Jianqing Zheng (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 71-92, 71.

73 Ibid., 76.

74 Ibid., 78.

75 Wright, 82, 87, 88. As I noted above, Brink also makes this connection in Wright between the image of snow and the theme of white oppression (Brink 79).

76 Brink also makes this connection about the snow and white oppression. Brink, 1096.

77 Wright 103, quoted in Iadonisi, 84.

78 Abdul R. JanMohamed, "Negating the Negation as a Form of Affirmation in Minority Discourse: The Construction of Richard Wright as Subject," *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 104, quoted in Iadonisi, 84.

79 Iadonisi 88.

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Collision. Hip Hop and Event

Anthony Ballas

Abstract

This essay examines hip hop as an aesthetic practice capable of transcending the ideological fantasies of race and racism existing today. White supremacy and the hegemonic structure of the social order are too often considered inevitable and without viable alternatives. By confronting death as the wound caused by the continual reproduction of white supremacy in American society, Kendrick Lamar demonstrates a radical aesthetic rendering of Alain Badiou's theory of points and evental subjectivity insofar as he focalizes the subject as agent of change, turning the listener toward the void of death beyond the limits of the social order and thus beyond the seeming inevitability of its reduplication. By understanding the sonorous and spatial features of Lamar's "These Walls," and the song's affinity with Bernini's use of space in *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, this essay takes hip hop as a spatio-aesthetic practice of liberation, highlighting the interface between the subject and the objective world and the role *jouissance* plays in modulating the social order. Aesthetically, hip hop is capable of producing a rupture in the social order analogous to Walter Benjamin's description of divine violence; although to an outsider this rupture might appear violent, to those engaged in the struggle, aesthetic praxis as a means of intervention contains an undeniable truth necessary for the continuation of anti-racist movements against the static truths governing subjectivity in the present.

Keywords

The continuation of white supremacy through legalistic and extra-legalistic means and the incessant systematic violence perpetrated upon black Americans by the police and vigilantism, carve out the material substratum of everyday life for black American citizens. These hard realities of racism function as though inevitable in society, as though predestined to be reduplicated daily: unchanging, implacable, and unceasing. Such a cycle is what Walter Benjamin described as mythical violence—a lawmaking and law-preserving violence which sustains and reduplicates state power.[1] In response to this mythical cycle of death and violence, Kendrick Lamar's latest album *DAMN.* (2017) features a chorus of voices directly addressing the reduplication of this cycle, asking, "is it wickedness / is it weakness / you decide / are we going to live or die?"[2]

Lamar's opening gesture identifies the listener as the source of reduplication of mythical violence as the chorus of voices calls out, "you decide," highlighting the interface between the call and the subject's position within the repetitive structure of the social order—or what Byoung-Chul Han calls "*the inferno of the same*."[3] In this way, Lamar seeks salvation not through mechanisms within the social order like communicative reason or legal reform but rather through the wound that the social order itself generates. As in Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882), "the spear, alone that made it shuts the wound"—only a gesture which turns the subject traumatically toward the wound of white supremacy has the potential to disrupt and transcend the social order, ideology, and hegemonic facts upheld by the fantasy of white supremacy.[4]

By focalizing the listener as subject and turning toward this wound, Lamar approaches Badiou's description of "the point": the moment the subject confronts the transcendental world situation by being called toward the event.[5] For Badiou, the subject of the event encounters a choice in which only a binary "yes or no" is made available. Either the truth of the event is affirmed and the subject undertakes a truth-procedure to enact the truth of, in this case, freedom from the oppressive repetition of the racist social order; or the truth is disavowed, and the possibility of the truth is closed, sealed off, and the situation or social order is reduplicated.[6] "The point" is thus interventional, functioning as a hinge upon which the subject pivots toward freedom and event or resorts to the symbolic system and institutional logic which reproduces subjectivity in the present. By developing the question of life or death and questioning the seemingly inevitable unfolding of mythical violence and systematic white supremacy, Lamar transforms the listening subject into an agent of possibility, producing a cut in the repetitive structure

that outlines the social situation. The cut, like the Wagnerian wound, turns the subject toward the possibility of producing a new truth without resorting to utopian gestures of reconciliation; the wound continues to gape while the subject braves the trauma thereby produced.

Lamar employs a sophisticated braid of sonority and spatiality in his aesthetic practice. In "These Walls" from *To Pimp a Butterfly* (2015), Lamar uses the technique of panning—switching a sound on and off in stereophonic speakers so that the sound seems to move between the right and left sides of the audible space—in order to focalize the listener as subject of the space of the sonorous landscape created by the song. Anna Wise's voice is heard early in the song—saying repeatedly, "if these walls could talk"—only to break apart and oscillate between the left and right speakers, emphasizing the way in which the sound surrounds the listener.[7] This presentation of the sound through oscillation momentarily disrupts the listening process, jarring the listener out of the music in a semi-Brechtian mode, and in turn offers a note of reconciliation when both sides of the stereo are restored in tandem with one another, giving way to the rhythm and tone that comprise the song's pop/funk groove. Lamar raps in syncopation with the groove, deploying the metaphor of "these walls" as both vaginal walls and prison walls respectively, associating freedom with sexual enjoyment and confinement with sexual impotency.

This groove is interrupted two thirds into the song when the beat discontinues and the music shifts to a minor key accompanied by a wailing saxophone. This tonal and rhythmic shift is in turn followed by Lamar's revelation of the trauma underpinning his hyper-sexualized lyrics, as he raps, "killed my homeboy and God spared your life / dumb criminal got indicted same night," directly addressing the individual who murdered his childhood friend.[8] This revelation produces a cut in the music, exposing the listener to the traumatic underside motivating both the sonority and the lyrical content of the song, ostensibly reducing the pop/funk groove to a fetish-like projection deployed in order to conceal this traumatic episode from Lamar's past. The opening up of this wound delivers the listener to the truth embedded in the song; the oscillation between freedom and confinement and between pleasure/pain, are suspended by Lamar's revelation of the truth: the murder of Lamar's friend. "If these walls could talk" thus acquires the meaning "if the truth could speak."[9]

The combination of the panning technique and the withholding and exposing of the traumatic wound share a particular affinity with the Baroque sculptural technique of spatial inclusion. For instance, Bernini's famous *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (1647–1652) features a marble sculpture of a royal audience carved in high relief, which flanks both the left and right sides of the main stage upon which Teresa is portrayed being penetrated by arrows. These reliefs are composed of a handful of audience members all looking toward the scene unfolding before them as though the entire space spontaneously transforms into a theater. The spectator thus occupies the space of an audience member along with the flanking royal audience, included in the space as a witness to the divine scene unfolding before them. Lamar's panning technique performs a similar procedure; by stitching the listener sonorously *into* the work, as the pivotal point around which the scene unfolds, the listening subject becomes a presence in the work itself as though the material space opens up as a result of the listener's presence.[10]

Bernini and Lamar's works highlight a spatial antagonism, illuminating the often paradoxical relationship between the subject and the space they occupy; the subject enjoys the pop/funk sounds of "These Walls" and the grandeur of the divine light in *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* yet is wounded by Lamar's lyrical content; metaphors between vaginal walls and prison walls; murder, pain, and power; and the sublime violence of arrows penetrating Teresa's chest as her body lies limp. What is exposed through these works is therefore the complicated braid between the event as a point beyond immediacy and the subject's oscillating pain and pleasure thereof. Lamar and Bernini present the trauma of transcendence: they imply liberation through access to the point beyond immediacy; yet the freedom of this space is sutured to the trauma of breaking free from immediacy itself. The pleasure/pain binary (perhaps more poetically formulated as Eros/Arrows) introduces us to what Lacan calls *jouissance*: that which is beyond the pleasure principle. When Freud realized that the pursuit of pleasure was not alone in regulating the subject's psychic economy, he inspired Lacan's understanding of desire as an enjoyment which fundamentally exceeds the psychic economy. This excess is exposed as the subject's investment into the world in both Bernini's and Lamar's works—an excess which is fundamentally traumatic.

Mario Gooden's claim that "liberation is a spatial praxis" summarizes this intersection between architectural space, freedom, and *jouissance* as the staging ground for the subjective desire for transcendence beyond the limitations of the social.[11]   Lamar's subject navigates through discourse

and social and spatial relations by identifying a point beyond immediacy, opening up new vectors of possibility for intervention, alteration, and modulation of the social order. This intersection could be thought in terms of Badiou's understanding of subjective choice and spatiality: "the points of the transcendental of a world define a topological space … [which] amounts to saying: where there's a choice, there's a place," Badiou writes.[12] For both Gooden and Badiou, the subject is the agent of space, the topological operator which participates transcendentally or architecturally in spatial praxes toward a redefinition of space as such. When Badiou states that "the point … localizes the action of that truth to which an event has given the chance to appear in the world," he is suggesting that the subject arriving at the truth as the possibility for freedom domesticates it through embodied practices or "truth-procedures."[13] This act of domestication eliminates the distance between subject and object through material means: truth-procedures (art, science, politics, and love) function as interventional praxes which unfold the possibility of freedom for the subject. Gooden's notion of spatial practice as liberation can be considered a truth-procedure unfolded spatio-aesthetically toward the emancipation of black subjectivity under hegemonic whiteness and white supremacy congealed as spatial and social relations which define the prevailing social situation.

For Badiou, "[a]n event is an *interval* rather than a term," which means that the opening up of the space beyond the immediate social order (the rule of law, spontaneous ideology, facts which outline the current situation) turns the subject toward divine violence, which Walter Benjamin described as "the sign and seal but never the means" of intervention.[14] The event is thus a sign or name of the void which spatializes possibility as a formulaic interface between subject and world, staging the desire for freedom against oppression. The choice exists as the site where the subject is focalized and turned toward "the point" as the possibility of intervention, functioning as "a topological operator—a corporeal localization with regard to the transcendental—which simultaneously spaces out and conjoins the subjective (a truth-procedure) and the objective (the multiplicities that appear in a world)."[15] Simply put, it is at this juncture that the subjective act makes contact with the objective world, and the possibility for intervention is either acknowledged and undertaken as a process or turned away from and forgotten altogether. In Badiou's words, "there is a 'point' when, through an operation that involves a subject and a body, the totality of the world is at stake in a game of heads or tails."[16] The point marks the fulcrum whereupon the subject opts for either divine violence (the possibility of something new) or mythical violence (reduplication of the same).

In Lamar's music, the "totality of the world" is at stake between life and death; the listening subject is positioned as the focal point of the choice between the unfolding of a new space beyond the confines of white supremacy; life will either continue its mythical cycle of racism, or the acknowledgement of negativity through the wound can suspend the cycle and engender new possibilities through spatial and social relations. Although it will "always remain doubtful whether there has been an event or not, except to those who intervene, who decide its belonging to a situation," those turned toward the traumatic wound opened up through Lamar's aesthetic praxis are offered the chance to embody the truth of freedom voiced through hip hop as a medium and vehicle for change.[17]

Slavoj Žižek observes—apropos of Badiou's notion of event and Benjamin's divine violence: "the same act that, to an external observer, is merely an outburst of violence can be divine for those engaged in it—there is no big Other guaranteeing its divine nature; the risk of reading and assuming it as divine is fully the subject's own."[18] For Žižek, events like the protests and uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri following the murder of Michael Brown are acts of divine violence; although to external observers like Fox News or centrist liberals these events may appear violent, for those participating within they function as interventional spatial praxes beyond the mythical guarantee of the social order, which is held in place via police and vigilante violence and ideology. Although Lamar's lyrics imply the risk of trauma, pain, or even death; the truth beyond the social order, beyond the spontaneous conformity to social rule, and *beyond the pleasure principle* highlights the desire to transcend the limits of social space via the excess which cannot be sublimated adequately into the social order. Especially for black subjects in America, whose very bodily existence bars them from stabilizing a purchase in the racist texture of white supremacy, interventional praxes such as Lamar's, which focalizes the listening subject as the agent of spatial and transcendental change, are crucial ethico-aesthetic components accompanying the continuation of anti-racist movements.

Notes

1 In his formulation of divine violence, Benjamin writes that police violence, which he considers mythical in structure, "is lawmaking, for its characteristic function is not the promulgation of laws but the assertion of legal claims for any decree, and law-preserving, because it is at the disposal of these ends." Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), 186-187.

2 Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, *BLOOD*., Kendrick Lamar, Aftermath/ Interscope, B0026716-02, CD, 2017. Although J.Cole's album *4 Your Eyez Only* predates Lamar's by a few months, lyrics from his introductory song *For Whom The Bell Tolls* ought to be read as the subjective response to the question posed by Lamar's opening song, "the bells getting loud, ain't nowhere to hide / got nowhere to go, put away my pride / tired of feeling low even when I'm high / ain't no way to live, do I wanna die? / I don't know, I don't know!" Jermaine Lamarr Cole, *4 Your Eyez Only*, J.Cole, Roc Nation/ Interscope, B002600-02, CD, 2016.

3 Byung-Chul Han, *The Agony of Eros*, trans. Erik Butler (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 1, Han's emphasis.

4 Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, trans. Alfred Forman (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1899), 70, https://archive.org/details/ parsifalinenglis00wagnuoft. Hans-Jurgen Syberberg's *Parsifal* does just this by staging a literal gaping wound — a detachable partial object separate from Amforta's actual body. Although the wound is never healed, the direct address of the gaping, bloody wound alludes to a non-utopian understanding of salvation possible only through the wound itself, and not via its closure. "Dritter Aufzug," *Parsifal*, directed by Han-Jurgen Syberberg, (Chatsworth, CA: Image Entertainment, 1999), DVD. Just as Adorno sought to save Wagner from those who regarded him as "the apostle of renewal," so too we ought to resist the urge to interpret Lamar as offering a reconciliatory or redemptive alternative to the wound of white supremacy. Theodor Adorno, *Night Music: Essays on Music 1928-1962*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Chicago: Seagull Press, 2009), 78.

5 Badiou elaborates the subject of his theory of points as "the form of a body whose organs treat a worldly situation 'point by point'." "A point," for Badiou, "is a transcendental testing-ground for the appearing of a truth." The truth unfolds via the subject's arrival at a point and fidelity to the event (truth-procedure). Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 399.

6 For Badiou, "[e]ach multiple of the world is … correlated to a 'yes' or a 'no'," thus the structure of the event is always a gamble. Ibid., 400.

7 Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, *These Walls.* Kendrick Lamar. Aftermath/Interscope B0022958-02. 2015. CD.

8 Ibid.

9 This formulation closely resembles Lacan's infamous phrase, "I, truth, speak." For Lacan, "there is no metalanguage," and therefore "no language [is] able to say the truth about truth." Rather, it is the truth itself that speaks through the unconscious. For Lamar, it is not so much the shift in the language of the music (the shift into a minor key for instance) which signals the truth, but rather the unconscious trauma which articulates myself through the shift in the song's mood directly to the listener. At the beginning and end of multiple songs on *To Pimp a Butterfly*, Lamar recounts a primal scene—a panic attack that he suffered while in a hotel room. These interstitial 'skits' function as the truth of the unconscious speaking. See Jacques Lacan, "Science and Truth," in *Ecrits,* trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2002), 855-858.

