Popular Music and Politics: In, Against and Beyond Identity

Jessica Sylvia Winterson

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

September 2018
Abstract

The research establishes radical modes of theorising for an explicitly anti-capitalist musicology able to celebrate music’s enactment of post-capitalist desire and to understand how music helps to ‘make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable’. Adopting a sharp focus on the 1960s to the 1990s this thesis combines popular musicology and autonomist Marxism to argue that music functions as politics in transforming consciousness and shifting domains of acceptability in thought and feeling. Emancipatory politics must destroy the appearance of a ‘natural’ order and the thesis develops perspectives on ‘popular music and politics’ that can account for past struggles against capitalism, demonstrating how and why these struggles are naturalised with the discontinuity they signify necessarily erased or appropriated. Music performs emotional work of political significance such as in the embodiment of hope and confidence necessary for political mobilisation. The capacities of music to articulate the emotions that empower people are deployed here to suggest contradictions contained in, against and beyond identity bear utopian orientation. This statement is developed to ask what it means to counter hegemony and break social cohesion.

‘Insubordination’ forms the macro-arguments of the research. These arguments are around the roles of politics in popular music experience in the translation of mid-twentieth century revolution to capitalist realism and neoliberal modernity. Flows of rebellion are drawn out carefully in discussions of non-subordination, listening and identity. Hidden structures of rationality undermine the power of the imagination and therefore hinder possibilities for enacting non-capitalist futures. The research takes its cue from new trends which are cultivating different habits of thinking for post-capitalist politics and defining political action. It sets frames for the subversive potential of music as affording liberatory experience. Many of the concepts and ideas, such as psychedelic consciousness and punk performativity, used to discuss artists from Jimi Hendrix, to Patti Smith and John Cage (Destiny’s Child, Pussy Riot and Tupac) do not have recourse to assured theoretical principles. The reader should expect to access the work of a wide range of authors, not least Mark Fisher.
CONTENTS

Preface 4

Introduction 7

In, Against and Beyond Identity 21

Chapter One - Anti-Capitalist Musicology 29

All of this is Temporary 34
Politics and Popular Music 46

Chapter Two - The Political Framework 56

Autonomy 60
Counter Hegemony 73
Identity Politics 80

Chapter Three - The Musicological Framework 86

Deconstruction 92
Reconstruction 98
Transcendence 111

Chapter Four - Beyond Gender 118

Three Songs 126
Feeling Good 135

Chapter Five - In and Against the State 154

The Subject: ‘Fuck Tha Police’ 159
The Individual: ‘Holla If Ya Hear Me’ 170

Conclusion 180

Bibliography 188

78,828 words
PREFACE

The historical *a priori* conditions of society determine collective and individual experience in the present. Past, present and future ways of existing in the world will be explicable in terms of social relations, historical experience and material conditions. Hence, all of popular music will continue to accrete meaning historically. With recourse to a differentiated range of relationships, as engaged through a wide range of scholarship, this thesis examines political histories from the 1960s – 1990s in popular music (punk, hip-hop, pop) that, it will be argued, engender new worlds of insubordinate reference. It focuses on moments of historical confluence for popular music and politics to explore the production of subjectivity and agency. The emphases are placed on how the social world improves. It is a politically committed thesis written in, against and beyond capitalism in the Global North.

The thesis is a personal testimony to popular music as able to engender political movement. Whether it represents more than this is a highly subjective question. Theorists are a product of their immediate times, circumstances and social connections. It is worth noting the following passage from Richard Schechner on ‘performance studies’ to expand this point.

In anthropology, for the most part, the “home culture” is Western, the “other” non-Western. But in performance studies, the “other” may be a part of one’s own culture (non-Western or Western), or even an aspect of one’s own behaviour ... In this active way, one performs fieldwork. Taking a critical distance from the objects of study and self invites revision, the recognition that social circumstances – including knowledge itself – are not fixed, but subject to the “rehearsal process” of testing and revising ... Many who practice performance studies do not aspire to ideological neutrality. In fact, a basic theoretical claim is that no approach or position is “neutral”. There is no such thing as unbiased.¹

There is no aspiration to ideological neutrality in this research. Not only because it is impossible to approach a study of ‘popular music and politics’ except from one’s own cultural position but, also, because of the nature of the subjects in the thesis – identity, affect, political and musicological philosophy – it feels appropriate to share with the reader from the start that I have biases and limitations. Indeed, that there may be an un-ironic and underlying sense in which this is a thesis about confrontations within the limits of one’s own thinking in, against and beyond identity.

Objectively there have been epochal shifts in the way the world and society is organised over the course of twentieth century. These are important in thinking about how politics play out

in the twenty-first century. Popular music scholarship is uniquely placed to build on these shifts. Popular music constitutes a significant part of the material reality of recent collective history and it therefore has roles in shaping the possibilities of subjective experience in the present and future. Articulating and arguing for the significance of syntheses between popular music and politics requires that one is attentive to the value that is being attached to music: that value is a political one, and the processes that attribute value are themselves forms of political organisation. The artists that receive the most attention in this thesis (Jimi Hendrix, John Cage, Patti Smith, Pussy Riot, and N.W.A) are chosen, in part, because of the roles they play in constructing my identity: channelling anger, pleasure and individualism and crafting escape from the everyday experience of life in and against capitalism. As musicologist Philip Bohlman states in his essay “Ontologies of Music” ‘Ideally, I should endeavour to represent non-Western ontologies of music; I should draw on ‘other’ metaphysics no more or less than my own. I can’t.’ ² Bohlman helps to underline how this thesis is simply too individually rooted to make claims on what is essentially my perspective on the legacies of these artists.

A purpose of the preface is to identify myself, in a project around identity, as a ‘libertarian communist’ with the aim of ensuring that the conjectural conditions of the thesis’s larger arguments become quickly intelligible. Having said that, I do not have an overwhelming interest in political labels, preferring to side-step dogmatic conviction. So, on the one hand anarchist/socialist/communist also suffices but, on the other, none of these labels need be used with much frequency in the discussions that follow. This should be read as indicative of a (libertarian communist) belief in contingency, variability and experimentation over determinist readings of politics and dissent.

In this light it is also necessary to state that the thesis is ‘Marx inspired’. It is interested in how capitalism organises, limits and distorts social and political life, but it is not ‘Marxist’ in the specialised sense of the knowledge of these processes that can be found in Karl Marx’s original writings (and that contain within them immanent possibilities for the kinds of society that could be created given specific conditions and trends within capitalism itself). To be Marx-inspired is to share the belief that a new and morally superior and more sustainable civilisation could succeed capitalism. More specifically the thesis is rooted in autonomist and anarchist thought. It therefore characterises a purpose of theory as to shape (or re-shape) the

power of the working class. Hence, the focus is on ‘insubordination’ as those processes through which workers subvert, resist and transcend, and thus rebel against – and shape the evolution of – capitalism.

The project uses personal experience to build a cautious optimism for enacting imaginative possibilities of a post-capitalist world. It therefore builds theoretical reflections on the relations of hope and confidence that are necessary to fight for political transformation. According to Franco ‘Bifo’ Beradi, an Italian Marxist theorist and activist in the autonomist tradition, it is not the desperation of the consciousness of the horrors of the world that makes us unhappy, but the depressing effect that this has on our empathic body. In a tribute to Mark Fisher (1968-2017) Beradi wrote that, ‘Social suffering turns itself into depression when it dulls the capacity of being caressed. And the openness of receiving a caress is not only the condition for individual happiness, but also that of rebellion, of collective autonomy and of emancipation from the salaried work.’ \(^3\) The thesis is also written in memory of Mark Fisher and likewise makes arguments in the written word that are about the embodiment of hope and confidence for collective autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

The thesis develops anti-capitalist approaches to musicology. ‘In, against and beyond identity’ is a means to formulate conceptions of subjectivity through music’s transcendent and performative dimensions. The Introduction chapter sets out the concepts that are important to the thesis and its central themes: post-structuralism, hegemony, prefiguration, embodied music cognition and ‘identity politics’. In so doing it begins to unpick relationships across ‘popular music and politics’ that help to reconcile the tensions between ‘identity politics’ and a politics of, or desire for, a post-identity world. The project therefore needs approaches that can be self-reflexive around changing class composition and the relationships between class and identity politics. Class is not simply one identity among many but the structural contradiction that forms the background to other identities (in gender, sexuality, race, culture, etc.). As the Preface began to put forward, this is a thesis written by a radical critic following paths mapped out by popular rebels in music, grounded in left politics, and with the particular target of understanding and leveraging subjectivity in, against and beyond identity and capitalism. An overriding purpose in developing anti-capitalist approaches to musicology is to, following Mark Fisher, think about how the contemporary left can lay claim to freedom and pleasure in terms of how people ‘feel’ alternative political educations. It is an investigation into music as politics and the mutability of subjectivity.