10 The sexual content of the works is important as well, as both artists demonstrate the link between sexuality and divinity (sexuality as the sphere of the spiritual) and the paradoxical relation between pleasure and pain. St. Teresa is penetrated violently by arrows, her mouth opened slightly as though in the throes of pleasure; and the ambiguous voice which opens "These Walls," sounding at first like a muted trumpet, slowly comes into sonorous focus as a female voice either moaning in pleasure or groaning in pain.

11 Mario Gooden, *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity* (New York: Columbia, 2016), 21.

12 Badiou, *Logics*, 401. Elsewhere, Badiou quotes Rimbaud, "I have found the place and the formula," which, according to Badiou, articulates the subject's orientation to truth as both a site and a matheme. Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin, *There's No Such Thing As a Sexual Relationship*, trans. Susan Spitzer and Kenneth Reinhard (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 45.

13 Badiou, *Logics*, 401.

14 Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 206; Benjamin, *Reflections,* 300.

15 Badiou, *Logics*, 399.

16 Ibid., 400.

17 Badiou, *Being*, 207.

18 Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*: *Six Sideways Reflections*, (London: Profile, 2009), 200.

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Deleuzian Creativity and Fluxus Nomadology: Inspiring New Futures, New Thought

Janae Sholtz

Abstract

This paper mobilizes a conception of creativity derived from the aesthetic philosophy of Gilles Deleuze that invokes principles from performance art, aesthetics of indeterminacy, and a theory of exhaustion in order to understand the political potential of artworks. After outlining some considerations of the modern conception of creativity and its cultural significance from the mid-twentieth century onwards, I will focus on the confluence between Deleuze's philosophy of art and the practices of the neo-avant-garde art collective Fluxus during the 1960s and '70s in order to theorize creativity as a form of anti-capitalist resistance. I interpret Fluxus performances as nomadological events that open spatiotemporal intervals for the manifestation of futural forces and re-examine Fluxus as a mode of "resistance to the present"—which is so important for revivifying creative and political impulses.

Keywords

Deleuze
Guattari
Fluxus
Nomadology
Creativity

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari provide a succinct assessment of contemporary culture and its creative possibilities. They say, "We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. *We lack resistance to the present.*"[1] In order to understand how this statement enjoins us to a particular political imperative, we should think of it in relation to another phrase to which Deleuze often refers: Klee's renowned statement that "what we need is a people, but the people is missing."[2] By pairing these two key phrases we can begin to interpret Deleuze's intense commitment to contemporary critique and political transformation. Taken together they can be interpreted as criticism and challenge, indicating both the waning of creativity and the possibility of imagining a new future—which is in effect to resist the overbearing and prefigured present. After developing an account of Deleuze's critique of this waning of the creative impetus, I will focus on the confluence between Deleuze's philosophy of art and Fluxus collective's neo-avant-garde art practices during the 1960s and '70s—in attempt to envision a new Deleuzian conception of creativity as a form of resistance to the overbearing powers of capitalism.

Deleuze's cultural critique is aimed at the manner in which post-industrial capitalism has changed our understanding of communication, creativity, and political possibilities and at how capitalism "takes over" all desire and creative or revolutionary outlets in such a way that, ironically, render truly creative acts impossible. Thus while Deleuze's analysis refers to the mid-twentieth century, the twenty-first century's cultural and political scenes seem to verify his views—especially when we consider such phenomena as privatized prisons, the manipulation of war and terror, or the military industrial complex. Moreover, his intuition is echoed by the uneasiness that resonated through the art world in the latter years of the twentieth century: the concern that a certain counter-cultural energy had left the social and political scene accompanied by the dread of a corporate takeover of life itself.[3] This dread was expressed by Marcuse and Adorno—early critics of consumer society and the massification of culture—but became all the more profound as the counter-culture revolution of the '60s and '70s gave way to neoliberal economic policies of the 1980s (Reaganomics, Thatcherism).

Yet while Deleuze warns of the inescapable spread of capitalist territorializations and the ubiquity of control societies, his goal has always been to provide us with concepts that resist these totalizing, immobilizing frameworks and open us to, as he says, lines of flight—which is to say a reinvigorated creative impulse. The picture is complicated because

capitalism's model is that of constant deterritorialization as its mode of production; in effect, it has mobilized creativity for itself, so any simple recourse to deterritorialization as a creative, affirmative force has the paradoxical effect of reinforcing this system. It would seem that we have to think the possibility of creativity anew; to find lines of flight for creativity itself. My intent here is, by tracing the paths Deleuze has opened, to suggest a new conception of creativity that acts as a countermeasure to the swift appropriation of the concept by and through capitalism's modalities. Whilst I accept Deleuze's critique of capitalism and its deleterious effects on our creative capabilities, I attempt to make better sense of his more enigmatic imperatives to resist these phenomena in order to offer a conception of creative resistance that, while faithful to Deleuze's prerogatives and conceptual framework, moves beyond them.

It is well known that Deleuze constantly turns to the realm of the aesthetic in discussions of creativity, resistance, and futural politics. Yet scholars have pointed out that he rarely focuses on contemporary artists, opting for more canonical figures from modern art.[4] This has caused some to question just how useful Deleuze's aesthetics are for addressing contemporary problems. Yet at the beginning of *A Thousand Plateaus*—a book devoted to the forces of the future and the possibility of resisting sociopolitical control mechanisms—he and Guattari use a graphic score by the Fluxus composer Sylvano Busotti to represent the concept of rhizomatic philosophy.[5] Though this seems to be the extent of Deleuze and Guattari's referral to Fluxus, I have attempted elsewhere to imaginatively extend this engagement with other elements of the Fluxus paradigm and argue that Fluxus practices provide an artistic parallel to the critiques and conceptual framework that Deleuze and Guattari perform through their philosophy.[6]

After outlining the modern history of creativity and addressing Deleuze's own enigmatic gestures towards a new form of creativity, I will focus on three particular areas of confluence with Fluxus practice—ideas about the unity between art and life, indeterminacy, and infinite movement—in order to give image to this new form of creativity as resistance. I suggest that Fluxus performances are nomadological events which open spatiotemporal intervals for the manifestation of creative, futural forces. I also examine affects created by Fluxus performances as modes of the "resistance to the present" which is so important for revivifying the creative, political imagination.

I. Critiquing Creativity, Critiquing Capitalism

Deleuze's preoccupation with creativity and the creative act has to be situated within the context of a certain historical manifestation of the concept that has been delineated as something thoroughly modern. In other words, it is because the concept of creativity becomes a part of the cultural landscape that it must be assessed from within it and its relation to the socio-economic framework becomes particularly relevant. As Pope explains in *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice*, it isn't until the early mid-twentieth century that this emphasis on creativity took root as a response to rapid social and technological change.[7] "The 1930s in particular witnessed some of the earliest recorded uses of such phrases as 'creative salesman' (1930), 'creative education' (1936) and even 'courses in creative writing' (1930)."[8] Now, of course it isn't the case that there were no references to creativity prior to the twentieth century; it is just that these references were reserved for art and the artist, whereas mid-century creativity found its way into the cultural landscape as a populist possibility that utilized or coopted the realm of artistic creativity for itself.[9] In the process, the concepts of creativity and the creative act are transformed.

The elevation of creativity as a modern phenomenon follows the shift to a post-industrialized society, which has generated the "creative culture" or "creativity industry"—a technological society revolving around ideas, communication of information and knowledge, self-expression and economic fluidity. The problem is that creativity has been appropriated by the new capitalist paradigm; that creativity, at least as a cultural product and attainment, is thoroughly integrated with consumerism and the ideals of choice and self-expression that serve the order of capitalism, and "it is precisely the compounding—or confounding—of consumer choice with democratic freedom that makes present constructions of creativity at once so potent and superficially beguiling."[10]

The association of creativity with post-industrialist capitalism and the consumerist and corporatist mentality obliges us to reconsider the concept of creativity and what may have been lost through its assimilation. Deleuze's attempt to contemplate creativity arises out of this backdrop as a rebuttal or refusal of this modern culture of creativity. His philosophy can help us understand how creativity's immense potential was reabsorbed by culture itself—appropriated by the same forces it worked against. Moreover, since Deleuze and Guattari define philosophy as the creation of concepts, there is a need to distinguish the philosopher's activity from that of their capitalist rivals.

Deleuze and Guattari's critique of capitalism is aligned with Marx, who emphasizes the way that the capitalist logic of exchange transforms social relations: "capitalism works by reworking not just social, political, and economic relations but the very subjective needs… of individuals so as to accommodate those needs to capitalism's system and structure."[11] According to Marx, one of the significant transformations under capitalism is that the value of a commodity is no longer found in its use-value but rather in its exchangeability (commodity abstraction). This is primarily because the aim of capitalism is to perpetuate surplus value through the perpetual flow of money. Marx famously inverts the commodity-money relation (C-M-C) arguing that the true movement of capitalism is M-C-M. This formulation suggests that commodities are merely placeholders and that capitalism's functioning depends on circulation rather than accumulation. As Hajdini explains, "the circulation of capital (M-C-M) forms an open circle, that doesn't start with need and end with satisfaction or consumption of a commodity, but instead forms an essentially limitless process."[12]

Marx speculates that this system necessitates the proliferation of needs and generates social relations bent on "creating a new need in others."[13] In other words, "capitalism's ever-present need to produce accumulation for accumulation's sake and its concomitant project of turning everything into a commodity even turns the desires of individuals into commodities to be bought and sold, to be manipulated by the capitalist class in the production of new needs to be filled by new commodities."[14] Capitalist production requires a constant feedback loop of production and obsolescence, which in turn requires generating constant desire *for consumption itself*, not just commodities. Subjective desires are the outgrowth or effect of the forces of capitalism, and therefore desire itself becomes a commodity.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari add to this critique by re-conceptualizing the role and nature of desire. Rather than an imaginary force based on need or lack, desire is conceived as a real force of production. Desiring-production is composed of flows and interruptions which alternate between processes of synthesis and decoding, and social production is simply desiring-production under determinate conditions.[15] Thus Deleuze and Guattari analyze how desiring-production operates under determinate conditions in order to understand social relations and particular forms of subjectivization. Desire does not represent conscious desires of individuals but the state of unconscious drives.[16] This is useful for understanding how individuals in society who do not stand to equally gain from capitalism remain subject to it.

Deleuze and Guattari find that the linkage between capitalism and desiring-production is particularly profound in that capitalism's axiomatic aligns with processes of production themselves; the conversion of surplus value of code into surplus of flux upon which the infinite movement of capitalism relies (M-C-M) "is enough, however, to ensure that the Desire of the most disadvantaged creature will invest with all its strength, irrespective of any economic understanding or lack of it, the capitalist field as a whole. Flows, who doesn't desire flows, and relation between flows, and breaks in flows?"[17]

Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari stress that capitalism is not just defined by decoded flows, but by generalized axiomatic of decoding.[18] Under these conditions, desiring production is invested in an overall axiomatic of decoding and flux. Yet, desiring-production also desires the interruption of flows, their cessation. The more accelerated and the more decoded that social forces become, the more desire there is for the soothing of desire's freneticism—that desire desires its own repression is immanent to desire itself. Suley Rolnik observes this in cognitive capitalism's takeover of the struggles and creativity of the 1960s, claiming that the more social unrest and fluidity, the greater the potential for capturing desire within predetermined paradigms:

> The most common destiny of flexible subjectivity and of the freedom of creation that accompanies it is not the invention of forms of expression motivated by an attention to sensations that signal the effects of the other's existence within our resonant body. What guides us in this creation of territories for our post-Fordist flexibility is an almost hypnotic identification with the images of the world broadcast by advertising and mass culture. By offering ready-made territories to subjectivities rendered fragile by deterritorialization, these images tend to soothe their unrest.[19]

This rerouting of creativity energies is a phenomenon she scathingly labels "pimping"; and according to Rolnik it is a politics of capture that has steadily reached global proportions.[20] Her reading aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's assessment of one of the most pernicious effects of capitalism: because its *modus operandi* is to decode the significance of all codes and then recode them for its own purposes, everything is absorbed into it. An example is the punk phenomenon of the 1980s. Originally considered a countercultural force, punk was neutralized by its regurgitation as a commodity, its creative

impulse repackaged with a shiny seal and the promised purveyance of cool. As Pope says, "resistant or subversive gestures may themselves be quickly re-appropriated and reproduced as a saleable 'style.'"[21] Deleuze would add that this is predicated on the manufacture and perpetuation of a specific set of desires.

In order to maintain circulation, capitalism is "continually confronting limits and barriers that are interior and immanent to itself [yet] precisely because they are immanent, [they] let themselves be overcome only provided they are reproduced on a wider scale."[22] In other words, capitalist creativity consists in generating more objects to be consumed and the illusion of limitations to be overcome in order to create new products that surpass the old or assimilate any creative energies and desires that come unbound. But, these innovations are determined by projections of profitability and fidelity to the system—remaining within a set of predetermined possibilities that support rather than truly overturn or change the system. This is also why Deleuze and Guattari can say that, while there are many inventions and innovations resulting from capitalism, the system itself remains caught in a recursive logic that always finds a way to domesticate these rogue energies and creative tendencies. Capitalism needs to bind the schizophrenic charges and energies into a world axiomatic that always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new interior limits.[23]

One of Deleuze's serious concerns is that the mechanisms of control which are sustained and perfected through the absolute dominance of the capitalist machine will make it more and more difficult to break out, to find lines of flight beyond these territorial constrictions. Perhaps *because* of Deleuze's hyperawareness of this very danger, his philosophy offers resources to resist and to unearth a fundamentally different kind of creative impulse that nonetheless beats underneath the heavy weight of such a voracious system. The will to defy the control that has come to define modern society is a creative act according to Deleuze.[24] Though libido, as unconscious and machinic, will generally invest in the existing social field, including its most repressive forms, "it may launch a counterinvestment whereby revolutionary desire is plugged into the existing social field as a source of energy."[25] This revolutionary potential is crystallized in the phrase that began this inquiry:

We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. *We lack resistance to the present.*

Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari articulate this imperative of resistance in the course of distinguishing "concept creation" as the task of philosophy,[26] from the mere proliferation and use of concepts in communication. Deleuze and Guattari single out communication to signify the shift from industrial production to the production of information as indicative of "the present." This shift exacerbates the commodity's abstraction, which only accelerates the axiomatic of capitalist decoding and the commensurate capture of desire within its order. The present form of capitalism makes commodities out of concepts, integrating them into the cycles of capital. Information and ideas circulate in a dizzying display of combinations, as long as there is profit to be made, and as long as the circulation remains within the parameters of a capitalist logic. Our reality is territorialized—coded and bound—according to the standards of capitalist domination. Communication operates as a mechanism of control by repeating and solidifying certain concepts which themselves codify existence according to the ideals of capitalism.