The thesis has five discursive chapters that put forward its original contribution to knowledge. The first three of these synthesise my own particular combination of frameworks and ideological approaches drawn from musicology and politics. The following two chapters put these frameworks into play and examine the legacies of artists and songs. In ‘Beyond Gender’ this is begun through Patti Smith in the 1970s through the ‘expansion of punk rock’ to Pussy Riot in 2012. Following the two framework chapters, ‘Beyond Gender’ is able to conceive and employ the concepts of ‘feeling good’ and ‘punk performativity’ to explore prefiguration in popular music and politics. The chapter is also an autonomist exploration of anti-work ideology. As such it analyses three songs, Patti Smith’s ‘Piss Factory’ (1974), Dolly Parton’s ‘9-5’ and Destiny’s Child’s ‘Bills, Bills, Bills’ (1999). In these analyses the chapter identifies ways in which each song has a notable political relationship to the epochal shifts from counter-cultural optimism into an era of capitalist realism and neoliberal modernity. The final chapter, ‘In and Against the State’ pivots around the legacy of N.W.A’s
1988 reality-rap single ‘Fuck Tha Police’, looking first at the conditions of the songs emergence before the second half suggests Tupac as a revolutionary in, against and beyond individual who used music to foster collective autonomy against the status quo. The chapter thus suggests Kendrick Lamar as a topic for future research that might now be conducted in this light.

It is a politically committed thesis with a strong allegiance to the work of Mark Fisher. Emancipatory politics must destroy the appearance of a ‘natural order’ and Acid Communism is Fisher’s theses that the left needs to construct that which was promised but never actually realised by the various cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. ‘Capitalist realism’ became an influential concept in the humanities, social sciences and activist politics when Fisher published Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative? in 2009. It implies the sense of resignation and fatalism engendered by the ideology of neoliberalism, and simultaneously argues that an ideological and affective hold of ‘there is no alternative’ infected politics and culture. In the extension to Acid Communism further emphases are placed within the ‘capitalist realist’ trope on how the production of this status quo was at a deliberate and systemic level. Fisher gives political weight to how neoliberalism came about to eliminate the increasing resistance to the capitalist status quo in the altered concepts of reality and consciousness engendered by alternative music cultures and widespread drug use in the mid-twentieth century. In this era, it ‘suddenly’, as Fisher describes it, became clear that nothing is fixed because everything (reality) is mutable. Or, perhaps, that open-mindedness and experimentation is a good way to live. Significant changes in technology and communication enabled a spread of discourses that implicitly recognised the status quo as just one form of organisation of which there could be others. Drug trips and the mixing of politics with popular culture worked alongside popular and experimental music scenes to remove people from the dominant post-war reality and ‘expose’ it as provisional. Fisher makes it clear that what he does not mean to imply, because he does not believe it, is that widespread drug use was destined to lead to a revolution, it did not, it has not, and it will not. His subject matter, rather, is the transformative power of consciousness. Fisher therefore spoke of developing an anti-authoritarian left in which ideas of post-capitalist desire and imagination have centrality.

***

Neither post-structuralism, nor postmodernism, are easily identified with or aligned to any one school of thought but can be seen as strands of thought within very many disciplines.
Post structuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction are similar though have different histories, but, according to David Macey, if there is a common core to all the tendencies that have been described as poststructuralist, ‘it lies in a reluctance to ground discourse in any theory of metaphysical origins, an insistence in the inevitable plurality and instability of meaning, a distrust of systematic scientificity, and the abandoning of the old Enlightenment project.’

‘Deconstruction’ understood as the relationship between ‘text’ and meaning, climaxed as a critical outlook in the mid twentieth century. It engendered a destabilization of language that formulated structuralism that, in turn, led to post-structuralism which questioned, that is deconstructed, structuralism as a meaningful theory.

Deconstructive practices, such as the post-structural, relate to ‘postmodernism’. In *Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Frederic Jameson describes ‘postmodernism’ as the cultural response to neoliberalism’s systemic changes to modernity. ‘Postmodernity’ is a temporal marker that names linguistic responses to seismic shifts and revolutions in technology, communication and global capitalism at the turn of the century (and thus could be seen as climaxing ‘modernity’, though some disagree). ‘Postmodern’ also denotes deconstructive critique and critical aesthetics, practices that invoke wide spectrums of aesthetic and interrogative resources, and are shorthand for ideas about the presentation of thought, the de-centring of meaning and the authoring of agency.

On postmodernism performance theorist Richard Schechner states, ‘One of the decisive qualities of postmodernism is the application of the “performance principle” to all aspects of social and artistic life’. It is through postmodern theory that ‘performance studies’ came into existence within and as a response to the radically changing intellectual and artistic circumstances ‘of the last third of the twentieth century’. Culturally the preconditions of the postmodern era are found in the enormous social and psychological transformations of the 1960s. In this sense Schechner goes on to summarise the distinction between modernity and postmodernity, ‘In modernity, what was “deep” and “hidden” was thought to be “more real” than what was on the surface (Platonism dies hard). But in postmodernity, the relationship between depths and surfaces is fluid; the relationship is dynamically convective.’ The difference is politically important for bridging the gap between critical deconstructions of the

---

5 Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991)
7 Ibid, 25.
8 Ibid, 14.
subject/individual with the senses of ‘we’ that necessarily need to be constructed for the collectivity of left politics.

Language is the system of relations between linguistic signs, speech is individual utterance. When we say ‘I’ we enter a symbolic order that offers a range of subject positions but no guarantee of fixed meaning. Structuralism therefore refutes that ‘the subject’ is a knowing, unified, rational centre of consciousness, because subjectivity is constantly in formation. Yet structuralism itself was a symbolic idea made up of signifiers, with binary oppositions a favoured device to ‘map the dialectical tensions of a system’. So, whilst it provides useful means for interrogation, it leaves little room for conceptualizations of culture from different standpoints or political interests, because of the inherent tendency to attach language problems through binary opposites to universalised unconscious structures. Feminists therefore developed post-structural extensions of structuralism to uncover the processes by which women are reconciled to subordination, and might therefore resist.

Post-structuralism’s function as a mode of deconstructive criticism is to resist the hegemony of common sense by articulating the repressed power imbalances that are disguised in language. Post-structuralism, as with structuralism, foregrounds the critical functions of language, but with a higher focus on ‘becoming’. For post-structuralists everything is in flux. The postmodern logic here is that ‘text’ (anything) can always have its meaning altered retrospectively, and that each supplementary text can therefore be supplemented (and so on). Such deconstructive practices are useful to break the normalizing logics and the totalizing frames of capitalism. For anti-capitalist politics the value of post-structural deconstruction lies in the ‘decentering’ that can take place in countering every kind of hegemony, including philosophical, sexual, political, artistic and economic. To decenter and deconstruct is to subvert authority, domination and fixity. The thesis develops anti-capitalist musicology with post-structuralism using ‘popular music and politics’. It is therefore able to reveal how the apparent meaning of embedded tales are reinforced by their narrative frames, by who tells them, in what circumstances and why.

Postmodern theory can sometimes be perceived as reproaching modernists and liberal humanists for a naivety of belief that readers/spectators/listeners could experience a piece of

---

Ibid.
art or music and perceive it to be free of all diverse political implications. Postmodernism in this reading is seen as an abandonment of the Enlightenment project, with a reluctance to ground discourse in any theory of metaphysical origin and an insistence on the inevitable plurality of meaning. Nonetheless, as will become clear in anti-capitalist musicology, tenets of postmodern critique can work productively with metaphysics in musicology to build optimism for music’s transformative and performative powers in enacting non-capitalist futures.

* * *

**In, Against and Beyond Identity**

In, against and beyond is a schema through which to put the concepts of movement and non-identity first for politically committed anti-capitalist approaches to the study of popular music and politics. Political systems can be co-ordinated and de-centralised at the same time: this is how capitalism operates. Capitalism is ontologically totalising though empirically an ensemble of different strategies. Similarly, then, the anti-capitalist left needs ensembles of different strategies and affective attitudes that come together under, against and beyond capitalism. Marx did not resist modernity in his time (simply, the modern) but sought to analyse and to intervene from within it. Following Marx, capitalism, for all its exploitation and murderousness, remains the most powerful economic system to date. Capital’s gains should not therefore be reversed but accelerated beyond the constraints of the capitalist value form. Anti-capitalist political imaginaries must construct popular visions of left modernity that can advance radical political aims from within the existing remit. In these projects, any articulation of identity must be understood as provisional or plastic since there are no fixed identities – only desires, interests and identifications. New articulations of identity can always be articulated because no one is, essentially, anything.

‘In, against and beyond’\(^{10}\) is a modality able to bridge ‘popular music and politics’ in order to explore music experience and the politics of identity. To state that ‘we’ are all in and often against, but also beyond capitalism, belies a dialectic ‘belief’ that the world is in a constant state of flux and that it is bereft of solid objects. Historically the best known dialectic thinkers are Marx and Hegel who see objects as processes and society as constituted by action. Into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and theories of performance also attest to change as the cornerstone of reality. The doctrine of perpetual flux was first aphorized by

\(^{10}\) It is a live activist phrase used at both grassroots and academic levels.
pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Nominally, that ‘no one can step twice into the same river, nor touch mortal substance twice in the same condition’. It is an aphorism that comes to the fore in ‘performance studies’. As performance theorist Diana Taylor says of performance ‘for some it is a process, for others the ‘result’ of a process’ and, as such, any and all of human life can be studied ‘as’ performance due to both the materiality and interactivity. The theorisation of impermanence in ‘process’ and ‘as’ performance is the dominant conceptual framework in this thesis through which it uses anti-capitalist politics to analyse human subjectivity within the heuristics of music as (or is) politics.

Social reality is the interplay of conflicting performatives. Gender, race, ethnic and sexual divisions govern different moments of life and attribute different subjective capacities to people. Whilst capitalism creates capitalist subjectivities, by hooking up personal existential data to capitalistic notions of race, nation, competition, gender (and so on), these divisions predate the birth of capitalism. Structural oppression (and privilege) do not develop at the level of individual but throughout the structures of global history. Capitalist subjectivities work to protect and sustain capitalism as they work in, against and beyond individuals. Whilst some social movements rely on identity claims in practice, theory tells us that identity itself is never fully constituted, but always unstable. It is this incompleteness that, in Judith Butler’s words, is ‘essential to the project of hegemony itself’. In the instability of identity, capitalism is able to co-opt emancipatory programmes to its own ends. As the counter-cultural idealists of the 1970s were to realise, anti-Establishment social deviance and resistance to commodification conform very well to commodification. Into the 1990s and in the wake of the deflation of this revolutionary potential, neoliberal capital’s power to produce variety, niche markets and affective tendencies became hegemonic processes that helped to cultivate and maintain capitalism’s liberal visage.

Hegemony

Capital’s power is to subsume society by determining social relations and producing subjectivities in accordance to the needs of capitalism and, hence, it functions through hegemonic and performative processes. The ways in which capitalism (and anti-capitalism) function and morph can be explained using the expansive concepts of hegemony and

---

performativity. Theories of hegemony have in common with theories of performativity a central concern with resistance as well as agency. In practice, hegemonic and performative processes can be mutually constitutive. As Butler states ‘The theory of performativity is not far from the theory of hegemony, both emphasise the ways in which the social world is made ... and new possibilities emerge ... At various levels of social action through a collaborative relation with power.’ 14 In turn, hegemony can be thought of at municipal, regional, national and ultimately global levels because it involves long-term strategy. Hence, countering hegemony is also about long-term projects and scale-able politics, and it is self-legitimising. That is, hegemonic power is good performativity, because it has self-legitimating aspects. This is what Jean-François Lyotard meant, though he was talking in business and technical senses, when he argued that power depends on the optimization of performance.

This is how legitimation of power takes shape. Power is not only good performativity, but also effective verification and good verdicts ... It is self-legitimating, in the same way a system organised around performance maximisation seems to be. 15

Hegemony is vital as a concept to research that seeks to understand the dynamics of past, present and future and the ways in which people relate to the lived conditions of existence. It is not, however, a single coherent theory. There are tensions between the Gramscian notions of hegemony, as projects of control (e.g. taking control of the State) that rest on singular conceptions of power 16 and the style of affective politics in this thesis in which hegemonic hold is conceivable in more open/decentralised terms that throw up ‘counter-power’ as a supplement to traditional understandings of countering hegemony.

The concept of hegemony was first developed by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist who saw before many of his peers that the configurations of society and the State were so different to 1917 Russia that they required totally different strategies. The influence of Gramsci’s hegemony developed into a pseudo ‘grand narrative’ to conceive of and scrutinise the social as a whole. The concept of hegemony is not limited to matters of direct political control, and it describes neither a world view nor an ideology. As Raymond Williams states, hegemony seeks to describe a more general predominance than ideology can capture, ‘in that it is seen to depend for its hold not only on its expression of the interests of a ruling class but also on its acceptance as ‘normal reality’ or ‘common sense’ by those in

16 The chapter will go on to explain ‘singular conceptions of power’.
practice subordinated to it.\textsuperscript{17} And as Gramsci put it, ‘The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as ‘domination’ and as intellectual and moral leadership.’\textsuperscript{18} The social as a whole, a conceptualization of the contents of ‘hegemony’, assists readings of how public opinion is artificially created as an organ of power and ‘common sense’ plays a role in the maintenance of nefarious ideologies. Gramsci’s interest in hegemony focused his attention on public opinion through the role of institutions, such as the church, media and education, in the formation of ideology. He sought to draw strategic conclusions, and emphasised that hegemony is always in respect of specific and changing class elements and the orientation of oppressed strata. Thus, whilst hegemony is active in producing subjectivities, it should not be mistaken for enforced unity. The meaning of ‘hegemony’ will always be complicated and variable.

The influence of its inception changed the directions of Marxist and academic thought throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. In \textit{Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader} John Storey dubs this the ‘Gramscian insistence’ – as before, with and after Gramsci. The Gramscian insistence, as Storey explains, became the widespread revelation in scholarship that there is agency and structure, that we both make culture and we are made by culture, such that, ‘It is not enough to celebrate agency, nor is it enough to detail the structures of power; we must always keep in mind the dialectical play between resistance and incorporation.’\textsuperscript{19} Gramscian conceptions of hegemony are particularly instructive for theories of State and its agencies in which oppression and power are explicable as not simply expressions of domination but also its precondition. Excluding the most direct forms of domination (police brutality, war) hegemony is the reproduction of civil society and it includes structures of violence. That is, civil society is reproduced by its own hegemonic order by appearing to consent to the general direction imposed on society by the ruling groups. A social group or class cannot reach power (governmental, for example) unless it has already established its ideological hegemony over society. As Macey explains,

A conception of the world becomes hegemonic when it is no longer confined to professional philosophers or the intelligentsia, but comes to belong to a popular culture that permeates the whole of civil society. The establishment of a hegemony is the task of the organic intellectuals of the ruling class. At the highest level, they create philosophy, the sciences and the arts; at a lower level they

\textsuperscript{17} Williams, \textit{Keywords}, 145.
\textsuperscript{18} Antonio Gramsci, in John Storey, \textit{Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader} (Harlow: Pearson Londman), 75.
\textsuperscript{19} Storey, \textit{Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader}, xvii.
administer an existing body of knowledge and ideology through their work in the educational system, cultural institutions and the media.  

In this, then, hegemony is not ‘feeding lies’ to the populace, but affecting people negatively in order that the public feel less able to act in the world. Foucault sought to undermine the hegemonic sense in which history appears to proceed as a continuous and smooth stream of causes and effects by challenging not so much ‘facts’, but how knowledge is performed and written or manufactured. Similarly, this thesis perceives the history of ideas as an open project, social reality as the interplay of conflicting performatives and (in turn) performative inquiry as a suitably substantiating methodology for combining autonomist social theory with anti-capitalist musicology. It develops Marx-inspired renditions of deconstructive practices simultaneous to ideas around building counter-power against hegemonic politics. Counter-power is a more anarchistic concept that can be used to supplement traditional understandings of counter-hegemony that focus on ‘taking’ power. The anti-capitalist musicology that is being developed explores processes of being and doing that go against capitalism’s negation of the possibility of self-creation and in so doing it advocates fostering a politics of becoming to engender counter-power against this.

Finally, the capitalist hegemonies of the early twenty-first century are different to the mid-twentieth. Fisher coined the concept ‘capitalist realism’ to describe how the normalisation of neoliberalism was both a precondition and effect of its political, economic and ideological hegemony. At its peak the era of capitalist realism engendered the feeling that the age of revolution was in the past, and that no great change will ever happen again. The ideology at play, that every part of the world will end up eternally capitalist, is potently represented by Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1972). Such absolute ‘un-think-ability’ of change was accepted across degrees of consciousness because it had hegemonic hold. Into the twenty-first century and Fisher explains that whilst capitalist realism once looked like a post-political condition, it was in fact a particular mask of mutating (neo)liberal capitalism. Following Fisher, Foucault and Gramsci that the production of the *status quo* is systematic and deliberate, anti-capitalist politics expose it as provisional.