Deleuze and Guattari associate this type of communication with the work of the "creative class," which has repackaged concept creation as the work of public relations agents, marketers, and advertisers.[27] They write: "these days, information technology, communications, and advertising are taking over the words 'concept' and 'creative,' and these 'conceptualists' constitute an arrogant breed that reveals the activity of selling to be capitalism's supreme thought."[28] Deleuze and Guattari intimate that the creativity of the creative class is understood as innovation on already present ideas (or products) and/or as a progression that is determined in advance by the "needs" of the market. These communicators are "imitators of art" who patch over the space of true creativity with marketable ideas: "the simulation of a packet of noodles has become the true concept, and the one who packages the product, commodity, or work of art has become the philosopher, conceptual persona, or artist."[29]

Thus, what is at issue is the transmutation in the concept of creativity itself. Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism operates through liberating flows of desire.[30] Because of the constant voraciousness necessary for its self-perpetuation, capitalism approximates the practice of creativity by constantly surpassing its own limits, exhausting every possible resource, which in turn facilitates the ideology that production pure and simple is creation and, by approximation, the consumption of commodities becomes a mere fetish for new products. To sustain its levels of production, requires a consumer class that is not motivated by the selection of products

but whose desires are calibrated solely to the consumption of products *tout court*, the festishization of the new where the new just means materially new, nominally new, or new in terms of a different iteration. Following Marx's logic, these acts of consumption are formalized as the only possible "expressions of freedom" in this over-determined system.[31] Marketing firms create entire campaigns around concepts of freedom and choice in order to support this incessant production, approximating ideals that appeal to their consumer-base all the while circumscribing their meaning. Reciprocally, the desire for more choices requires the constant "creation" of new products. This process has only been exacerbated in the last decades of corporatization and consumerism, where management discourse operates with the mantra, "innovate or die," indicating just how deeply the imperative for creativity has become enmeshed with corporate mentality.

Under the rubric of communication, creativity is understood as proliferation, production, or innovation, and these are all in service of a higher order of the logic of consumption—to make money by facilitating the unceasing production and consumption of commodities and to maintain the often-exploitative conditions that facilitate this order.[32] Couple this with the fact that an entire industry of marketing and advertising was developed in order to promote the constant circulation of these virtual commodities, and we can now see how creativity is seen as synonymous with capitalist production and becomes, in and of itself, a key product to be circulated. Creativity becomes a transcendent mode of thinking, objectivized as the "concept of creativity."[33] What I mean by this is that, rather than some thing or some practice being creative or making a genuine contribution to changing the existential framework, the corporatist-consumerist world has created a commodity out of the concept of creativity itself, in the same way that choice and freedom have become commodified. By elevating creativity as the desired product, capitalism accomplishes its goal of maintaining itself through constant deterritorialization that has been carefully routed to produce a feedback loop of desire and energy. As Deleuze and Guattari make clear in *Anti-Oedipus*, fetishizing the new is really the capture and routinizing of desire rather than its liberation. Deleuze and Guattari recognize that capitalist production has come to guide the idea of creativity as the proliferation of options and choices, rather than any genuine thought about the creative as breaking with or challenging the status quo. Moreover, since the possibilities that it engenders are already laid out in advance, given that these choices are determined from within the parameters and needs of the capitalist system, creativity itself becomes commodified.

How can we respond to a world in which capitalism has spread itself over everything in an ever-expanding globalism and appropriated the creative for itself? In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari's energies are devoted to conceptualizing a revolutionary type of desire that disrupts the system and envisioning methods for liberating desire from capitalist enslavement, and we can situate their aims with regard to the revitalization of creativity as a counterpart to these goals. The answer, following Deleuze and Guattari, is that we must resist the present and the model of creativity it offers. At the conclusion of *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari attribute just such a role to the artist: "other artists are always needed to … carry out necessary and perhaps greater destructions, thereby restoring to their predecessors the incommunicable novelty that we could no longer see."[34] The concept of creativity that has dominated our cultural landscape makes us blind to the truly creative act, one that actually creates something new rather than circulating fetishized facsimiles of newness. We need a different model of creativity; we need these "other" artists to turn the creative paradigm upside down in order that we begin to see what we no longer can see. Moreover, following the critique Deleuze makes of creativity understood as merely a form of proliferation and communication, creativity is something that requires a transformation of our lived reality, and cannot just be relayed as information or object to be consumed. The latter part of this essay is devoted to the creation of affects as a counter to capitalism's consumption of our desires and routing of our sensorial experience to its prerogatives. To liberate our desires, to resist control, and to exist in deterritorialized spaces is to become or participate in a nomadological existence that reinterprets from within those spatio-temporal dynamics—a creative immanence.

Now, several authors have noted that Deleuze and Guattari offer a critique of creativity and have sought in his work a revised account of creativity.[35] Often these contributors have drawn the distinction between the creative, the creator, or the created and Deleuzian creativity as one between creative *being* and creative *becoming* or processes. This seems like an accurate first step, though there are further resources to push this distinction much farther. My interpretation seeks to provide some nuance to these accounts through a particular set of textual and conceptual pairings. I wish to offer the contours of a potentially new model for creativity inspired by Deleuze's brief yet tantalizing remarks concerning creation: "creation traces a path between impossibilities … taking place in bottlenecks … A creator who isn't grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator."[36] This quote speaks to Deleuze's critique of capitalist appropriation

of the creative, where creativity is understood as the modification of already established ideas or the proliferation of choices and products within predetermined boundaries.

More directly, it involves Deleuze's philosophical critique of the possible as a categorical distinction rather than a change in kind, which can help us understand what is needed to liberate the concept of creativity. In his attempt to identify and advocate for what is distinctive and philosophically powerful about his new conception of the Virtual, Deleuze argues that the category of the possible is an empty form. He contends that the possible is opposed to the real merely as its conceptual double. The possible is "an image of the real, while the real is supposed to resemble the possible"; they merely re-duplicate each other, one as actual and the other as nonexistent but "possible."[37] If the real is merely the manifestation of the prefigured or predetermined field of possibilities, then the possible adds nothing new to the real and cannot go beyond the parameters of what is. Given that there is a conceptual identity between the two, with the only difference being that one refers to what already exists and the other to what does not, there can be nothing new thought within this paradigm. Often theories of creativity—even those that extend beyond stereotypical notions of the creative genius or the production of the new—are bound to notions of potentiality or possibility.[38] Rather than the realm of the possible, which Deleuze has always associated with linear temporality of the present (the Actual), creativity must tarry with the impossible (the Virtual), but what can this mean and how does one do it?[39]

One answer, which Pelbart invokes in *Cartographies of Exhaustion*, is to interrogate Deleuze's notion of exhaustion.[40] Pelbart insists that we create by exhausting the possible. Pelbart likens this to a crisis in which the exhaustion of all possibilities corresponds to a "collective mutation, in the sense that what was once routine becomes intolerable."[41] Pelbart describes exhaustion as an operation of disconnection, an unbinding of what captures and imprisons us, but he also presents exhaustion of the possible as a precondition for reaching some other mode of the possible. The possible, in the first sense, indicates only the previously determined past and present, while the second sense is directed toward the future.[42] Aesthetically, this could mean pushing the boundaries of an art form to a point that is almost unrecognizable, causing the presumed rules of the genre to rearrange themselves, as one might say was the case with jazz's effect on music. Though I think Pelbart's intent is much more political than this and would include incorporating elements of social realities that

themselves are intolerable—to use the artwork as a space of confrontation where the intolerable is dramatized and inescapably present.

Yet, we must be very careful not to interpret exhaustion as a form of accelerationism, especially in light of the model of deterritorialization that we have associated with capitalism itself. Accelerationism has been touted as a political stance inspired by Deleuze and Guattari that addresses capitalism's dynamic deterritorialization through accelerating forces (and strategically endorsing the impersonal processes of neoliberalism in order to bring it to its own destruction). On this view, exhaustion would mean exhausting all the possibilities inherent *in* the system. But the problem is that the system never exhausts itself of circulating concepts, forces, bodies, and affects in ever-renewed combinations meant to generate and mesmerize our desires. In other words, in a world where everything is possible, it would seem that nothing is possible to exhaust; and therefore there can be no real creation—only repetitive circulations. I argue that, rather than exhausting all possibles as in accelerationism, it is the *inexhaustible*—the idea that "you never realize all of the possible"—that exhausts the possible and that *this* is what it means to trace a path between impossibilities.[43] Creativity is not just invention of new things but recognition of the need to wrangle with inexhaustibility, the impossible.

II. Between Inexhaustibility and Resistance

It seems that Deleuze is participating in something of a counter-cultural zeitgeist—one which recognizes that the post-industrialist cult of creativity actually operates at the expense of another sense of creativity. Deleuze's solution for breaking open the current regime of prepackaged desire and limitations of creative energies is to find ways to release counter-currents of desire that resist the way that the truly creative is occluded, a sentiment that finds its parallel in the practices of Fluxus. Allen Burkoff, in his commentary on Fluxus, explains how they embody this zeitgeist and provide a potential model for the liberation of social desire:

> More than an art movement: Fluxus was a gigantic release of creative energy into human culture; along came this small band of Fluxus folks around the world who used radical art, strange activities, objects and performances in upside down creativity to reverse this narrowing down restrictive tendency in the evolution of human culture. They were huge cultural

> tricksters … by expanding and in some cases obliterating what we considered to be normal, interesting and human behavior to be. *These guys brought on the '60s … expanded the potential and possibilities in human culture.*[44]

This quote expresses the exhilaration of anticipatory potential that characterized this counter-cultural movement and—given that Fluxus has to a large extent receded from cultural memory—reminds us of how precarious these moments of resistance can be, especially in light of competing socio-economic forces and desires. It reminds us that resisting the present is an ongoing, inexhaustible task— always to come—and that teaches us that resistance must become fluent in mobility if it is to address the ever-increasing capture of desire by capitalist consumption.

This section addresses confluences between Deleuze's philosophy and Fluxus and asks, "How can Fluxus' upside down creativity help us resist these paralyzing forces of the contemporary world?" I am interested in the way that Fluxus upsets certain boundaries in the art world and releases a new set of forces therein not because I would replicate their practices but because we need to think about subversive affects in order to incorporate them into future practices. In other words, Fluxus is an example of the Deleuzian creative act, releasing new affective experiences. The affects of indeterminacy, inexhaustibility, and mobility that Fluxus produces are examples of creative resistance that delay, postpone, or even elude the present.

Dick Higgins describes the Fluxus theory of intermedia as a creative practice characterized by the fusions of existing mediums: as work that occupies the "uncharted land that lies between" existing categories of practice.[45] Their intermedial approach means that Fluxus performances operate within the paradigm of between-ness through the conscientious fusion of composition and performance, audience and performer, and aesthetic and mundane. Ken Friedman claims that intermedial art forms invoke a liminal state because they cross boundaries to establish new zones of interaction, understanding, cognition, and emotion.[46] This experience of threshold states that mark transitions and growth is like being swept up in a movement rather than participating in the disinterested contemplation of an object. This transitivity produces an affect of mobility, a zone of indeterminacy where the generative processes of life themselves can be felt; it is also meant to transform our experience of life and eliminate the subject/object boundaries that constitute us as subjective viewers

rather than intimate participants in a thoroughly interrelated complex of immanent becoming. Thus, Fluxus focuses on the process of creation itself rather than the created—and creates affects of movement that mirror life itself. As such, the artwork as event occupies the space of inexhaustibility through its provocation of incessant mobility.

Deleuze identifies the creative potential of the between as well, writing, "It's not beginnings and endings that count, but middles. Things and thoughts advance or grow out from the middle, and that's where you have to get to work, that's where everything unfolds."[47] What is important from a Deleuzian perspective is that Fluxus operates in a kind of spatio-temporal flux, finding the cracks and the fissures within the present in order to disrupt—or resist—the present. Fluxus occupies this in-between space as nomads who are in perpetual motion and transition. As such, through the multi-faceted paradigm of betweenness, Fluxus provides a model for the inexhaustible. In "The Exhausted," Deleuze identifies four ways of exhausting the possible, the last two of which are "extenuating the potentialities of space" and "dissipating the power of the image."[48] Elsewhere, I have identified six ways that the phenomena of Fluxus exemplifies a perpetual 'in between.'[49] I will focus on three of these themes that help demonstrate the last two methods of exhausting the possible mentioned above: (1) the unity between art and life; (2) indeterminacy; and (3) infinite movement.

Unity Between Art and Life

Fluxus artists were pioneers in challenging the priority of the "object" in art, bringing mobility and life into the artwork and thereby bridging the distance between art and life.[50] They did this primarily through the infusion of performance aspects into work: action rather than materiality makes up the Fluxus artwork. In essence, "form in Fluxus is mobilized,"[51] an attempt to prioritize the fluidity and movement in life over the artificiality of an immobile art object. As Maciunas explains, "Since artificiality implies human pre-determination, contrivance, a truer concretist *rejects pre-determination of final form* in order to perceive the reality of nature, the course of which, like that of man himself is largely indeterminate and unpredictable."[52] Just as life is ongoing and open-ended, they reconceived the artwork as a between-space constituted as much by distances, movements, holes, gaps, and silences as by constituent objects or final form.[53] This is paradigmatically evident in the phenomenon of the "event score," which epitomizes the idea of artwork-in-flux on temporal and spatial levels. These

event scores typically consist of a set of minimal directions that can either be interpreted and performed, or taken up as objects of contemplation. The event score challenges the commonplace understanding or function of the artwork itself.

In these Fluxus events, the boundaries of the work and its surroundings are often dissolved. The performance aspect of the event score is, of course, but one way that this dissolution of distance is accomplished, as it focuses spatial dynamics and movement rather than reinforcing a clear subject/object divide that is incumbent to traditional object-oriented artworks.[54] But even among performance-based works, Fluxus event score events are unique in their attempt to include the audience member in the performance itself. This is yet another way of bridging the distance between art and life, by literally breaking down the barrier between the artistry on the stage and what is being viewed by the real-life audience.

A common characteristic of event scores is that they highlight everyday actions and quotidian objects, another instance of the marriage of art and life. George Brecht, for instance, describes his work as an attempt to attain "the smallest unit of the situation," claiming that this was to ensure that "the details of everyday life, the random constellations of objects that surround us, stop going unnoticed."[55] Simple instructions—such as for Brecht's 'Three Lamp Event', whose bullet-pointed instructions read: (1) off.on; (2) on.off; (3) lamp—provide that they can be performed anywhere and by anyone, drawing attention to our most quotidian practices. In a retrospective piece entitled "Forty Years of Fluxus," Ken Friedman explains the idea of the unity of art and life more precisely: "When Fluxus was established, the conscious goal was to erase the boundaries between art and life… Today, it is clear that the radical contribution Fluxus made to art was to suggest that there is no boundary to be erased… Another way to put it is to say that art and life are part of a unified field of reference, a single context."[56] Typically, commentators refer to this as Fluxus' elevation of the overlooked realm of the mundane through use of everyday objects or activities in performance.