*Identity politics*

With the industrial capitalist mode of production fully entrenched, and following the seismic shifts of World Wars and technological change, the mid-twentieth century was an era of huge

social transition. The term ‘identity politics’ came about to describe the new social movements of the 1960s and these began with the Black Civil Rights Movement, lesbian and gay activism, and the women’s movement (‘second-wave’ feminism). Identity politics deconstructed the structures of domination in everyday life using the new-found tools of critical theory. Reflecting the revolutionary idealism of the time, these movements were new and unexpected and disruptive to normative sexuality and institutionalised racism. They provided frameworks for subsequent rights-based movements. What identity politics sought to make clear in the first instance evolved in part against the class-based politics of Marxism at the time, asserting that transformation or change in relationships of economic exploitation are not possible without attendant changes in power relations. There are differences between power and exploitation: exploitation exists within the wage relation, between employer and employee, whereas power can transcend structural realities and manifest itself in racism, misogyny, and homophobia, for example, in ways that have little to do with the wage relation.

Capitalism responded to the social movements emerging from this era by internalising these ruptures and evolving new modes of social control. Those that rule capitalism need to control political, economic and ideological change as evolutionary rather than revolutionary processes. In a wide historical sense this means that the ruling classes backwards project continuities that are false in order to suppress counter histories and political transformation. To argue that there are reasons for the production of continuities, where in fact there was both physical and ontological violence and rupture (discontinuity) is a Foucauldian expectation of how power operates. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) Foucault wrote that,

> We must renounce all those themes whose function is to ensure the infinite continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of a constantly recurring absence. We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and in that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of books. Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs.21

Power here is explained as able to transcend structural realities and manifest itself in the infinite continuity of discourse (and beyond economic exploitation). In order to be able to reflexively receive moments of discourse in their ‘sudden irruption’ expectations of oppositional politics must include time, desire and the imagination as functions of power.

---

21 Michel Foucault, *Performance Studies*, 143.
French philosopher and political militant Félix Guattari (1930-1992) is perhaps best known for his collaborative work with fellow philosopher Giles Deleuze. Deleuze and Guattari had a mutually inspiring relationship with the Italian autonomists and, because they engage with the question of the relationships of desire to politics, remain major intellectual resource for left movements. When they met in 1969 both theorists were frustrated with the ‘family romance’ emphasis of psychoanalysis as it had been developing at the time. They agreed that psychoanalysis had become a ‘capitalist drug’ – individualising collective problems and neutralising the potentially disruptive effects of desire. Their first joint text was *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, first published in 1972. As Foucault led the scholarship on power, they had similar things to say about desire: it is everywhere and it passes through everyone without ‘belonging’ to anyone. ‘Desire’ does not indicate a blanket force for good by these authors. Foucault penned the introduction to the American edition of *Anti-Oedipus* and, noting Deleuze and Guattari’s argument that capitalism breeds ‘a shatteringly intense fracturing of subjectivity’ he describes how the true adversary is, therefore, not so much capitalism as ‘the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us.’

Hence, desire can also be destructive, or elusive and harmful. Desire, like power, is better understood in terms of field rather than a force. Multivalent understandings of power and desire are necessary to link music to the world.

Capitalism evolves because of human activity, and music poses qualities of enactment through experience because it is performative. For the subject matters of this thesis, singular conceptions of power are insufficient. Singular conceptions of power are unable to explain how identity politics were captured by new strategies for the private realm to dominate the public in the late twentieth century. In *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Gibson-Graham discuss how normative political understandings of what power is and how it functions built up during this century. Commenting on where things stand at the beginning of the twenty-first century they reflect that, previously, ‘distance from power is the marker of authentic radicalism and desire is bound up in the purity of powerlessness’ and so ‘the move to re-inhabit power is deferred’. Hence, they continue, ‘If we are to make the shift from victimhood to potency, from judgement to enactment, from protest to positive projects we also need to work on the

---

moralistic stance that clings to a singular conception of power and blocks experimentation with power in its many forms.’

Through multivalent understandings of power, the performative and ‘performativity’ are conceptual tools for understanding the attribution of agency to subjectivity in the humanities and in the social sciences, though the distinctions between applications across these disciplines are not easy to make. Linguistic philosopher J. L. Austin’s posthumously published (1962) lectures on the concept of the performative “How to Do Things with Words” was a first iteration of the concept. He argued that ‘performatives’ are utterances that perform, such as bets, promises and naming. Austin states that ‘To say something is to do something’ and, therefore, performatives are an integral part of ‘real life.’

‘Performativity’ was extended as a politicised concept by Judith Butler in her seminal text Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity where she argues that identity is performance, and that the deconstruction of gender performatives demonstrates that the performance of identity is also always the performance of non-identity. Identity production is the mutual enactment of non-identity production, because it is a performative process.

Pioneer of performance theorising Schechner describes ‘performance studies’ as ‘unsettled, open, diverse, and multiple in its methods, themes, objects of study, and persons’ because it is interdisciplinary and intercultural. Immediately this chimes with perceptions/constructions of identity as in, against and beyond. Most especially because, as Schechner continues, ‘To be ‘inter’ is to exist between, on the way from something toward something else. Being ‘inter’ is exploring the liminal – participating in an ongoing workshop.’ Performativity (and performance studies) understands the world in its ceaseless becoming. ‘Performance’ is, then, a particularly loaded word that can be complex and contradictory. Performance theorists develop theory within continuums of ‘performance’ in order to ask questions around embodiment, action, behaviour and agency, without seeing these processes as ‘objects’ or ‘things’. The discipline of ‘performance studies’ is defined by a quality of ‘liveness’. Hence, ‘performance’ (and the performative) can be applied as a mode of study to examine art and

23 Gibson-Graham, A Postcapitalist Politics, 11.
24 Schechner, Performance Studies, 16.
25 John Austin, in Schechner, Performance Studies, 123.
26 Schechner, Performance Studies, 124.
27 Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge, 1990)
28 Schechner, Performance Studies, xi.
culture not simply in themselves but, rather, as performance. American performance theorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, a specialist in the aesthetics of everyday life, describes ‘performance studies’ as a ‘provisional coalescence on the move’ in which ‘presence, liveness, agency, embodiment, and event’ are not the defining features of the objects of study, but the issues at the heart of the disciplinary subject. The use of ‘as’ performance and theories of performativity in this thesis imply conversation about the power of the imagination, and the emotional and ideological consequences of aesthetic (over ordinary) realities.

Aesthetic reality equates to an ‘as if’ in which what is ‘performative’ is its own realm, ‘an intermediary, liminal, transitional, maya-lila time-space’. In this realm, the reactions are ‘actual’, but the actions eliciting the reactions are fictional. So, as Schechner describes ‘as if’ and the performative, it is ‘where the causes issue from one domain of reality – that of artistic production – while the effects happen in another domain, that of emotional response.’ In theories of ‘performance’ it is possible to talk about how, in the flow of behaviour and social action, various states of consciousness and cultural forms find articulation. Comprehending observations of the world ‘as’ performance is useful to study how popular music accretes meaning historically (as politics), as well as how music simultaneously effects the future (performatively) from the present, in its relationships to the past. Guided by the section ‘Transcendence’, ‘The Musicological Framework’ analyses music experience and listening as moving from judgement to enactment, victimhood to potency, ‘in’ performance.

As part of the move in contemporary anti-capitalist political theory to redefine political action, J. K. Gibson-Graham discuss the senses of certainty that have prevailed in an ‘all-knowingness about the world’ and in which, they say, the accepted or ‘correct’ political stances of critical, radical and left-oriented thinkers have been ones in which the ‘emotional and affective dispositions of paranoia, melancholia, and, moralism intermingle and reinforce’. Contemporary thinkers actively draw attention to, the ‘deep-seated negativity associated with an “epistemological practice” (Sedgwick 2003, 128), a “structure of desire” (W. Brown 1999, 20), “habits of feeling and judgement” (Connolly 2002, 76), and the

---

29 Ibid.
30 Schechner, Performance Studies, 124.
31 Ibid.
32 J K Gibson-Graham is the pen name shared by Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham, therefore all references to their work will be in the plural.
“reactive stance” (Newman 2000, 3). Gibson-Graham therefore begin their own book, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, by using these authors to suggest that they identify some of the hidden structures of thinking that plague left politics by depicting processes (for example, in theories of neoliberalism) as holding a rationality that assumes a certainty and, thus, are sufficient to predict the narratives of globalising capitalism. These hidden structures of rationality develop what Gibson-Graham describe as ‘strong’ theory. They serve to definitely establish what ‘is’ to the exclusion of what ‘does’, and they therefore risk missing potential failures and fault lines in capitalism. These structures undermine the power of the imagination and therefore also the potentials for enacting non-capitalist futures. Advocating instead a softer theoretical approach Gibson-Graham explain ‘strong’ theory by stating that:

Whilst it affords the pleasures of recognition, of capture, of intellectually subduing that one last thing, it offers no relief or exit to a place beyond. If we want to cultivate new habits of thinking for a postcapitalist politics, it seems that there is work to be done to loosen the structure of feeling that cannot live with uncertainty or move beyond hopelessness.

A fault-line of ‘strong’ theory is the melancholia of looking backwards and inwards rather than to the future and for new alliances. Gibson-Graham say that some practitioners of strong theory turn to post-structuralists and ‘identity politics’ to blame for the betrayal of old ideals. Yet the conditions from capitalism are far from inevitable, they crack, open and can be reconfigured. Their post-capitalist approach is fostered by the ‘politics of becoming’ for which post-structuralism and ‘identity politics’ pave the way. In the chapter “Affects and Emotions for a Postcapitalist Politics” Gibson-Graham further describe how structures of thinking have stood in the way of politics that foster becoming and post-capitalist possibility. They comment on the renewed stances of

…both an emotional and an affective positioning of the self in relation to thought and thus to apprehending the world. Under the influence of rationalist traditions that have policed the mind/body, culture/nature divides, thinking has been seen to operate in a register above and separate from untamed bodily sensation. Yet we have all experienced the intense interconnection between thought and feeling.

They encourage movement away from the subtle and pervasive influences of rationalist traditions in political theory, and cite theorists William Connolly and Brian Massumi in an enthusiasm for their scholarship as drawing attention to the ‘layered “inter-
intracorporeality” (Connolly 2002, 65)\textsuperscript{38} of thinking, and the autonomy of affect “that pulls thinking beyond the steady control of intellectual governance” (76; Massumi 2002 chapter 1)\textsuperscript{39}. These moves in contemporary anti-capitalism pay heed to body/brain processes that operate at a remove from representation and consciousness. These are the lines of enquiry that are giving impetus to new kinds of radical left thought. Conceptualising music as politics positions musicological study to contemporary anti- and post-capitalist politics in this thesis. In this the post-structural contention that all social identities are performative is assumed alongside the notion that, in music experience, difference is ‘felt’ as ontologically prior to identity.

The world is constantly in movement and human subjectivity and experience exists both within and as capitalism. There is no escape from capitalism and there is therefore no point in trying to ‘get out’ of it. We must oppose the structures that we are inside and be honest about our complicity. For this thesis ‘politics’ means, loosely, the transformation of the means by which subjectivities are articulated and formed. In this ‘identity’ is a political concept and it is a material effect. In terms of both concept and material effect the thesis emphasises the need to move beyond liberal interpretations of gender, violence and power that privilege identity over anti-oppression politics and that root themselves in identity, rather than power, as political action. It is by no means a straightforward dismissal of twenty-first century identity politics but it is to emphasise that it is not possible to define or measure anti-capitalist political success in terms of linear progress. The roots of destroying or superseding capitalism are not thought to lie in concentrating on any one given group formation, but in grasping the ways in which identities are given and formed. Neither politics nor identity are immovable systems of ideologies; because people are not inert, unchanging or unchangeable but fluid. Subjectivity is always in flux.

For Marxist politics, the ultimate rejection of identitarian categories comes through asserting class. Class therefore needs conceiving of broadly to umbrella the interests of people who relate to different things, but share the fact that they have to sell their labour onto a market under capitalism to exist. Identity is, like hegemony, never fully constituted, because it is always unstable. As Butler explains, ‘The transformation of social relations becomes a

\textsuperscript{38} Connolly, W. Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
matter, then, of transforming hegemonic social conditions rather than individual acts that are
spawned by these conditions.'

It is thanks to the first incarnations of ‘identity politics’ that there is no longer a presumption of an industrial workplace identity for political activity. Yet, some idea of universalism is essential to radical politics, though where this universal comes from must come under continual question (because ideas of universality are different all over the globe and across history). There is a crisis in perceptions of modernist class politics. Post-structural and autonomist challenges to liberal identity politics are that they rest on a mistaken view of the subject, treating it as cohesive and ontologically prior to forms of oppression and injustice. Yet, there is no ‘real’ identity, individual or collective, that is separate from its conditions of possibility. For Gibson-Graham, and indeed the project in hand, a helpful reconceptualization is therefore for a ‘postmodern politics of class’. They describe this as

Understanding class as a relation of a process – the process of performing, appropriating, distributing surplus labour … The class politics we are thinking of is focused on questions about who appropriates the wealth produced in a social labour process, how wealth is distributed and what kinds of societies it potentiates and sustains, and how noncapitalist class relations might be fostered. It is oriented toward class becoming and transformation, rather than toward identities and struggles defined by capitalism and the traditional left.

Throughout the thesis the in, against and beyond schema should be read as denoting a postmodern politics of class. A postmodern politics of class cautions against reducing emancipatory politics to identitarian binaries. In, against and beyond can speak to theories about how each individual internalises capitalism, as well as accept that the ways in which people come to think of themselves changes and can change. As will be seen in the second and third chapter this in, against and beyond (postmodern) understanding of class (oriented toward class becoming and transformation, rather than toward identities and struggles defined by capitalism) is a means to celebrate music’s enactments of post-capitalist desire as part of the transcendence of structures of identity.

The struggle is to construct a new and surprising world and not to preserve identities shaped and distorted by capital. As Fisher says,

… we can start to engage in many prefigurative activities right now. Actually, such activities would go beyond pre-figuration – they could start a virtuous cycle, a self-fulfilling prophecy in which bourgeois modes of subjectivity are dismantled and a new universality starts to build itself.

41 Gibson-Graham, A Postcapitalist Politics, 11.
The aim is the destruction of the class structure because the interests of the working class are the interests of all, and the interests of the bourgeoisie is capital, which is in the interests of no one. Radical left politics must have class at the core and recognise that class consciousness is double. This involves a simultaneous knowledge of the way in which class shapes and frames all existence in order to emphasise that transcending ‘identity politics’ can only be achieved in the assertion of class politics.

*Prefiguration*

Prefiguration is an amorphous concept through which to build connections across eras. The development of the notion and process of prefiguration in ‘popular music and politics’ is used in this thesis to articulate political action (and meaning) in terms of music experience. Prefiguration is a primary concept to open up the research into insubordination and develop frameworks for politically committed anti-capitalist musicology. The focus on the 1960s to the 1990s is a way of running together various histories in popular music and politics and extrapolating meaning out of them. It is a period that includes the epochal shifts from counter-culture idealism to capitalist realism and neoliberal modernity. Anti-capitalist musicology conceives of the prefiguring of post-capitalist imaginations in relation to political theory and musicology. The purpose of combining popular music and politics with and across senses of prefiguration is to explore how and in what ways different worlds of insubordination inform each other.

The word ‘prefiguration’ is historically suited to critiquing capitalism, rooted in the anarchist tradition, and able to adopt various theoretical guises to explain the operations of power both within and beyond social movements and activism. Since the nineteenth century anarchism has interrogated the political relationships between means and ends to develop complex philosophies on violence that ask what it means to employ violence politically from within, and against, the State. In the context of anarchist practice, the use of both ‘prefiguration’ (as transformation, political action and movement) and ‘prefigurative politics’ (as striving to improve the ethics of political organisation and bodies of instincts) are, when understood to be ‘countering hegemony’, politics of creation that break with hierarchy and the established order of things. Implicit in both terms, in this counter-hegemonic sense, is that merely to create realities antagonistic to those which prevail is to perpetuate a blockage of the future, because it is to remain defined by the remit of established practice.
‘Prefigurative politics’ in activist movements denote activity that aims to create processes and structures that work from within, but are counter-veiling to, the dominant ideological, political and economic structures. The moniker ‘prefigurative politics’ was applied by Sheila Rowbotham in *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (1979) to directly challenge Trotsky-Leninist accounts and describe women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s as an attempt to embody personal and anti-hierarchical values in politics. Prefiguration is used across the chapters to explore how different processes of insubordination inform and transform one another in relationships with popular music. This is particularly the case in the second section (Counter Hegemony) of ‘The Political Framework’ in which ‘folk politics’ are drawn out as ‘prefigurative politics’ in order to interrogate what it means to act strategically and embrace the inconsonant logics of politics as they actually play out.

The artists discussed in the thesis are chosen for the historical contexts of continuity, discontinuity and how ‘we’ can interrelate with the activities and successes of the past and present for the future. This reifies the ‘absolute movement of becoming’43 in order to formulate conceptions of subjectivity through music’s transcendent and performative dimensions. Prefiguration is a dominant concept for the thesis that allows for connections to be built across eras not by identifying with how things are, but hoping for something better. Such ‘process philosophy’ avoids entrapment in the mind/matter duality because the mental and the material are abstracted from the same occasions of experience: that from which all other occasions of experience consist of (processes of occasions of experience that are reacting to them). Thus the post-structural is also a central concept to the thesis, and to prefiguration, because of the flexibility it is able to offer. Previous ‘us’ and ‘them’ theories constituted subjectivity and closed down perception of lines of continuity and discontinuity in insubordination. Indeed, in ‘The Political Framework’ there is a discussion of contemporary anarchist theory and praxis as ‘post-anarchism’ (that is, post-structural anarchism).