Although many associate Fluxus' unity of art and life with a Duchamp-esque preoccupation with found objects, I argue that the more fecund reference is John Cage's focus on immanent surroundings and reconfiguration of music as a marriage of ambient sound and art in *4'33''*. Cage's performance "invites the audience to a multi-sensorial aesthetic appreciation of all events unfolding in time-space" and provides a model for Flux-events to come.[57] The difference that I want to underscore is between

objects as *representing* the everyday in Duchamp and the Cagean or Fluxus artwork as an event: a space in which the unity between art and life arises and happens to us in a way that provokes a new form of sensibility and a new conception of life.

Thus, it is in the manner that these quotidian objects are treated that elevates this practice beyond merely underscoring the conflation of art and the everyday. Take for example George Brecht's 1962 performance, *Drip Music*. The score offers these simple instructions: "a source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel."[58] None of the elements are specified completely. Neither is how this arrangement should be assembled. The sparsity of instruction means that the particularities of its enactment are extremely open-ended. Moreover, the dripping water is the sole movement in this score. Imagine an audience striving to understand this piece, wondering if there is more, recognizing finally that the methodical dripping of the water is meant to produce the whole soundscape, to fill the art space. The elimination of the familiar trappings of performance deepens the engagement, the immersion of audience and work. The incessant and stark drip, drip, drip of the performance exposes the audience to a bare multiplicity, and like Cage's *4'33'*, provokes a new kind of attention—by breaking the plane of expectation in performance through this bare repetition, the performance is meant to induce a change "in kind" in the audience itself. The audience has to grapple with frustration of their expectations, which is to say that a performance will have some linearity, some narrative, some action, while attempting to understand the purpose of something so mundane. The sparsity of audio and visual stimulation has the effect of absorption rather than the more traditional distraction or stimulation. Higgins describes this as an experience of immersion: "the silence is absolutely numbing, so much of the environment has the piece become."[59]

This appeal to quotidian, ambient sounds produced by the simple dripping of water awakens our senses to the world in which we are immersed: the idea that there would be an inexhaustible source of sound, music, and instrument if only we were sensitive to it and attuned to the small shifts, cadences, and contrapuntal relations of our environments—creative immanence. Brecht says: "there is perhaps nothing that is not musical. There's no moment in life that's not musical … All instruments, musical or not, become instruments."[60] These art-events open a space in which we experience the merging of art and life, and the possibility of something new arising through the void and silence of that very fusion.

Thus, we may understand the coupling of art and life as a kind of becoming which signifies the reinvigoration of the concept of life itself—very much akin to Deleuze's reorientation of ontology as a heterogenetic field of becoming populated by creative forces whose future is always indeterminate.[61] Fluxus' transformation of the art object—the event score in particular—reveals what Deleuze would call the ontological reality of creative immanence. Deleuze views the plane of immanence as an intrinsically creative process characterized not by discrete objects or things but by continuous flows. Fluxus' unification of art and life has the potential to make us aware of this pre-personal and immanent space from which events, affects, and objects arise to become sensitive to immanence itself. As Owen Smith explains, "the idea that art is part of life … and should therefore imitate the universal processes of flux and change" was central to Fluxus, and this resonates with Deleuze's ontology of creative becoming.[62] As Deleuze says, "Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation."[63]

Fluxus aims to disrupt ordinary perception in order to transform our very relation to the everyday. It is an imperative that corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari's critique of creativity under capitalism to which I alluded earlier: it is not enough to create new things if the system in which we are immersed remains untouched. Fluxus' aim is to change the very nature of perception, as Deleuze's aim is to disrupt the very foundation of capitalist desire. Fluxus tries to provoke this new sensibility by radically challenging the parameters of various art forms and tarrying with their liminal boundaries, in order to break them open and exhaust their latent and unknown potentialities.

Indeterminacy

As we have seen, one of the indices of the event score's relation to life, as well as one of the key features of Deleuze's concept of becoming, is open-endedness, a feature which forms a bridge to our next form of inexhaustibility—indeterminacy. With the event score, the possibility of multiple temporal realizations guided by the most minimal of instructions implies a special cadence that is both iterative *and* indeterminate—a kind of Derridean iterability that succeeds in overcoming mere repetition. What is accomplished is akin to Deleuze's dramatization of the event wherein more and more of the virtual aspect of the event is brought forth. The

model of the event score is to provide instructions that may involve the audience, challenge the performers to undertake spontaneous tasks, or be approached as contemplative spurs. These instructions are purposefully ambiguous or open-ended, hence, event scores provide flexible road maps with unforeseeable consequences—an inexhaustible futurity. Fluxus takes this prerogative to a radical extreme—devising situations that seek to privilege the unknown, by incorporating ambiguity into the score instructions, relying on audience participation which cannot be anticipated, and shifting situational constructs.[64] The multiplicity of context and inherent variability parallel the Deleuzian event, which invokes an infinite virtual field—the paradigm of inexhaustibility. Considered to be the first event labeled as Fluxus, the 1962 performance of Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* at the *International Festival of the Newest Music* in Wiesbaden, Germany, is a paradigmatic example of the way that indeterminacy permeates the Fluxus ethos.[65] Corner provided a score with a minimum of notation and instructions, and the performers radically interpreted it to include a methodical yet random destruction of the piano as Nam June Paik plays it. The traditional sounds of the piano were "accompanied by brutal noises such as splintering wood, scratching, tearing, crushing, rubbing, hammering, that sound at times like a bomb assault was happening, and sometimes more like an unobtrusive clattering."[66] The resulting performance was shocking to the audience, producing gaps in the audience's expectations both in terms of the temporality of the performance (what could possibly come next) and in terms of the challenge to musical form itself. The score was meant to transcend the usual parameters of musicality and open up the possibilities of sound: to "shape something coherent out of the chaotic reservoir of sounds [residing] in the instrument and to broaden the field of possibilities for freedom in performance."[67] It represents the breaking open of the art form from within. As the performance continues, "improvisation makes itself heard, as the players produce the most refined dynamics, relate to each other, create collective noise landscapes, and allow single sounds."[68] A space opens; a new sensibility is born; a line of flight is released.

Perpetual Movement

Natasha Lushetich develops comparable themes of inexhaustibility through movement, transitivity, and indeterminacy by comparing Fluxus event scores to the perpetuum mobile: an object that translates input energy into motion in a perpetual cycle which also creates repercussive

motion in objects with which it comes into contact.[69] Because of its open-endedness and interactive nature—as well as its temporality, which resembles Bergsonian duration rather than linear temporality—"the *event score* generates perpetual performance and triggers cross-categorical ways of being and acting in the world."[70] Lushetich shows how Brecht's 1961 "Two Elimination Events" exemplifies a perpetual motion machine through the undecidability of its simple phrase, "Empty vessel. Empty vessel." It is in the ambiguity of the language itself that the perpetual motion resides. Rather than just a basic repetition, the simple phrase actually defies interpretation. The phrase vacillates between assertion, conjuring an object, instruction to perform, temporal description, and prescription of how to empty, dismantling boundaries between work, audience, and performer, and disrupting the temporality of the work itself. All of the modes of interpretation given above are simultaneously present in the score, thus evincing a principle of undecidability, which Lushetich describes as perpetual movement or slippage between senses and concepts.[71]

We have seen how the event score explores the potentialities of space and opens up the concept of a vibrating, moving conception of betweenness (like the perpetuum mobile created by the score, "Empty Vessel, Empty Vessel"). Deleuze suggests that a certain kind of image approaches exhaustion with its power "to produce a void or create holes, to loosen the tourniquet of words, to mop up the transpiration of the voices."[72] Event scores create these vacuoles and intervals through their merging of art and life, their elevation of indeterminacy, their disruption of the commonplace, and their attention to immersive silences, pauses, and ubiquitous repetition. The tacit acknowledgement of the multiplicity of potentialities in each inexhaustible moment opens a space in which they can therefore arise. Thus, exhaustion reflects the fact that the interval in which the image arises is itself a "process" that is "no longer concerned with the objects to be combined but solely the objectless journey"—as event.[73] Thus the two characteristics of exhaustion necessary to "abolish the real"—(1) the most extreme indeterminacy and (2) the pursuit of the formless—are manifest in Fluxus performance and artworks. Indeterminacy was a form of resistance for Fluxus: resistance to the political and cultural present as well as what they considered to be an underlying perceptual passivity. Through these events, Fluxus promotes a conception of life "based on ambiguities, ruptures, and incongruities."[74] Thus, the unity of art and life means that life is finally understood in its full complexity and living movement.

III.Conclusion: Fluxus Practices as Nomadological Events

By introducing movement into form and transitivity into the artwork, Fluxus practices are nomadological events. There have been attempts to interpret Fluxus as nomadological based on their international composition and movements. I differentiate my position, first, because I want to locate the nomadological moment within the artwork, not as a descriptor of their membership. Second, I worry that the latter perspective risks being too literal or importing subsequent interpretations of nomadism that lead to a less precise interpretation of the term, possibly occluding its conceptual nuance. Therefore it is important to go back to what Deleuze and Guattari mean by nomadology. First, in terms of conceptual persona, they differentiate nomads from migrants. While migrants move from point to point, the nomad exists in the intermezzo, the between of two points. In nomadology, what happens in between is more important than the goal of reaching another point. In other words, nomads do not necessarily move; they occupy space differently. Nomads distribute themselves in a constantly renegotiated open space, a *nomos* that is experimental and fluid. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari are not advocating that everyone literally uproot themselves, become nomads and roam the earth; they are suggesting that nomadology reveals a different way of being in relation to space and others that can be incorporated and mobilized for political activity and change. It offers a way of living outside the model of the state apparatus, which preserves itself vociferously through domination and control of spaces to make social order and rule intractably sedentary. The wandering or movement that happens via nomadology happens in place.

> Voyage in place: that is the name of all intensities, even if they also develop in extension. To think is to voyage… what distinguishes the two kinds of voyages is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being for space.[75]

Thus, nomadology is both topological, characterized by a constantly shifting borderline, always in tension with the existing dominant social order, and noological, a critical consciousness of constantly questioning and resisting socially coded or rote paradigms.[76] A nomadological consciousness would be one that is prepared by the sensitivity to immanent life that I have advocated—a sensitivity to the affects of indeterminacy, the otherwise imperceptible, the vacuoles and holes that leave room for the future within

the present and can be the inspiration for drawing creative intersections and new lines of development. The affects of Fluxus prepare the sensibility necessary for the critical consciousness that is nomadology.

As Harren suggests, Fluxus' "variability enacted a dismantling, unworking, and reconstruction of the very meaning of form."[77] Thus, there is a principle of *désoeuvrement* at work in Fluxus. Its formlessness—or propensity to reinvent, mutate, and transform—helps us understand Fluxus as a community without community.[78] This is interesting because not only does it provide a framework for a new nomadological way of being towards others that does not take identification and therefore exclusion as its paradigm; it also offers a re-conception of the artwork as an entity that can survive through transmutations.[79] Fluxus provides a model for art as nomadological, for affects that can become detached and extracted from their art object and reconnected for future becomings.

Finally, by applying the understanding of nomadology as a transformation of the spatiotemporal dynamics from within, I wonder if we can conceive of the Fluxus sensibility as having transcended the art world altogether and Fluxus' creative energy as having seeped into the cultural landscape. From one of the founding members of Fluxus: "The Fluxus of 1992 is not the Fluxus of 1962 and if it pretends to be—then it is fake. The real Fluxus moves out from its old center into many directions, and the paths are not easy to recognize without lining up new pieces, middle pieces and old pieces together."[80] Though for some it would seem to suggest that Fluxus is no more, that this spilling over is a kind of dissipation; perhaps by considering Deleuze's concept of virtuality we can understand that this giant release of creative energy never ceased to exist but went underground. Rolnik's work is quite suggestive in this respect. The energy and desire that has been "pimped out", i.e. captured by capitalism, doesn't have to remain so. If Fluxus can be considered an ongoing social practice that has moved underground, it can become nomadic again—it can flow. So where did that upside-down counter-cultural creativity go? It is here, persistently operating *within* and *between* the cracks and fissures of our world if only we become sensitive to it; this would truly be a minor art in Deleuze's sense, an art that happens in the intervals. Deleuze says that language can renew itself and creativity can be renewed in exhaustion—moving from the realm of the possible to the impossible, being attuned to the *imprévisible* and unimaginable that gets refused as so much detritus when it does not sync up with imperatives of growth and innovation as the indices of success that dominate this particular present; "it rises up or becomes taut in its holes, its

gaps or its silences" where others, even, have ceased to believe it is possible and where the mainstream and capitalist elite has no purchase.[81]

The idea is that salvation does not come from the outside; there is no eschatological future, only the eviscerated hull of a present that we have to mine. Deleuze says that a people, a future, is only made possible out of great need. We should look to those whose lives that have been made impossible by capitalism, to places where global exploitation and political erasure have created unassimilable pockets which render capitalist discourse and idealizations nonsensical and moot, in order to humbly see what kind of future and what kinds of creativity comes out of these exhausted spaces and struggles. For Deleuze, the future (minor) people, future (minor) humanity, will be a bastard people, inferior, dominated, always in becoming, always incomplete," one that renders the values of the present, including forms of the creative that merely replicate the ideals of capital, preposterous—impossible.[82] "Men's only hope lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable."[83]

True change and true creativity indicate a transformation in kind rather than merely the perpetuation of the new. The "to have done with" implicit in the concept of exhaustion does not indicate an ending, but the possibility of a new beginning which has to clear away the prerogatives of a present that do not leave space for it. One way to prepare for this future is to recognize that we have to change the models that we use and the affects that we engage with. The first step would be to make people aware that these intervals and spaces exist—to find ways to hold them open. Creating and perpetuating openings and intervals, making manifest the oft-overlooked "between" where the minor, the forgotten, the exhausted reside. The forces of the future will not and should not take the same form of the elitist "creative class" mentality that papers over inequality, rejects real imaginative difference for a facsimile of creation as sleight of hand difference and trademarked innovation. Creative resistance means opening up spaces in which we can heed the cries of those whose suffering is like birthing pains bringing a new necessity into a world that has become impossible for them—if only we have the ears to hear it. Art that makes us aware of impossibility itself, that, like Fluxus, focuses on the perpetuation of the between as an inexhaustible resource, can prepare us for this transformation in kind of creation.

Notes

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 108 (italics indicate authors' original emphasis).

2 Paul Klee, *Paul Klee on Modern Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

3 From the mid-1940's onward, Adorno warns against the leveling and pacifying effects of the culture industry, perpetuated by capitalism. In 1964, Susan Sontag identified a new sensibility in the art world that "sees everything in quotation marks" and "converts the serious into the frivolous," a harbinger of the demise of a certain countercultural and political energy. In terms of the growing suspicion of consumer takeover of culture, one can look to figures such as Adorno and Marcuse. Also in 1964 in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse argues that cultural distractions render us too comfortable to revolt. Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991); Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'," In A*gainst Interpretation: And Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 2001), 280 & 277; Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

4 Stephen Wilmer, "After Dada: Fluxus as a Nomadic Art Movement," *New Theatre Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (2017): 59.

5 It is Piece Four of Sylvano Bussotti's *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor.* Bogue calls it the most important image in the book, an example of rhizomatic art prefatory of not only the first plateau, but the book as a whole. See Ronald Bogue, "Scoring the Rhizome: Bussotti's Musical Diagram," *Deleuze Studies*, 8, no. 4 (2014): 470-490.