*Embodied music cognition*

In *Ubiquitous Listening: Attention, Affect, and Distributed Subjectivity* Anahid Kassabian interjects into the scholarship on ‘listening’ to argue that listening modulates attentional capacities, tunes affective relationships to categories of identity, and, conditions our

43 See chapter one for an explanation of this concept.
participation in fields of subjectivity. Throughout her arguments she connects listening, sound, attention, and affect as keywords and shows how they interact in order to consider the relationships between ubiquitous musics and distributed subjectivities. We share large fields of subjectivity, she argues, that are neither undifferentiated nor individualised, neither simply individual nor reductively social. She makes these points by considering the kinds of listening that fill our days (unsolicited or not), rather than the kind of attentive listening that is routinely presumed in musicology and elsewhere. Her questions are about how we listen to the music we hear everywhere, and how that listening engages and activates the world we move in.\(^\text{44}\) Kassabian’s ‘distributed subjectivity’ is particularly helpful for the research in hand because it follows the post-structural contention that, in identity, the universal and the hyper-specific need not be a binary.

Building on the scholarship of Mark Weiser on ubiquitous computing, and Joseph Lanza’s *Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak, Easy-listening, and Other Moodsong*, Kassabian asks what, then, are these ubiquitous musics doing as we listen to them in so many places and ways?\(^\text{45}\) She makes it clear that her responses will be distinct from the kinds of analyses that came to the fore in the early 1990s in the disciplines of musicology as it analysed the Western art music canon of modernity. Kassabian emphasises instead that the discourses these approaches relied on around ‘Althusserian subject formation’ and how they ‘hail’ us ‘as bourgeois subjects’\(^\text{46}\) fail, or as she appears to suggest are unable, to take into account, the lower levels of attention at play in this contemporary ubiquity of music.\(^\text{47}\) Musicologists must now account for how these musics are operating in a different modality of affect altogether. The shift in theoretical work to less rigid differentiations of the senses is a move in scholarship to embrace the primacy of process. It is a move away from positioning and identification toward, as Kassabian puts it, ‘a more dynamic account of the relationship between us and the things with which we interact.’\(^\text{48}\) These shifts mean for musicology, as articulated by Kassabian that, if we take seriously the notion of a dynamic subjectivity, then we demand a ‘whole-cloth rethinking of the study of music’ in which we must stop analysing

\(^{44}\) Anahid Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), xi.


\(^{46}\) Ibid.

\(^{47}\) Ibid, xii.

\(^{48}\) Kassbian, *Ubiquitous Listening*, xvii.
music as an object external to us and, rather, describe dynamic nonhuman subjectivity.\textsuperscript{49} Whilst scholar and music have long been thought of as subject and object, Kassabian argues that in actual fact the two share large fields of subjectivity. ‘Dynamic’ and ‘distributed’ subjectivities are conceptual means to close the gaps, not only between music and scholar, but between ourselves and a whole range of others.

Kassabian distinguishes ‘distributed subjectivities’ from varying descriptions\textsuperscript{50} of similar phenomenon by noting the points that specify her interest. Such as, that ‘distributed subjectivity’ is constructed in and through our responses to acts of culture in ways that are similar to how ‘we once theorised individual subjects were formed, but through different processes’. It becomes possible to suggest, she goes on to explain,

\ldots along with Jacques Attali (1985), that in the circulation and engagement with music in its mass cultural forms, the shape of another social order in the making, the form that would supplant mass media culture, could be and indeed was heard.\textsuperscript{51}

Distributed subjectivity is further distinct in recognising that whilst many of the notions on which our ideas of individual subjectivity were based, including the bourgeois family and Enlightenment individuality, have deteriorated - and yet individual subjectivity continues to appear to us to function - it can take account of ‘its force in absentia’\textsuperscript{52} Kassabian names this the individual-subjectivity function and provides the following helpful analogy, ‘Desktop computing treats the computer as a discrete entity; like the Enlightenment subject, it relies solely on the processing power contained within itself. Distributed computing, however, links smaller units together so that they can share processing power in a pool of sorts.’\textsuperscript{53} Hence, distributed subjectivity is a ‘field’ rather than a group of subjects or individuals. The move in focus from position to process here is a challenge to theoretical models based on narrative and identification (processes themselves) and, for Kassabian, this makes it possible to take into account modulations of attention and pitfalls of theory premised on narration and identification.

Distributed/dynamic subjectivity is helpful for the thesis to account for affect in music experience in terms of embodied cognition and beyond the individual. They are

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Kassabian cites Cyborgs (e.g. Haraway 2003), the network (e.g. Castells 1996-98) and rhizomes (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) as the best known versions of similar theoretical ideas, Ubiquitous Listening, xxiv.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, xxiv.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, xxv.
complimentary concepts to ‘in, against and beyond identity’, emphasising as they do that identity is not static or positioned but in process. As the thesis will develop these points, working against neoliberalism means understanding the work the imagination performs on social and political scales beyond individualist psychology and ideology. Conceiving music as politics, in terms that go beyond the individual-subjectivity function includes inherent recognitions (in politics and musicology) that body/brain processes operate at a remove from representation and consciousness. Kassabian’s text is important to this thesis, then, in that she provides a musicological means to politically reify the imagination and the kinds of movement (including distributed and dynamic) that post-capitalist imaginaries are capable of engendering.

Conclusion
The performative is a category of theory able to explain and draw out syntheses between popular music and politics because on the one hand, music continually inserts itself into new contexts and, on the other, there are no theoretical limits to performativity. Hence, the performative dimensions of music are active in and between historical contexts. There is in the performative as a category of theory the means to test ideas not only around the manipulation of sound in music, but the manipulation in or by music of the contexts in which frames of mind experience sound. The study of popular music in these terms is productive for anti-capitalist politics that are future oriented because, as the thesis will demonstrate, music fosters emotional resilience and has utopian functions. Music enables a sense of change within the lived experience of music that might not feel achievable in the ‘real’ world. Thus music in fact changes tangible reality in, for example, habits of thinking.

The two framework chapters develop careful cultivations for an experimental musicology interested in the production of subjectivity and agency in and beyond popular musics. They develop flexible perspectives through which to look at countering hegemony, developing counter-power and the potentials for scale-ability. Anti-capitalist musicology thus develops through the thesis with practices of critique that can adjust to the conditions of an era and that endeavour to correspond to the actual and contemporaneous forms of capitalism and the rising subjectivities that contest and/or accompany it. Central to the thesis is the contention that politically committed musicology focused on the future is necessarily provisional, experimental and open to transformation, because how political processes will play out cannot be determined in advance. The future is an important political signifier but it is a
matter of contention as to what will happen. The left needs to popularise new images of the future, but any particular image of a new modernity must be open to co-creation and alteration. The political saliency of ‘popular music and politics’ in prefigurative terms, is in how the rebel artists in the thesis can be seen to establish, re-establish, or create, linear and non-linear narratives with dynamic and performative effects. Each chapter pivots around music’s empowering qualities in, against and beyond identity as a political enquiry into rebellion.
CHAPTER ONE

Anti-Capitalist Musicology

Anti-capitalist musicology has ‘collective autonomy’ as its dominant ideological horizon. Collective autonomy is the foundation of genuine individuality when interdependence is understood as the enabling aspect of individual subjectivity. Anti-capitalist musicology combines critical theory with the kinds of open-ended thought engendered by music experience. The chapter begins by refining the fields of anti-capitalist politics to which this project belongs: negative autonomism. It does so by detailing Holloway’s critique in 2016 in In, Against and Beyond Capitalism paying particular attention to how this is levelled against the left political economies of the twentieth century. Twentieth-century Marxist-Leninism started not with ‘we’ or ‘us’ but with ‘them’ and with capital and domination. This tradition thought of the working class as a ‘they’, ‘they are the revolutionary subjects’. New trends in anti-capitalism in the twenty-first century, a consequence in large part of post-structuralism, see this as a disastrous starting point that restricts analyses from the outset by setting the framework from within which we must therefore think. It is thanks to these shifts in the grammars of both thought and form toward ‘process’ (and as the chapter elucidates, the ‘absolute movement of becoming’) that ‘in, against and beyond’ can pose ‘we’ in dynamic terms. Furthermore, as the chapter also outlines, ‘in, against and beyond’ is politically useful for understanding music’s modality as unleashing complex performative feedback loops ‘in and beyond’ the shifting landscapes of politics. In so doing the chapter kicks of the negotiations in the research of how to understand music’s autonomy, asking if it is possible to perceive music as stronger than politics.