6 See Janae Sholtz, "Concluding Event," in *The Invention of a People: Heidegger and Deleuze on Art and the Political* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 265-279.

7 Rob Pope, *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice,* (USA: Routledge, 2005), 19.

8 Ibid, 40.

9 Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray and Ulf Wuggenig, "On the Strange Case of 'Creativity' and its Troubled Resurrection," In *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the 'Creative Industries,'* ed. Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray and Ulf Wuggenig (United Kingdom: MPG Books Group, 2011), 1. 2011, 1.

10 Pope, *Creativity*, 41.

11 Geoff Pfeifer, "The Question of Capitalist Desire: Deleuze and Guattari with Marx," *Continental Thought and Theory A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* 1, no. 4 (October 2017): 256

12 Simon Hajdini, "Capitalism and Repetition: Marx and Lacan," *Crisis and Critique* 1, no. 3, (2014): 224.

13 Tucker, Robert (ed), *The Marx Engels Reader* (New York and London: Norton, 1978), 305.

14 Pfeifer, "The Question of Capitalist Desire," 256.

15 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 29.

16 See Dan Smith, Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Toward an Immanent Theory of Ethics," *Parrhesia*, No.2 (2007): 73.

17 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem, and H. R. Lane (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 229.

18 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 224.

19 Sulie Rolnik, "The Geopolitics of Pimping," trans. Brian Holmes, in *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the 'Creative Industries,'* ed. Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray and Ulf Wuggenig (United Kingdom: MPG Books Group, 2011), 28.

20 Rolnik, "The Geopolitics of Pimping," 29.

21 Pope, *Creativity*, 13.

22 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 259.

23 Deleuze and Guattari say that monetary flows are perfectly schizophrenic but bounded by the immanent axiomatic of capitalism—putting these in service of the capitalist order and that capitalism constantly arrests the schizo process and turns the subject of this process into a confined clinical entity (*Anti-Oedipus*, 246-7).

24 Gilles Deleuze, "What is the Creative Act?," in *Two Regimes of Madness, Texts and Interviews* 1976-1995. edited by David Lapoujade, trans. A. Hodges, and M. Taormina (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007), 323-4.

25 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 30.

26 See Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, 3, 7 40, 108, and 207.

27 Richard Florida suggests that a "creative class," defined as innovative professionals such as programmers, designers, and information workers, will contribute to the reinvigoration of urban areas and the rise of a new economic and social order. Florida's work is an example of the thorough imbrication of creativity and market forces, as well as the exclusivity of "creative class" based on a certain model of capitalist success. Since its publication, many critics have noted that Florida's work did not account for how the innovations of the so-called creative class mainly service the needs of a particular class at the expense of lower-income neighborhoods. Florida, himself, came to recognize that the social emphasis on consumption and rising inequalities are significant barriers to his optimistic vision. See Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, (New York: Basic Books, 2004); Richard Florida, "The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited." Citilab June 25, 2012, https://www.citylab.com/life/2012/06/rise-creative-class-revisited/2220/

28 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 1972-1990, trans. M. Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 137.

29 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 10.

30 See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.

31 See Steven Shaviro, "Capitalism, Consumerism, and Waste," *The Pinocchio Theory*. July 21, 2008. http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=651, accessed April 2017.

32 Raunig, et al, "On the Strange Case," 4.

33 Emma Jeanes, "Resisting Creativity, Creating the New. A Deleuzian Perspective on Creativity," *Creativity and Innovation Management* 15, no. 2 (2006), 127-8.

34 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 204.

35 Pope, *Creativity*; Jeanes 2006.

36 Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 133.

37 Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. trans. P. Patton (New York: Columbia Press, 1994), 211-212.

38 Pope, *Creativity*, xvi.

39 For Deleuze, the Virtual is a category that "possess a full reality by itself," only yet to be determined (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 211).

40 Deleuze delineates two modes: *l'exhaustif*, (the science of exhausting the possible) and *l'exhausté* (one who renounces all need, goal, preference, or significance). Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted," trans. *SubStance* 24, no. 3. Issue 78. (1995), 5.

41 Peter Pál Pelbart, *Cartographies of Exhaustion: Nihilism Inside Out*, trans. J. Laudenberger, F. R. Palazuelos (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2015), 129-30.

42 Pelbart *Cartographies of Exhaustion*, 128.

43 Deleuze "The Exhausted," 3.

44 Burkoff, Alan "What is Fluxus?" You Tube Video, 4.35. April 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGZ9OS1Oj14 (transcribed from recorded interview)

45 Dick Higgins, "The Origin of 'Happening,'" *American Speech* 51, no. 3–4 (1976): 271; Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," *Leonardo* 34, no. 1 (2001): 49-50.

46 Ken Friedman, "Freedom? Nothingness? Time? Fluxus and the Laboratory of Ideas," *Theory Culture Society* 29, no. 7-8. (2012): 392.

47 Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 161.

48 Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 12.

49 "(1) temporally, as event, with no distinct beginning, or origin, and no end; (2) in terms of its composition, Fluxus is heterogeneous and hybrid. It is never possible to specify its full meaning nor its membership; (3) in terms of genre, it is anti-art, and by liberating affects from traditional modes of expression, scrambles significance, order, and purpose; (4) in terms of its aesthetic, it is in between art and life; (5) topologically, it embraces the paradigm of de-centering and offers us a way of envisioning artworks as mobile processes, rather than stable objects, and, finally, (6) for its overall paradigm, it bears the mark of indeterminacy. It accomplishes this aim by embracing uncertainty and risking randomness." Sholtz, *The Invention of a People*, 266.

50 Natilee Harren, *Objects without Object: The Artwork in Flux 1958-1969* (PhD diss., UCLA, 2013). http://escholarship.org/uc/item/57q9d2m9.

51 Harren, *Objects without Object*, 36.

52 George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 157.

53 "Although Fluxus has often been historically categorized as a direction in the visual arts, it was in fact first and foremost a performance arts organization." See Owen Smith, *Fluxus the History of an Attitude* California: San Diego State University, 1998), 54.

54 Just to be clear, I am not saying that performance-art as such is "unique to Fluxus" but that it is a central component of their work; the emphasis on performance as well as the particular kind of performance is what is important. Even in the realm of performed pieces, what Fluxus was doing was considered avant-garde (as was the work of John Cage in the musical realm, which is the inspiration for Fluxus experimentations with chance and indeterminacy). I am building up a general description of the nature of an event score. One aspect is that it confounds the tendency to think of art as object; another is that event scores introduce challenges to certain parameters within the genre of performance-based art.

55 Brecht, George. "The Origin of Events," in *Happening & Fluxus: Materialien*, exhibition catalogue, ed. H. Sohm (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970), unnumbered.

56 Friedman, Ken. "Forty Years of Fluxus," 2002. Accessed February 9, 2018. http://www.mostowa2.net/angelpastor/kfriedman40yearsoffluxus.html

57 Natasha Lushetich, "The Event Score as a Perpetuum Mobile," *Text and Performance* 32, no. 1 (2012): 2.

58 George Brecht's event score, *Drip Music* (*Drip Event*) (1959). See Ken Friedman, Owen Smith, and Lauren Sawchyn (Eds.), *The Fluxus Performance Workbook* (Performance Research e-Publications, 2002), 22.

59 Quote by Higgins in reference to his reaction to Satie's "Vexations," repeated 840 times in a 24hr performance. See Natasha Lushetich, *Fluxus: The Practice of Non-Duality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014, 50).

60 Darwent, Charles. "George Brecht: Composer and Artist with the Fluxus Movement Who Pioneered Conceptual Art." *Independent* (obituaries). March 17, 2009.

61 Deleuze and Guattari *What is Philosophy?*, 199.

62 Smith, *Fluxus the History of an Attitude*, 235.

63 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 173

64 Smith, *Fluxus the History of an Attitude*, 227.

65 The score is printed in Alison Knowles, Thomas Schmit, Benjamin Patterson, and Phil Corner, *The Four Suits* (New York: Something Else Press, 1965), 166–168.

66 "Piano Activities: FluxClang! Sensational uncovered Source of Fluxus Movement History" from *Klavierzerstörungen in Kunst und Popkultur* (Berlin: Reimer, 2012), accessed April 2017. http://piano-activities.de/englindex.html

67 "Piano Activities: FluxClang!"

68 "Piano Activities: FluxClang!"

69 Lushetich, "The Event Score as a Perpetuum Mobile," 1-19.

70 Lushetich "The Event Score as a Perpetuum Mobile," 1.

71 Lushetich, *Fluxus: The Practice of Non-Duality*, 49-50.

72 Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 12.

73 Ibid.

74 Smith, *Fluxus the History of an Attitude*, 234.

75 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia Volume 2.* trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 482.

76 Ibid, 351–87.

77 Harren, *Objects without Object*, 32.

78 Ibid, 28.

79 Ibid, 32.

80 "Fluxus Portal for the Internet." Fluxus Portal. 2006. Accessed July 17, 2017. http://www.fluxus.org

81 Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 12.

82 Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. M. Greco and D. Smith (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 14.

83 Gilles Deleuze, "Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Antonio Negri," trans. Martin Joughin, *Futur Anterieur* 1, (Spring 1990). Accessed January 2018. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze3.htm

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Somaster Fiction and the Avatarial Game Body

Daniel Paul O'Brien

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the elements of the avatarial game body. Using Don Ihde's philosophy of technology, in addition with Richard Shusterman's concept of somaesthetics, I break the avatar down into basic parts. I consider these parts through Shusterman's understanding of the soma and Ihde's postphenomenological discussions of human-technology relationships to devise somaster fiction. Somaster fiction, as I argue, is a convergence between the player's real-life body and a computer game experience, presented through avatarial onscreen bodies in games such as the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise, and invisible non-avatarial agency, discussed in games like *The Novelist* and *This War of Mine*.

This paper incorporates each of Ihde and Shusterman's main ideas about the body, which coalesce during the gameplay experience to enable players to become masters of an avatarial body and virtual topographical space. Somaster fiction discusses the different human-technology relationships that occur during gameplay and how a player is extended into the game world via controllers and avatars. This paper also touches on what a body is in accordance with Ihde and Shusterman, and how these concepts of bodyhood are reverberated within the game world.

Keywords

Postphenomenology
Embodiment
Avatar
Computer Gaming
Don Ihde

Introduction

Taking a leap of faith off the precipice of a virtual cliff edge, throwing a grappling hook and swinging onto a higher and more dangerous rock are essential elements of the action-adventure franchise games *Uncharted*[1]. Throughout these games, this type of avatarial control affords a player an elevated feeling of aliveness, excitement and vertigo, which in many cases will supersede our own mortal limitations of such risky thrill-seeking corporeality and acrobatic dexterity. The avatarial adventurer, Nathan Drake, protagonist of the first four installments of the *Uncharted* series, typically carries out such maneuverers with ease in the game world. He leaps, swims, climbs, swings and rappels from one near impossible location to another, causing my hands to become slick with sweat on the game controller as I watch Drake cling onto a vertiginous ledge.

The significance of this sweat can be attributed to the high phenomenological investment of how my body is enfolded into the body of an avatar. Similar to Vivian Sobchack's renowned account of how her fingers feel the movement of onscreen hands,[2] a phenomenological relationship between a player and a game avatar is often at the heart of a computer game experience; particularly (but not exclusively) to when the avatar takes on a humanoid look and feel.

A player's relationship with a screen avatar is, to some extent, comparable with Jacques Lacan's concept of (mis)recognition that takes place during the mirror stage.[3] This is the idea that an infant upon gazing at itself in the mirror for the first time will develop their sense of self by seeing a more complete and accomplished "I" in the mirror. Hitherto, the infant's experience of selfhood is what Malcolm Bowie describes as an "assemblage of fragmented limbs."[4] The mirror image enables the child to mis(recognize) their reflective selves as being more complete and having greater control. This notion continues through adolescence to adulthood, in which the mirror has been replaced with the cinema screen, or in this instance, computer games, whereupon players mis(recognize) their self through the avatarial body. In gaming, players become assimilated with the avatar in what David Sundow has referred to as an "electro-umbilical hookup."[5] As Sundow suggests, the avatar becomes an extension of the player's physical gesticulation.

Rune Klevjer's 'Enter the Avatar' puts forth a similar proposition, when he describes how the practice of avatarial control is akin to the

mastery of a prosthetic marionette that is "hooked up to the player's fingers by invisible strings."[6] As Klevjer asserts, gameplay progress is achieved by incorporating the avatar "as the on-screen extension of his or her own body, via the physical extension of the gamepad."[7] Consequentially the player experiences a form of shared identity that is necessary in order to progress through the game world.

In the field of computer games studies much has been written about this notion of shared identity and avatarial embodiment. James Newman's 'The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame' for example considers the dichotomy of the player relationship in terms of an On-Line/Off-Line split.[8] For Newman, On-Line pertains to the direct influence and execution of movement through haptic controls that a player exercises during gameplay. In contrast, Off-Line is used to consider any game element that disrupts this agential link. This may take the form of cut-scenes, loading screens, replays or stats about the player's performance, such as position and lap time at the end of racing games. Fundamentally, Newman uses the idea of an On-Line/Off-Line approach to consider the complexity of the player relationship and to argue that computer games are misunderstood as a purely interactive medium. Newman's paper foregrounds the idea that computer game players take on shifting roles as users and observers, which is a notion that this paper builds upon.

This paper also channels into other issues in game studies around embodiment, particularly Martti Lahti's paper, 'As We Become Machines: Corporealized Pleasures in Video Games.' Within his work, Lahti describes videogames as a technologically enhanced other that replaces and extends a natural body. As he states, games produce a "symptomatic site of a confusion or transgression of boundaries between the body and technology that characterizes contemporary culture."[9] This is reminiscent of Scott Bukatman's book *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*, which similarly articulates how video games "represent the most complete symbiosis generally available between human and computer—a fusion of spaces, goals, options and perspectives."[10] Similar to the work of Sherry Turkle,[11] Ted Friedman,[12] James Paul Gee,[13] RT Nørgård[14] and many others, Lahti's work considers how video games have been driven by the desire to "erase the boundary separating the player from the game world and to play up tactile involvement."[15]

For Lahti, aesthetical developments from 2D to 3D graphics, combined with sensory apparatuses such as steering wheels, vibrating

controllers or any other haptic gaming device, enables a sensory melding between real and virtual space. As Lahti discerns,

> this delirium of virtual mobility, sensory feedback, and the incorporation of the player into a larger system thus [ties] the body into a cybernetic loop with the computer, where its affective thrills can spill over into the player's space.[16]

The screen becomes a technologized form of vision that extends the player's body into its virtual realm, composing a hybridity between body and technology, where players rehearse the controls of their avatars until intuitively mastered.

Just as Drake in *Uncharted 4* negotiates and masters his environment through increased stamina and dexterity compared with that of a real-life body, so a player must proficiently negotiate their topographical game worlds through the mastery of an avatarial body. This mastery of the body in story-based computer games is what I call somaster fiction, a portmanteau of 'soma' and 'master', and a play on Richard Shusterman's concept of somaesthetics. Within this paper I combine somaesthetics (which I will describe in due course) with Don Ihde's postphenomenological hypothesis of human-technology relationships. Using Ihde's framework, I will parse the computer game experience into basic elements as a way to consider the core essentials of computer gaming from a phenomenological perspective. To begin this investigation, I turn to the theoretical framework of postphenomenology, set out by Ihde's philosophy of technology.

Postphenomenology

Don Ihde's postphenomenology is a philosophical concept that considers the relationship between a human body and a technology. Ihde's work considers the ubiquity of tools and how such devices shape human existence, which is pervasive across our lifeworld. Following Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*,[17] Ihde's work considers how different technologies extend, limit and alter the ontology of human experience. From bicycles and automobiles that increase our bodily

sense of speed through transport, to the extension of human vision through eyeglasses, Ihde's postphenomenology contemplates how technological apparatuses reconfigure the human body, altering natural subjectivity.

Postphenomenology follows the combined phenomenological philosophy of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, each of whom respectively discuss concepts about the human body, primarily how it is the receptor for knowing the world around us (Merleau-Ponty), [18] and how this receptor is modified and reshaped by tools (Heidegger). [19] Ihde weaves these theoretical strands together to form his notion of postphenomenology, which I adopt within this paper by utilizing Ihde's human-technology relationships.

Ihde's work identifies four main human-technology relationships, which, as I am arguing, are the basic components that make up a computer game experience. These consist of: embodiment, hermeneutic, alterity and background relations. As a way to understand these relationships, beyond the description that follows, illustrations for each of these terms are presented in figures 1-4. Embodiment (figure 1) denotes a perception or experience *through* a technology as a tool becomes synthesized with a body in a particular way. Eyeglasses, writing utensils, a computer game controller or any other type of technology that is positioned between body and world, providing the body with some form of technological extension, where we act or perceive through the artefact, is what constitutes the embodiment relation.

A hermeneutical relation (figure 2), in contrast to the embodiment relationship of seeing or acting *through* a technology, is an experience *of* a technology. "Hermeneutic" therefore pertains to a technology that we read, such as clocks, thermometers, maps, books, computer game graphics or any other tool that marks a separation between body and technology. As I will show throughout this paper, computer games possess hermeneutic qualities, insomuch that a player always reads a screen.

An alterity relation (figure 3), unlike the first two examples, is a case in which a technology (from the perspective of the human) seemingly takes on a life of its own. In computer games, adversaries, non-player characters (NPCs), complicated moving environments are all elements of the alterity relationship, which provides the pleasure of the challenge. As Ihde states, alterity is

the sense of interacting with something other than me, the technological competitor. In competition there is a kind of dialogue or exchange. It is the quasi-animation, the quasi-otherness of the technology that fascinates and challenges. I must beat the machine, or it will beat me. [20]

Finally, background relations (figure 4) are the encounters that humans have with a technology in the periphery of their awareness. Household lighting for example is a domestic instance of the "fringe awareness"[21] that this technology has in relation to a human user. As Ihde asserts, background relations do "not usually occupy focal attention but nevertheless [condition] the context"[22] for the human user. In computer games, background relations are a prime element of gameplay, particularly in the form of graphical virtual space, which plays a significant part in conditioning what an avatar can and cannot do, such as the way the locations in the *Uncharted* games condition Drake's abilities and the player's controls to climb, swim, drive or attack depending on the context of the level.
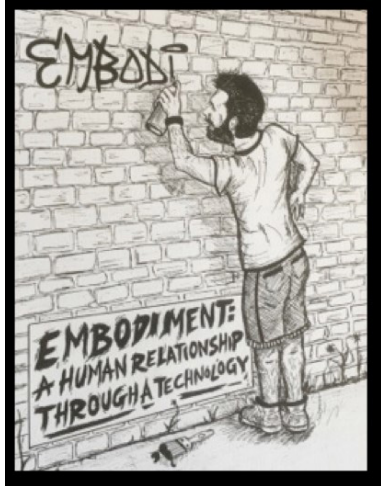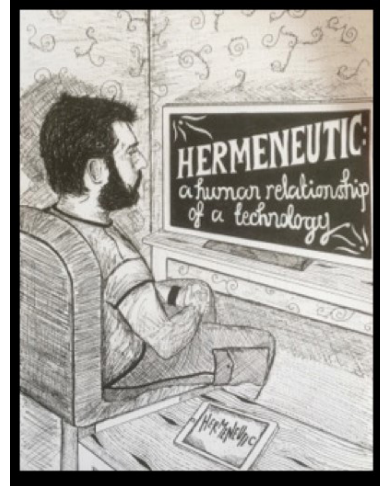
Figure 1: Embodiment Relation [23]
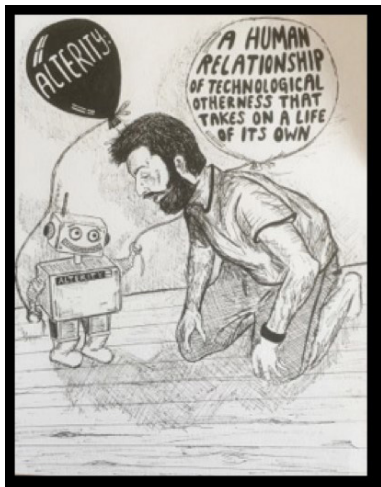

Figure 2: Hermeneutic Relation[24]

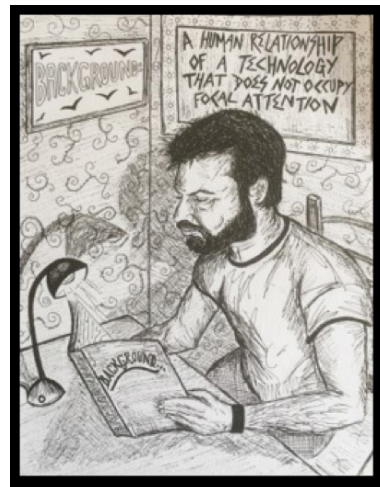Figure 3: Alterity Relation [25]

Figure 4: Background Relation[26]

In computer gaming, all four of Ihde's human-technology relations are united, as background, alterity, hermeneutic and embodiment relations come together. The combination of these four human-technology ingredients, as I argue, structures the player to encounter the specific type of experience that I am calling 'somaster fiction'.
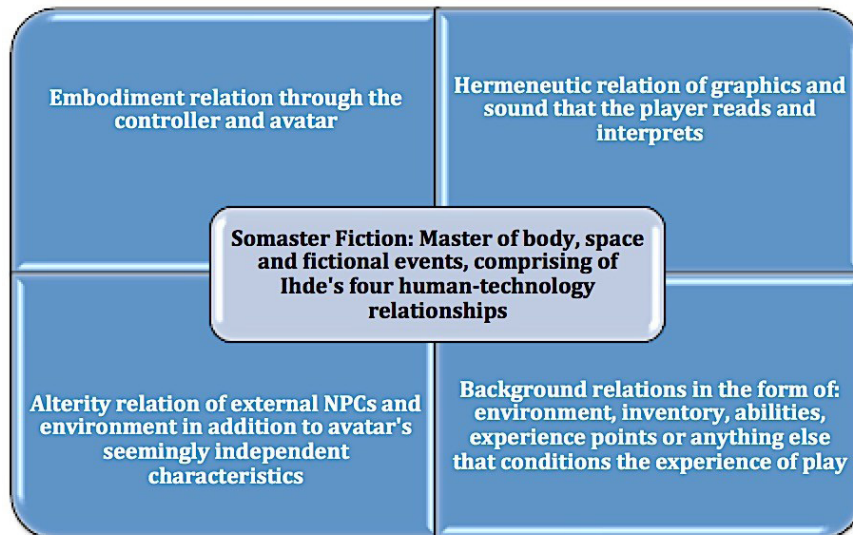
As noted above, Ihde's postphenomenology makes up one half of this term. The other half pertains to Shusterman's writings on the soma from his work on *Somaesthetics*.

Somaesthetics

In *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Richard Shusterman describes somaesthetics (a neologism of 'soma' and 'aesthetics') as a discipline comprising of both theory and practice in relation to how sensory perception is used by the human body. And how in turn, the human body can hone and improve such sensory appreciation.[27] In his own words, Shusterman describes somaesthetics as a branch of philosophy that is "concerned with the critical study and meliorative cultivation of how we experience and use the living body (or soma) as a site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning."[28] For Shusterman, such meliorative cultivation of the soma consists of two dimensions. The first is the way that the body is attuned to proprioceptive sensations, such as breathing, muscular awareness and other forms of inner sentient perception as a body. Examples among many include: hunger, satisfaction, calmness, stress, tiredness and tranquility. Shusterman's first use of somaesthetics therefore relates to the body (or soma) as a dynamic instrument or medium for perception.

The second dimension pertains to the body as a site for self-creation and expression through its physical materiality. How we dress, groom and purport ourselves as bodies, enables us to convey values about our personhood to others. This is something particularly relevant in Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto* franchise, where the opportunity to dress or move avatars in particular ways, such as dance challenges in *GTA San Andreas*,[29] will gain the player respect with other NPCs. Shusterman contends that these two dimensions of the soma, inner bodily perception and external bodily representation, are in practice connected to one another. This connection is why he uses the terms soma instead of body. As he explains, "[t]he term 'soma' indicates a living, feeling, sentient body rather than a mere physical body that could be devoid of life and sensation."[30] Put differently, Shusterman's use of soma instead of 'body' is for the intent of identifying the body as distinct from a mere surface and material interpretation as a flesh bag. Ultimately, a body can be dead and have no feelings; Shusterman therefore uses soma to denote the body as an existing, feeling site of sentient subjectivity.

Soma derives from the Greek word σῶμα, meaning body, and it is through an ancient Greek history that Shusterman comes to develop his term, which originates from one of his earlier works on pragmatist aesthetics. Within this book of the same name,[31] he argues that pragmatist aesthetics "has the purpose of bringing art and life together."[32] For Shusterman, "pragmatism is a philosophy that emphasizes that the basis of thinking is acting, [and that humans] need to think and believe in order to act."[33] As Shusterman notes, wisdom, spirituality and perception is honed through cultivation of the body, a concept that is transferable to computer gaming. Within gaming, perception and knowledge of the game environment is similarly obtained through the corporeal mastery of the controller, avatar and virtual space.

Shusterman identifies three aspects in somaesthetics, consisting of the experiential, the performative and the representational dimension. The experiential is the element of experience that makes someone feel good or better through somatic practices.[34] He identifies yoga for example, as a method that improves the body as a site for sentient subjectivity through development of movement and breathing capacities, enabling a feel of invigoration. Such feelings of 'betterness' can also be attained representatively. For instance, cosmetic surgery is a commercial practice in which the body as a site of representation is aesthetically improved.[35]The representational dimension is therefore "a culture largely built on the

division of body from spirit and economically driven by the capitalism of conspicuous consumption that is fueled by the marketing of body images."[36] In contrast, the performative dimension is something Shusterman describes as "performance-oriented disciplines [that] aim either at external exhibition or at enhancing one's inner feelings of power, skill, and health."[37]

Henrik Smed Nielsen's book, *Playing Computer Games: Somatic Experience and Experience of the Somatic*, utilizes Shusterman's approach, arguing that the experiential, representational and performative dimensions of the soma, "simultaneously run through and constitute the process of playing computer games."[38] Nielsen argues that computer games, in terms of the experiential, are designed to make players feel good by making the gamer feel as if he or she is there within the game world.[39] He argues that such feelings of goodness are not limited to wholesome or ethical wellbeing (for most games exercise some level of violence) but rather, that such goodness resides in experiences that are "*satisfyingly rich*, through perceptual shock."[40] In other words, a feeling of invigoration can be achieved by game experiences that place the player's soma in scenarios of exhilaration.

In terms of representation, Nielsen argues that human avatar bodies within computer games conform to "certain *physical ideals* within Western culture."[41] His research is based upon two papers written by Nicole Martins, who identifies how the look of video game characters supersedes the average look of most men and women. In 'A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters',[42] Martins notes how such avatarial representations are presented as "systematically larger than the average American male [body], in relation to muscle mass."[43] Similarly, Nielsen via Martins[44] identifies how the bodies of female avatars are usually portrayed much more thinly than the average female form.[45] This can be seen in characters such as Lara Croft from the *Tomb Raider*[46] franchise, Faith Connors in *Mirror's Edge*[47]and Jill Valentine from the *Resident Evil*[48] series, amongst many others.[49]

The performative aspect of Shusterman's somaesthetics again translates coherently to computer games, in which motor skills through corporeal practice improve over time through haptic rehearsal. Consequentially, Nielson highlights equilibrium between somaesthetics and computer games, a notion that is adopted and repurposed within this work. As I am arguing, avatar-based games utilize the performative, representative and experiential dimensions of the soma, which is channelled through Ihde's concept of postphenomenological human-technology relationships.

Through this corporeal combination of Ihde and Shusterman, players hone their gaming skills to become masters of a real and virtual soma experience. When playing an engrossing story-based computer game, I experience a feeling of excitement (Shusterman/Nielsen) and an experiential sense of anthropomorphism through the representation of the avatarial body. As I become assimilated to this screen body, learning to maneuver it through the performative dimension of the soma, so it becomes a tool that extends my gestures (Ihde), which in turn permits me to access the fictional universe.

The soma as a meliorative site for body and narrative cultivation through mastery of controls, avatar and game space, is how I formulate the notion of somaster fiction. In open world games such as *Skyrim*[50] or *Fallout 4*,[51] all of Shusterman and Ihde's concepts are woven together, constructing a somaster style of game story. *Skyrim* and *Fallout 4* require a player to construct an avatar, choosing race, sex, gender, body type and appearance, which upon completion, spawns their avatar visibly into the game world.

In *Skyrim*, the choices that the player makes open the character up to different possibilities. Different races have different abilities in the form of strength, weapon or magic skills, craftsmanship, stealth or thievery. These early choices guide the type of game style that the player will perform. Once the player's avatar enters the vast land of Skyrim, they are free to explore. Through this exploration, my avatar comes across many towns, villages, caverns and landmarks inhabited by NPCs, who offer me rewards for missions. I am free to undertake these tasks or decline them whenever I choose. Thus I am not confined to linearity but do need to engage in such tasks in order to increase my strength and gain experience points.

Experience and rehearsal within gaming become the key to somatic mastery of the topographical game space. Every attack I perform, with the vast arsenal of weaponry at my disposal, increases my swordsmanship, archery skills or spell casting powers. The more I do the stronger I become, and the further I travel, the more space I command. Each time I discover a new landmark, the location is automatically added to a map (enabling me to fast travel to the location whenever I choose). The map is thus filled in through my movements and actions, which by mastering, opens the game world to the player. Somaster fiction therefore equates to Ihde's embodiment, hermeneutical, alterity and background relationships, enfolded and linked into one another, uniting a virtual body (the avatar) with a real-life body (the player).