‘Capitalist realism’ once appeared to be a ‘post-political’ condition, rather than a particular ideological constellation of mutating liberal capitalism, and Fisher’s extension of the concept to Acid Communism diagnoses the era as the deliberate consciousness deflation that supported neoliberalism. A central argument to the chapter, following Fisher, is that it was a mistake of the left in the last century not to count pleasure and individualism as part of political struggle. For these conversations Fisher’s ‘psychedelic consciousness’ is employed to look at the changing relationships between experience and thought during the 1960s/70s in which mass audiences experienced its feelings being validated. A case study of Hendrix looks at ‘politics and music’ in terms of the psychedelic dismantling of reality. The psychedelic
imaginary of Hendrix helped to popularise the feeling of social reality as subject to transformation by collective desire. Fisher’s extension to Acid Communism has opened up the thirty-year hiatus of capitalist realism for new enquiries focused on the realisation of post-capitalist desire. The chapter in hand is the first in three framework chapters for the thesis to build momentum using anti-capitalism for post-capitalist politics that allow for the different types of political movement the imagination is capable of.

In, Against and Beyond Capitalism

The thesis’s research into insubordination through theories of prefiguration, subjectivity, performativity and embodiment in ‘popular music and politics’ shares Holloway’s rendition of contemporary anti-capitalism in which ‘rebellion’ takes precedence over ‘revolution’. The lexicon of revolution that dominated and infected twentieth-century orthodox Marxism was a belief that ‘a’ revolution would create a parallel world. Thanks in no small part to post-structuralism this is now more widely recognised as having entailed exaggerated notions of political will that overrode the complexity of society as it actually exists. Anti-capitalist struggle in the twenty-first century does well to develop approaches to the concept of revolution that see it as breaking social cohesion and not as taking power (or winning elections). That is, not thinking of revolution as the replacement of one totality by another totality, but as rebellion. The following pages go into John Holloway’s In, Against and Beyond Capitalism lectures to expand on this and situate the thesis’s anti-capitalist politics as autonomist Marxism.

Holloway (2016) makes it clear time and again in In, Against and Beyond Capitalism that he takes much inspiration and substantiation for his ideas from the following short passage from Marx’s Grundrisse:

…what is wealth other than the universality of human needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc., created through universal exchange? …The absolute working out of [humanity’s] creative potentialities with no presupposition other than the previous historical development, which makes this totality of development, that is the development of all human powers as such, the end in itself. Not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where he does not produce himself in one specificity but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?54

In this extract Marx explains what he means by wealth/richness and the commodity form by asking what is left when the limitations of the bourgeois form are stripped away, and this is

---

54 Karl Marx, in John Holloway, In, Against and Beyond Capitalism (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), 7.
‘the absolute movement of becoming’: freedom, the future. Whilst firmly in the historical tradition of dialectics, Holloway’s intellectual project seeks to be defined by an effort to develop a twenty-first century notion of open and negative dialectics. Holloway evokes the theoretical legacy of Theodor Adorno, and particularly Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* (1966), specifically that because objects (or constitutive elements) are in constant motion, our thought resists to ‘mere things in being’, such that our ‘thinking heeds a potential that waits in the object’.\footnote{Theodor Adorno, in Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, vii.} Holloway’s final question in the lectures “How do we, the losers of always, dare to hope?” can be explained in this light. He begins to conclude the series through a discussion of why we must understand contradiction (in and against but also beyond) as antagonism and, therefore, be able to ‘read from our own anger, our own dignity’, from our antagonistic selves.\footnote{Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 31.} Conceiving the richness that exists within the form of the commodity, alongside the death and misery that it involves, means that ‘we scream with anger, with the rage of entrapped dignity’ and yet nevertheless, ‘The dignity is there, our richness, entrapped but also not entrapped, not entirely contained, existing in but also against and beyond the commodity form, as struggle, as creative experiment.’\footnote{Ibid, 84.} As such, Holloway concludes that in the formations of anti-capitalism ‘it begins to click for us’ when we recognise that the rage that burns in, against and beyond us is ‘the fury of the active principle of richness’ (contradiction) \textit{and} ‘the absolute movement of our own becoming’ (the future). The only possible answer to the question “How do we, the losers of always, dare to hope?” lies in the recognition that it is the force of the absolute movement of becoming that constitutes the crises of capitalism, and it is the force of the absolute movement of becoming that breaks social cohesion.

After the defeats of socialism and communism in the twentieth century, many Marxists began to reject the dogmatic certainty of positive thought, of positivism. There was therefore a new generation of post 1968 Marxists that included Giles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault (and, later, Judith Butler) that, as a post-structural current, threw away coherent totalities and abstract categories, the monolithic and any notion of revolutionary purity. Yet for Holloway, whilst these theorists introduced necessary theoretical manoeuvring, this era marks an over-identification with the synthetic Hegelian tradition of dialectics and this has political consequences. Nominally, that these theorists actually develop a new positivation of

---

\footnote{Theodor Adorno, in Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, vii.}
\footnote{Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 31.}
\footnote{Ibid, 84.}
thought, ‘a return to synthetic closure’ that is unable to celebrate with open-ended thinking a central insight of Marx: that the world consists of processes of actions rather than discrete and separable objects. The new wave of ‘post-autonomist’ thought to emerge with the alter-globalisation movement of the 1990s provides examples of how a renewed positivism began to embrace new totalities. New categories such as ‘Empire’ and the ‘multitude’, Holloway explains, began to close off open-ended syntheses for anti-capitalist politics in favour of another paradigmatic approach focused on capitalist domination, and in which the new revolutionary subject, the multitude, is actually an identitarian subject deduced from relations of domination. Suggesting instead a ‘negative autonomism’, Holloway develops dialectic thinking by premising his Marxism on a form of logic that affirms movement, instability and the struggle of people (of the working class).

Holloway poses open-ended dialectics and non-unitary thinking without guarantees. As Andrej Grubačić explains in the preface to the published lectures ‘Without contradictory thinking in, against and beyond the capitalist society, capital once again becomes a reified object, a thing, and not a social relation that signifies transformation of a useful and creative activity (doing) into (abstract) labour.’ In resisting the reification of capital as object, or capitalism as totality, Holloways takes cues from early autonomist thought, and Mario Tronti in particular. Tronti’s famous inversion of the capital-labour relation appears in his seminal essay “Lenin in England” (1979):

> We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to put the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class.

The inversion Tronti instantiates here re-interprets, without undermining, the original writings of Marx and shows that in order to understand capitalism we have to start from the struggles of the working class. For Holloway, the newly positivist post-autonomist approach loses the Trontian inversion and instead poses another domination focused approach. He labels this kind of thought as ‘positive autonomism’ and thus describes his own ambitions as for a ‘negative autonomism’. Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* are, he argues, a perfect match for Tronti’s inversion, in that together they can suggest possibilities for building revolutionary theory that puts the concept of movement, and of non-identity and particularity at the fore. As

---

58 Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, vii.
59 Andrej, Grubačić, in Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, ix.
60 Mario, Tronti, in Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, ix.
Grubačić explains, ‘it is not enough to put the working class in place of capital and leave identity intact. It is here that negative or critical thought reveals itself as indispensable.’\(^{61}\) Negative dialectics, Holloway states, is the ‘ontology of the wrong state of things’ and he follows this up with Adorno’s statement that ‘the right state of things would be free of it: neither a system nor a contradiction’.\(^{62}\) In the preface to the 1990 edition of *Negative Dialectics* the author asserts that Adorno’s intention is ‘to use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity’ and that this is what Adorno felt ‘from the point that he came to trust his own mental impulses’.\(^{63}\) From this outline of Holloway’s arguments for a ‘negative autonomism’ it is possible to reveal another theme of this thesis, a fusion of (negative) autonomism with critical theory that fosters a focus on rebellion over (or as) revolution in terms of music experience. That is, non-identity and movement to study insubordination (over frozen chains of identifying equivalence), and insubordination as ‘process’ rather than ‘a’ revolution as a positivation, or certainty, of thought. The meaning of the word ‘revolution’ changes over time and according to interpretation. Holloway explains his meaning when he says, it is the ‘breaking of the logic of capital and breaking the social synthesis within which we live: it is rebellion.’\(^{64}\)

Historically, autonomist thought is a theorisation of the world from the viewpoint of open struggle, activism and militancy but Holloway encourages thinking about the world, and capitalism’s tendency to crisis, not just from the perspective of overt insubordination, but also from the basis of the non-subordination that is inherent to everyday life. Music experience, such as going to a gig or listening to the radio on the way to work, is an escape from the mundanity of work and the restrictions of capital’s social relations. The broader point here is that it is valuable to not understand ‘activism’ in contrast with ‘non-activism’. In order to not reproduce the vanguardism of the twentieth century, or create images of activists as thinking of themselves as special or superior to the people that they are trying to relate to in popularising their politics, anti-capitalist actors must continually consider their own engagement with the desire to change society radically ‘in its continuity with the non-subordination that characterizes the everyday life of everybody’.\(^{65}\) Thus, ‘revolution’ is rebellion and, in turn, rebellion is not only open insubordination, but the non-subordination

---

\(^{61}\) Grubačić, Andrej, in Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, ix

\(^{62}\) Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, x.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 45.