By using the controller, I embody, and am simultaneously extended by both the technological hardware of the apparatus and the virtual avatar; both become extensions of my corporeality. During gameplay I experience a sense of speed and freedom through the virtual body navigating the lands. However, working in the background is a stamina limit, presented as a hermeneutical bar at the bottom of the screen that appears only when the player is sprinting. The longer I run, the sooner the avatar's stamina depletes, until eventually I feel the controls becoming less effective and sluggish. When this happens, I must stop and rest to replenish the bar whereupon it will disappear from view, retreating into the background of the game experience. This background relation thus serves to condition the perceived freedom of movement. It limits the possibility for what can be done and also sets the parameters for the challenge in the game.

In *Skyrim*, the running ability is also hindered by other elements of the game's background such as inventory (armor, weapons and crafting materials) that my character wears and carries. When picking up items, they are stored within an inventory screen within the background of the game, ready to be equipped or put to use when the player requires them. Each item is assigned a weight value offsetting a carry value that my avatar can manage. If the avatar is overladen with inventory, movement becomes strenuous, and the avatar will not be able to run, while movement on the controller will feel heavy and sluggish.

Such detail offers the player a sense of realism, where real-world gravitational rules are loosely established in the virtual. This offers familiarity while allowing the player to make bespoke decisions about what to carry and leave behind, inevitably steering the course of events into a customized experience of fictionality. The embodiment and background relationships work in relation to the hermeneutical graphics of the game and the alterity of the enemies, challenging the player through combat. Within *Skyrim* and other open world games like it, the avatar body must 'work out' and train, like a real-life gym body, to increase strength and stamina through repetitive practice. As Torben Grodal proclaims in his writings about computer games, the key to advancing through the experience of computer gaming relies upon the repetition of cognition and motor skills that must be practiced until mastered. Gaming is thus a process of repetitive rehearsal[52] that is predicated on the sequence of "*unfamiliarity* and *challenge*, then *mastery*, and finally *automation*."[53] This investment of rehearsal, time and experience within *Skyrim* or any game, unlocks power ups, greater endurance and skills for the avatar and player's body through the combination of Ihde's four relationships.

The somaster body is about mastery, control and improvement over an avatarial body through repetitive practice, which falls in line with Shusterman's concept of somaesthetics. Somaster fiction is experiential in Shusterman's sense of the term in the way that gameplay, as stated by Nielsen and supported firsthand by my own experiences, is enjoyable and makes a player feel good through perceptual shock in a controlled environment. Somaster fiction is also performative and representational in accordance with Shusterman's hypothesis. Gameplay, as Nielsen highlights, is performative through corporeal motor skills upon controllers, and representational, in accordance with how the avatar looks to the player. This is in addition to how the avatar also looks to in-game characters or other (online) players. These elements of Shusterman's somaesthetics, combined with Ihde's four human-technology relationships, are the basis for the idea of somaster fiction, which to recapitulate, is mastery of the soma through the engagement between the body and technology of the controller and avatar.

Present and Absent Avatars

Now that a preliminary understanding of somaster fiction has been established (through Ihde's four human-technology relationships and Shusterman's somaesthetics), the following section will flesh these ideas out by analyzing three different types of avatarial experience. Here I will be considering somaster fiction and the playing body through present and absent avatars. I begin with the visibly present, fast-paced action avatar popularized in game franchises such as *Uncharted*, *Skyrim* and *Grand Theft Auto*. These agile and forceful avatars that require sustained input from the player will be compared with slower and more methodical types of games. As I will demonstrate, such games often utilize imperceptible absent avatars, which I explore through the thought-provoking game *The Novelist*. Finally, I combine the fast-paced present avatar with the slower methodical absent avatar to consider a different type of playing experience through *This War of Mine*. To begin, I now consider the action game and the visibly present avatar. This opens with a brief discussion about what a body is (through Ihde) and its relationship to tools (through Heidegger).

Present Avatars

In games such as *Skyrim*, *Red Dead Redemption*,[54] or franchises such as *Fallout* or *Grand Theft Auto*, to name a few, a player works their way through a world and a story by way of an avatarial body. This virtual body has undergone significant transformation through the developmental epochs from early computer consoles. Andrew Burn and Gareth Schott have addressed this idea in their work, 'Heavy Hero or Digital Dummy,' stating how the avatar has evolved to a multimodal two-part structure consisting of a fictional character and digital tool that interdependently leak into one another. Burn and Schott predicate this notion primarily on an analysis of the character Cloud from the action adventure game *Final Fantasy 7*,[55] but this idea can be applied to any avatar in any open world story game.

Fundamentally, Burn and Schott surmise that the player avatar relationship is a hybridized phenomenon of a game text. Just as the word *text* derives from the Latin word *texere*, meaning to weave, the player avatar relationship in fictional games similarly weaves together an experience that is both *read* entwined with one that is *played*. This flags up the avatarial body in terms of Ihde's hermeneutical and embodiment relationships, as well as Shusterman's somaesthetics, whereupon the body exists simultaneously as a site for feeling and sensory perception, in tandem to representation. This notion is also echoed in Shaun Gallagher's book, *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, where the author breaks the body down into a body image and a body schema. As Gallagher asserts,

> [a] *body image* consists of a system of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs pertaining to one's own body. In contrast, *a body schema* is a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring. This conceptual distinction between body image and body schema is related respectively to the difference between having a perception of (or belief about) something and having a capacity to move (or an ability to do something).[56]

Gallagher's ideas resonate with Ihde's, who similarly recognizes the breakdown of the body into two components that he terms *body one* and *body two*.[57] Primarily, this is Ihde's hypothesis that the body is both a motile, perceptive, sensing being in the world, which he calls b*ody one*. *Body two* is the term Ihde uses to highlight how a body is also structured as a cultural inscriber in terms of age, race, gender, class or sexuality.

Ihde's terms 'body one' and 'body two' are interchangeable with what he refers to as a 'here-body' and an 'image-body', a concept he adapts from R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self*. Within this work, Laing discerns that the human body consists of both an embodied and an unembodied self, which he describes in the following way.

> The embodied person has a sense of being flesh and blood and bones, of being biologically alive and real: he knows himself to be substantial. To the extent that he is thoroughly 'in' his body, he is likely to have a sense of personal continuity in time. The unembodied self, as onlooker at all the body does, engages in nothing directly. Its functions come to be observation, control, and criticism *vis-à-vis* what the body is experiencing and doing, and those operations which are usually spoken of as purely 'mental.'[58]

What Laing describes and Ihde adapts can be considered in relation to the avatarial game body.

When playing any avatar-based story game, I simultaneously am the avatar, where I look *through* it to see the world before me, and have a relationship *of* the avatar that I observe as a character. I have a sense of perceptual beliefs about the character I am using, which I gauge from the onscreen image-body, cut-scenes and interaction with other NPCs. I also have an experience of the body schema that I take into my phenomenological experiencing when I use the buttons on the controller. Paul Martin has addressed this duality of the avatarial tool from a Heideggerian perspective of being both ready-to-hand, that which we play through, and present-to-hand, that which we observe.[59]

Heidegger's ready-to-hand affords the user praxis or a 'practical behavior' rather than a theoretical one. Praxis binds a human user and a technology in a process of withdrawal; a term that denotes a temporary fusion between a user and an external technology as one withdraws into the other. In the act of gaming, for example, the controller or avatar withdraws into the grip and actions of its user. The controller/avatar temporarily fuses with its user, tracing their corporeality whilst at the same time changing their world, which in gaming affords the player to access the virtual topography of the game world. As Heidegger asserts, ready-to-hand is a type of 'fitting in with technology' into a network of equipment, such as the ink to the pen, the pen to the paper, the paper to the desk and so forth. A tool with ready-to-hand properties puts its human user into this network, whereupon the user operates with the tool "bound up with other equipment that is useful to us in engaging in the projects that mark the space of our concern."[60]

The ready-to-hand relationship posits that when a user is engaged in a task while using a tactile tool, such as a pen to write, a hammer to hit nails or a spade to dig the earth, a process of withdrawal takes place between body and tool, at which point they are synthesized together in the networked act of writing, hammering or digging. During this process, the user encounters an intuition, competence and inclination *through* their tool in order to accomplish the task at hand. As Heidegger maintains, the carpenter, when hammering nails, does not consider the properties of the hammer as an object made of wood and metal but instead is absorbed in the activity before them. Similarly, when gaming, one does not focus on the avatar or controller, but rather looks and acts through them to the task at hand. Here we are reminded of Newnan's distinction of an On-Line/Off-Line split, which draws similarities with Heidegger's ready-to-hand and present-at-hand terminology.

Present-at-hand denotes a different type of relationship to ready-to-hand. While ready-to-hand is distinguished by the user's activity or perception *through* a technology, present-at-hand concerns itself with an awareness *of* the technology. As Jeremy Wisnewski notes, the act of hammering does not require the user to think about the hammer explicitly, instead focus goes *through* the hammer to the terminus of the nail. However, if the hammer should break or get misplaced, it ruptures this task, causing the user to then think about the hammer explicitly. A comparison can be made when something happens during an Off-Line moment of a computer game, such as a cut-scene, which takes the player out of the action and prompts them to view their avatar as a character rather than see through it as a tool.

As tidy as Martin's idea is, that an avatar possesses both ready-to-hand and present-at-hand traits, it is somewhat reductive for fictional games that can stretch beyond these two confined categories of using and looking. This is why Ihde is more befitting to this medium. Instead of incorporating Heidegger's terms, we can instead adopt Ihde's by using his range of human-technology relations, which can be dissected into embodied, hermeneutic, background and alterity relations, which as I am arguing, are the essential components that formulate somaster fiction.

This can be understood when we consider that avatars in graphic or text-based computer games in general, are hermeneutic in their nature, insomuch that the player reads the imagery or text onscreen in order to assess what is happening and what their response should be. Such responses come by way of the controller: an embodied input relationship that powers the avatar, affording the player agency within the game, while the game world acts as a background relationship, enabling the avatar to act in a particular way. As previously noted, these four relationships are also localized to the avatar itself.

In *GTA San Andreas* for example, players control a character named CJ. In order to master the game, the player has to look after CJ by feeding him, exercising him and dressing him in a way that will earn him respect and appeal to the opposite sex. If I neglect to take CJ to the gym, or fail to run him about the city, the avatar loses stamina points. If I combine this with overfeeding him junk from any of the fast-food chains within the city, he will visibly gain weight and lose stamina.

Once this happens, pressing the button that makes him run will only take effect for a few brief moments before CJ loses breath (audibly conveyed) and reverts to sluggish, lethargic movement, which I feel through the controller. These fictional details highlight the hybridization of alterity and background relationships, insomuch that CJ's diet and exercise regime are remembered within the background of the game, and are illustrated both hermeneutically through the avatar's appearance and haptically through the rapid ease or slow effect of the controls. These changes do not take immediate effect but are a continuous and durational reconstruction, which plays out in the background of the avatar as an *absent presence*, existing unnoticed, but all the time changing.

The more time I spend utilizing CJ like a tool in activities such as driving, running or lifting weights, the more responsive this avatarial tool

becomes to these respective tasks. Kiri Miller's discussion of CJ in her book, *Playing Along*, considers how the multimodal two-part structure of the avatar (outlined by Burn and Schott above) works with the player to achieve goals. As Miller notes, "[t]he avatar has a programmed, unconscious repertoire of skills and behaviors, and the player must gradually acquire a parallel embodied knowledge of the commands required to animate him."[61] As Miller observes, the CJ avatar has virtual 'autonomy' through the way a single button press on the controller will prompt him to carry out a complicated series of gestures. A button press near a car for example will prompt CJ to run to a car, open the door, grab and drag the driver and hurl them into the road. This single click of the button in my real-world space sparks an alterity of violence in the virtual. As Miller and James Paul Gee argue, this is an instance of surrogacy in which player, 'avatar-as-tool' and 'avatar-as-character', coalesce.

As Gee states, "the real-world player gains a surrogate, that is, the virtual character the player is playing."[62] The player inhabits the avatar, taking on the goals of the surrogate as their own. Consequentially, "the player and the character each have knowledge that must be integrated together to play the game successfully."[63] Through "distributed knowledge"[64] and collaborative learning, the player and avatar acquire skills through practice. Rehearsal, as Miller and Grodal assert, is thus key to victory, a notion that Marie-Laure Ryan also maintains when she writes, "repetitiveness is an asset, since it is by performing the actions over and over again that players acquire the physical skills necessary to excel at the game." [65]

Absent Avatars

In action based gaming, avatars are usually presented as more physically resilient and morally free compared with our real-life bodies. In the game world we have infinite lives to take risks, we are also morally and lawlessly unbounded to hurt and kill other NPCs without hesitation. However, in recent years the ubiquity of independent games studios has ushered in a range of less action-oriented non-avatar games that focus more upon story through humanity and spirituality, which was significant in my playing experience of *The Novelist*.[66]

This non-avatar computer game is advertised as "a game about life, family and the choices we make." This 3D graphical experience (played with keyboard and mouse), takes place within the restricted vicinity of a bucolic holiday home overlooking an ocean. The three characters that inhabit this space are: Dan Kaplan, a novelist with a deadline working on his most difficult book to date, his wife Linda who is feeling the strain of Dan's workload and their young son Tommy, who misses the attention his dad once gave him. In playing this game, I do not possess an avatarial body but do possess the characters and fictional setting, so to speak. I have a first person view that can move and look around the home, but my image-body is invisible to me and to the Kaplan family. This is because I play a spirit, a virtual presence within the home whose job it is to read the thoughts and observe the actions of these characters, while attempting to suture the family unit back together as a whole.

This involves entering the mindsets of these characters and searching their emotions, which are hermeneutically presented as pictorial memories, sometimes with dialogue. It is also important that I search the house for clues too. Dan's notes, Linda's diary, and pictures drawn by Tommy, each offer significant bits of information about the fragile mindset of each character. It is left up to me to translate these messages and feelings to each of the characters so they can see things from another's perspective. My incorporeal presence means I cannot touch the other characters or props within the game, neither do I possess an inventory or have any ability to power up. Unbeknown to me as a player though, I do have some abstractive form of physicality, as I can be detected by the characters if I do not properly conceal myself. If this happens the characters become fearful which depletes any influence I have over them. Therefore, somaster fiction in this world is achieved by staying hidden from characters rather than aggressive confrontation, as is usually the case in the open world action games.

To maintain manipulation, moving around the house stealthily becomes a necessary component of the gaming experience. The most effective way to carry this out is by possessing the light fixtures within the home, where I can travel like light from bulb to bulb in what could be considered a reminiscent undertone of Marshall McLuhan's light bulb as a medium without content,[67] with me as avatar without body. The ironic concept of using the lights to keep out of sight enables me to maintain influence over the Kaplans. The network of light paths allows me to move swiftly through the space, slip by the family or distract them by causing a

light fixture to flicker. This has the effect of drawing characters away from their activities to come and investigate the fault; leaving me free to explore the space they were just occupying in order to learn their latest thoughts.

In the game, I must remain hidden to read these thoughts, which present specific desires from each of the characters. These consist of the father's desire for solitude so that he can progress with his work, the mother's desire for her husband and the son's desire for the attention of his father. Each character desire conflicts and it is up to me to action one which will always mitigate the other two. Deciding whose fate will succeed and whose will fail puts me in an authorial godlike position of being above the Kaplans and looking down. In the game this is often the case as I watch from the vantage point of the overhead lights. But in reality, this is also reverberated through my physical corporeality of being situated over the keys of my computer, which have a fixed position of always being below me. This, of course, is in contrast to the wireless controller I used for the plethora of action games, which were constantly tethered to my every movement. During those games, where my arms instinctively shot right as if to dodge trouble through the phenomenological confusion between an onscreen enemy and my corporeal response, the controller followed me and stayed with me. It became part of every series of gestures to do and not to do with the game. If I needed to scratch my face during gameplay, the controller naturally followed me up.

The methodical pace of *The Novelist* on the other hand does not require me to be so 'umbilically' hooked up to it, to borrow Sudnow's phrase. I do not grip the whole computer; instead my hands hover over it just as my invisible presence hovers over the Kaplans. In the same way that a body is compounded of both corporeal and cultural elements, as argued by both Shusterman and Ihde, my physical control of the game becomes entangled with the incorporeal (and cultural) side of what a body is, bleeding into the space of the game world. *The Novelist* inclines more towards a hermeneutical relationship than an embodied one. I read the game more than I play it, from an elevated position outside of a character. Reading, as Ihde claims, is always phenomenologically performed in western cultures from an elevated position. Our bodies are used to reading when we look down upon the pages of a book. As Ihde states,

normally, we sit, with book in front of and usually below our eyes, or, as was quite normal in the Middle Ages, standing, reading from above. In that respect there was already a sedimented practice regarding the reader/text position with relation to a bodily perceptual stance.[68]

This elevated posture over the book, or keyboard in this instance, allows the reader to take on a superior position in which form mirrors content. In *The Novelist*, the superior position is felt as the player 'reads' the events from above and subsequently manipulates the characters through the combination of: embodiment (button pressing), hermeneutic (character reading) background (the house) and alterity (character reaction). The concurrence of these elements is what establishes somaster fiction, which is at work as I do my best to try and make each character happy in a game that I read more than play, spiritually enhanced in this case by the removal of an avatarial body and replaced with bodiless, ghostlike movement. According to Ihde,

[w]ith reading there is *always perception*, but a particularly structured perception. It is a perception which, normally, carries with it a dampening of bodily motion, a fixed place for its object, an enhancement of the visual, and the privileging of an elevated or overhead position.[69]

The Novelist does reduce motility but physical controls are still necessary for the alterity (seemingly independent personalities) of the game's characters to respond to my actions. Therefore it still counts as an instance of somaster fiction as my embodiment relationship (through the keyboard) works with and affects the alterity of the Kaplan family. I register this through hermeneutical graphics and sound, all of which is confined to the background design of the house, which conditions my movements as well as the characters. Through these combined relationships, I am able to affect in-game events in order to co-author a fictional experience.

A final case study that I now want to consider is a game that unifies characteristics of the present/absent avatar games that I have discussed so far, to offer a different type of fictional experience. *This War of Mine,*[70] a game I played on the iPhone format, is a survival-come-strategy game in which the player controls a group of civilians sheltered within a large house, amidst a besieged war-torn city. The player has to look after these survivors by seeing to their basic survival needs, such as feeding, resting and entertaining them. The player takes on these challenges through touch screen controls, where I select a character and then choose an action.

The game begins with the player controlling three to four characters within a large derelict house. Overseeing a group of characters such as this is what Gordon Calleja refers to as "the space of miniatures,"[71] where the player is positioned outside of the action looking in at a group of characters (as opposed to the shared identity of a single avatar). In further contrast, the characters in *This War of Mine*, distinct from the avatars of action-based games, are more detrimentally susceptible to their environment, which physically and emotionally drains them over the course of gameplay. Furthermore, if one of them should die they cannot be bought back, which has negative repercussions to the mentality of the other occupants.

Each survivor has unique character traits that can be put to use to aid the perseverance of the household, which is what the aim of the game is, to survive until ceasefire. In order to do this the player must control the men and women of the household to fulfill certain tasks: craft beds and furniture from makeshift materials scattered about the house, construct a cooker and heater to prepare meals and survive the deadening weather if it should turn cold. Tools also need to be created from household materials, discoverable in each room; shovels for example need to be made in order to clear bomb damage rubble.

Unlike *The Novelist*, where gameplay takes the form of hiding from characters within a house and reading their thoughts from above, *This War of Mine* compels the player to touch characters, then environments, in order for them to carry out a comprehensive action. While *The Novelist* is primarily about hermeneutically reading characters and choosing events to play out from afar from a spectral-like body, *This War of Mine* is more about being embodied and extended through the different avatarial bodies, as the game details the meticulous practicalities of hands-on action in a realistic way. For instance, it will take certain characters a number of hours (in game time) to clear away rubble with their hands when I select them to perform this

task. Therefore it is key to command each character to be doing something simultaneously, as I oversee them from a privileged position and press instructions with my fingers to sculpt onscreen actions. Consequentially, the controls in each respective title complements the content; minimum controls for the absent body reading experience of *The Novelist*, versus touch screen controls for the tactile multi-bodied and multitasking action game of *This War of Mine*.

Once I have delegated a job to an avatar, by touching them, the baton of action becomes an alterity relationship, in the sense that the avatar will continue the task independently and unsupervised (in the background), freeing me to delegate other jobs to the rest of the household, where I can make them work through until nighttime. At the end of the day, I select a character to scavenge a particular area of the city. In these sections I control a single character, and the practice now conforms to a more agential, action-based style of gameplay. I enter new locations in the hopes of finding supplies to prolong my household's existence. Here I must select which character to use. Some large male characters can carry more but they are slower, while smaller female characters are quicker and stealthier but have a more limited carry capacity. Alterity through the unique attributes of the character, their virtual body size and abilities are thus factored into the fictionality of the game. My own body through the controller, combined with the alterity of the virtual character body (hermeneutically presented through graphics) compounds with the game's background clock and inventory, to produce this gaming instance of somaster fiction.

NPCs within these scavenging locations are divided between other looters and residents. I must move cautiously to avoid detection and being killed. It is possible, however, to make my character kill another, especially if armed with a weapon but this will often result in my character suffering a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) once they return home. It is through this PTSD that the character's alterity comes to the fore, as they suddenly begin to lose hope and become inconsolable and uncontrollable. They do not want to eat even though a hermeneutical indicator (another instance of the background relationship) flags up their hunger and they will not sleep despite similar readings indicating their exhaustion. They become broken avatars both as fictional characters and agential tools, which can lead to suicide or abandonment of the house. On one such occasion, having sent one of my housemates, Arica, out to rob food from a defenseless elderly couple, she returns home guilt ridden. Her anxiety triggers self-neglect and she becomes ill, torturing herself with her heinous actions, denoted

via a speech bubble that portrays regret for the old couple's plight. Arica's perturbation spreads outwardly to the other housemates who worry for her, concerned that she may not make it.

When characters suffer from PTSD and I lose the ability to control them, I can use other characters in the house to try and make the distressed ones feel better. If successful, I may even be able to get one of the characters to encourage the perturbed one to eat, slowly steering them back on route to recovery. Thus mastery of the alterity is structured by ethical decision-making, morality and human touch. Here we are reminded of Shusterman's use of somaesthetics as a way to feel better and attain divine spirituality. The game, which is about survival, raising sprits and making wholesome decisions is also fundamentally about the complexity of being human and engaging with human-to-human contact. This subject matter, which is becoming prevalent in independent games, is reinforced through controls on a touch screen interface, where the ability to touch characters physically, reverberates into a story of how the characters within the game touch each other emotionally.

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has introduced the concept of somaster fiction, an avatarial game body through the building blocks of Ihde's human-technology relationships, and Shusterman's somaesthetics. Somaster fiction, as I have argued, requires repetitive practice of the body to master controls in order to push fictional game events forward. Within somaster fiction, embodiment, hermeneutical, background and alterity relationships coalesce, enabling the player to experience control, agency, power and mastery over an avatarial or invisible body, and the environment that it exists within. Somaster therefore accounts for the mastery of bodily controls over a controller, virtual avatarial soma and command of a topographical space.

Control and mastery over each of these phenomena is what I experience when playing a role in fictional open world 3D universes that loosely look and feel like the real-life one I am accustomed to. However, within this screen universe I can do things differently (through the visible present avatar) than I can from my own, where I am restricted by real-life bodily obligations to feed and rest. Somaster fiction through an invisible avatarial body, such as the ones experienced in *The Novelist* or *This War of*

Mine, ascends me to the status of an incorporeal superior presence, where I command mastery over the bodies of other characters.

Somaesthetics, as I have argued through Shusterman and Nielsen, is relevant to computer games in the way that a player feels a positive sense of aliveness through gameplay. A player conducts corporeal input upon a controller in order to push events forward, and has an onscreen representation that temporarily becomes a shared part of the player's identity. In line with somaesthetics, I have also highlighted how computer game playing is a meliorative process of cultivation that utilizes repetitive practice to ingrain controls into the user's body, which in turn rewards the avatar with upgrades, making the controls more effective and responsive. Furthermore, I have aligned Shusterman's concepts of the body with Ihde's insomuch that a body is a dual entity in terms of sensory perception as well as a site for material representation. This is pertinent to avatar-based games where the look and feel of the character are conjoined, such as *GTA's* CJ. This was compared with non-avatarial or semi-avatarial games, such as *The Novelist* and *This War of Mine*. Through these games I considered how a culturally constructed body and real-life body are depicted through both the synopsis of the game's story, reinforced through the types and techniques of the controller. Somaster fiction thus serves as a postphenomenological approach to consider the elements that make up an avatar through the complexity of being a body and the body's engagement through human-technology relationships.

Notes

1 Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2007-2017.

2 Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts : Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 53.

3 Lacan's mirror stage is a concept in which an infant (mis)recognizes their own reflection for a more complete and proficient self in terms of motor-skills. In gaming it metaphorically provides an opportunity for a player to (mis)recognize their self into a game through an avatar.

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5 David Sudnow, *Pilgrim in the Microworld* (New York, N.Y.: Warner Books, 1983), 21.

6 Rune Klevjer, "Enter the Avatar: The Phenomenology of Prosthetic Telepresence in Computer Games," in *The Philosophy of Computer Games, Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, edited by John R. Sageng, Hallvard J. Fossheim and Tarjei M. Larsen. London: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012). Accessed 20 May, 2017.

7 Ibid.

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9 Martti Lahti, "As We Become Machines: Corporealized Pleasures in Video Games," in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003), 158.

10 Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Duke University Press, 1993), 196-97.

11 Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self : Computers and the Human Spirit*, 20th anniversary ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

12 Ted Friedman, "Civilization and Its Discontents: Simulation, Subjectivity, and Space," in *On a Silver Platter: CD-ROMs and the Promises of a New Technology*, ed. by Greg Smith (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

13 James Paul Gee, "Video Games and Embodiment", Games and Culture, volume 3, no. 3-4, (2008).

14 Rikke Toft Nørgård, "The Joy of Doing: The Corporeal Connection in Player-Avatar Identity." *Philosophy of Computer Games* (2011), available online at https://pure.au.dk/ws/files/36570060/The_Joy_of_Doing_The_corporeal_connection_in_player_avatar_identity.pdf.

15 Martti Lahti, „As We Become Machines: Corporealized Pleasures in Video Games," *The video game theory reader* (2003): 159.

16 Ibid., 163.

17 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*; *the Extensions of Man*, 1st ed. (New York,: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

18 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2002).

19 Martin Heidegger, J. Stambaugh, and D.J. Schmidt, *Being and Time* (State University of New York Press, 2010).

20 Don Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*, The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Technology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 100-01.

21 Ibid., 109.

22 Ibid., 111.

23 © Sandy East Art.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

28 Ibid.

29 Rockstar Games, 2004.

30 Shusterman, 2008, 1.

31 R. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

32 Interaction Design Foundation, Interview with Richard Shusterman—'Somaesthetics – Ancient Culture' at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxe73YY56Zg (accessed 05 June 2016)

33 Ibid.

34 Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, 27.

35 Ibid., 26.

36 Ibid., 28.

37 Ibid., 29.

38 H.S. Nielsen, *Playing Computer Games: Somatic Experience and Experience of the Somatic* (2012), 3.

39 Ibid., 98.

40 Ibid., 99.

41 Ibid., 101.

42 Nicole Martins et al., "A Content Analysis of Female Body Imagery in Video Games," *Sex roles* 61, no. 11-12 (2009).

43 Nielsen, *Playing Computer Games: Somatic Experience and Experience of the Somatic*, 102.

44 Nicole Martins, Dmitri C Williams, Kristen Harrison and Rabindra A Ratan, "Virtual Muscularity: A Content Analysis of Male Video Game Characters," *Body Image* 8, no. 1 (2011).

45 Nielsen, *Playing Computer Games: Somatic Experience and Experience of the Somatic*, 101-02.

46 Eidos Interactive and Square Enix, (1996-present).

47 Electronic Arts, (2008-2016).

48 Capcom, (1996-2016).

49 The representation of gendered bodies in computer games is a vast field of study and something that is beyond the scope of this paper. Regardless of gender my argument is that the avatarial body is something that pluralizes the player, provides agency into a fictional world and supersedes a real life-body in terms of endurance and invulnerability. For more detailed discussions about body gender in computer games see Anita Sarkeesian's video blog, 'Feminist Frequency—All the Slender Ladies: Body Diversity in Video Games' at https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qbqRtp5ZUGE (accessed 10 May 2017).

50 Bethesda Softworks, (2011-2016).

51 Bethesda Softworks, 2015.

52 Torben Grodal, "Stories for Eye, Ear and Muscles," in *The Video Game Reader*, ed. Mark J.P Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge), 148.

53 Torben Grodal, "Stories for Eye, Ear, and Muscles," *The video game theory reader* (2003): 148. Emphasis in original.

54 Rockstar Games, (2010).

55 Square, (1997).

56 Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, 2005), 24.

57 Don Ihde, *Bodies in Technology*, Electronic Mediations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xi.

58 R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (New York,: Pantheon Books, 1969), 67.

59 Paul Martin, "A Phenomenological Account of the Playing Body in Avatar-Based Action Game" (paper presented at the Philosophy of Computer Games Conference, Madrid, January, 2012).

60 J.J. Wisnewski, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 41.

61 Kiri Miller, *Playing Along: Digital Games, Youtube, and Virtual Performance* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 45.

62 James Paul Gee, "Video Games and Embodiment", 258.

63 Miller, *Playing Along: Digital Games, Youtube, and Virtual Performance*, 45.

64 Ibid.

65 Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, Frontiers of Narrative (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 351.

66 Orthogonal Games, (2013).

67 McLuhan, *Understanding Media; the Extensions of Man*, 8.

68 Don Ihde, *Postphenomenology: Essays in the Postmodern Context*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 97.

69 Ibid., 86.

70 11 bit studios, (2014).

71 Gordon Calleja, *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 90.

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