\(^{65}\) Ibid, 59.
and the lines (or potential identification of lines) of continuity between insubordinate and non-subordinate processes. In summary, it is the ‘absolute movement of becoming’ that constitutes the crises of capitalism because it is the absolute movement of becoming that breaks social cohesion. Everything is in process, it is temporary. The next section combines Fisher’s politics with musicological approaches that do not close off open-ended syntheses for anti-capitalist politics.

**All of this is Temporary**

Mark Fisher (2009) wrote that

> As any number of radical theorists from Brecht through to Foucault and Badiou have maintained, emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a ‘natural order’, must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable.66

The revolutionary era of the 1960s was a historical period in which people were able to develop political knowledge through non-mediatised collective institutions and against the effects of Establishment media processes. Alternative means of political education disrupt the hegemony of the news-form (see the final chapter for more on this point) and of parliamentary politics, and the ideological drives for a technical management of a society in which everyone is heading on the same one-dimensional trajectory. The era signifies a moment of huge discontinuity for the perception that the fundamental social relations were fixed in place, and capitalism as naturalised. Music and politics projected new futures that showed reality is mutable and society as multi-dimensional. Political knowledge was acquired through non-mediatised collective institutions beyond collections of ‘events’ and into new ideas about the future.

In the twenty-first century Fisher felt that the dynamics of ‘capitalist realism’ at the end of the twentieth century appropriated the counter-culture such that the 1960s and 1970s held a politically stalling stranglehold on popular memory. The era of capitalist realism was, he felt, determined by the counter-culture. The counter-culture was used to consolidate and naturalise the appropriation of its libidinal energies by the strategists of neoliberal capitalism. As such, he did not revisit the subversive power of this era until some of his final output. In his final lecture, “All of this is Temporary”, and the complementary blog post “No Romance Without Finance” for the UK activist organisation *Plan C*, Fisher opens up his concept ‘capitalist

realism’ to include, and somewhat seek a re-definition as, the deliberate ‘consciousness deflation’ that supported neoliberalism. Fisher argues that the developments towards neoliberal hegemony, particularly from the 1970s, as the ideologies of capitalist realism were naturalised, must be understood as a conscious project and effort to undo the effects of different forms of consciousness-raising that took place in the mid-twentieth century. These included feminist, class and psychedelic consciousness. Before his death, Fisher was working on a text on post-capitalist desire to be called *Acid Communism*, in which he was opening up this redefinition for new areas of enquiry for the realisation of post-capitalist desire.

Fisher describes neoliberalism, as it functioned through capitalist realism, as a distortion of everything that came before. He joins many other theorists who argue that neoliberalism developed to eradicate not only class consciousness, but the very concept of class. In “Revolt of the Elites” he talks about the rise of a new neoliberal bourgeoisie from the end of the 1970s and claims that the presidential premierships of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher mark the beginning of a world without apparent solidarity, and several decades of ‘capitalist realism’ that are only showing signs of coming to a close at the beginning of the twenty-first century. He uses the famous Saatchi propaganda for the Conservative Party in 1979 as a point of departure, ‘the notorious imagery of endless queues of the unemployed, of unburied bodies, and uncollected rubbish’. It was an advertising campaign that fixed a memory of the 1970s as a time of inevitable collapse. It is representative of the dominant narratives of the 1970s as a decade of ‘entropy and exhaustion’ that helped to fix the idea of social democracy as unsustainable and unfettered capitalism, as realistic. The rise of the Saatchis with the Conservative Party heralded the new role that ‘libidinal and reality engineering’ would play for capitalism. Fisher challenges the story here by underlining the need to construct new narratives and counter memories.

For instance, he says that ‘On the face of it, figures like Nixon, Reagan and Thatcher belonged to the party of the superego – they stood against libido, and specifically against the

---

67 A significant example is Owen Jones’s *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2012) in which he details how the working class has become an object of fear and ridicule in modern Britain. He explores how the working class has gone from ‘salt of the earth’ to ‘scum of the earth’ and suggests that the ‘chav’ stereotype is used by governments as a fig leaf to avoid genuine engagement with social and economic problems and justify widening inequality.


69 Ibid, 84.
libidinal outpourings of the counterculture, which they promised to dam’. Yet, as the investigations related to charges of sexual abuse against the former DJ and presenter Jimmy Savile investigations begin to disclose, we see that, ‘the problem for neocon/neoliberal reaction was not libido as such, but the failure to maintain a certain duplicity.’ Fisher explains that what had appalled the reactionary Right was the new visibility, the public shamelessness of countercultural libido. Such that, he goes on, ‘the new Right’s wink to their allies in the petit bourgeoisie’ was ‘law and order for the lower orders, but a jubilee without end for us ... a glorious shedding of all obligation to the poor and vulnerable’. He articulates the rallying cry that brought together the disparate forces of neoliberal reaction whose alliance brought remarkable success for capital and its preferred class since the 1970s as, ‘The masses have got above themselves – time to put them back in their place’. It is a success, Fisher concludes, that perhaps only Nixon, Reagan and Thatcher could, or would, have dreamed of at the end of the 1960s.

Fisher is interested in how neoliberalism collapsed any sense of alternative. He identifies Anglo-American parallels in this raising of left consciousness in, not only counter-cultural music but second-wave feminism, the emergence of rights-based activism in the LGBT communities, in black power, and trade unions. It is these projects, the ‘spectres of democratic socialism and libertarian communism’ in which, as Fisher explains, the powerful and the elite became aware that organised left resistance was no longer executed ‘primarily around Soviet stereotypes of top-down Stalinist bureaucracy and dreary monoliths’ but, was in the ascendant, and beginning to take place across a range of consciousness. In turn, this meant that capitalism had to develop its own libidinal energies and revise its processes of reality-engineering. These projects became the intensive machineries of PR, advertising and the branding of consumer culture that (now inseparable from social media) work in support capacity for individualist ideology and colonize increasing areas of the life-world. For Fisher the value of consciousness-raising against these processes is, in whatever form it may

---

70 Ibid, 87.
71 Operation Yewtree is a Metropolitan Police investigation into sexual abuse claims. It was launched in October 2012 in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal and has seen several high-profile defendants brought to court. Savile's status as a celebrity meant that he was thought to have been 'hiding in plain sight'.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Mark Fisher. “All of this is Temporary.” CCI Collective. Filmed February 2016: accessed June 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deZgw0YHQLt=5s
76 Ibid.
take, that we are able to feel what we know, and know what we feel: but without being stuck in our feelings, because we have related them to structural causes.  

It was not only the onslaught of neoliberalism, however, that saw, as Fisher reflects, the ‘Sixties counterculture’s retreat from Promethean ambition’. He refers to Ellen Willis’s *Beginning to See the Light: Sex, Hope and Rock-And-Roll* (1992) as an excellent account of how many individuals found themselves at odds in these new cultures with ‘the authoritarianism and the statism of mainstream socialism’ in which ‘Whilst the music spoke of freedom and experimentation, socialism seemed to be about centralization and state control’. It is in part a failure of the mid-twentieth century left that the struggles of identity, civil-rights and feminism could be rhetorically captured and incorporated into the façades of bourgeois (neo) liberalism. The left’s politics were vulnerable at this time due to over-reliance on interpretations of revolutionary transformation that exaggerated notions of political will and overrode the complexity of society as it actually plays out. It is an over-theorisation simultaneous to, effectively, waiting for ‘a’ revolution that was never going to happen because this is not how collectivity functions. Fisher summarises these points in the style of political animus that is characteristic of his work:

...consciousness-raising practices weren’t only at odds with capitalist ideology; they also marked a decisive break with Marxist-Leninism. Gone was the revolutionary eschatology and the militaristic machismo which made revolution the preserve of an avant-garde. Instead consciousness-raising made revolutionary activity potentially available to anyone.

In the twentieth century, incarnations of Marxist-Leninist anti-capitalist protest and resistance took the form of revolutionary calls-to-arms in newspapers and pamphlets imbued with a fantasy that some spark would ignite ‘the people’ to move as a mass. Foregrounding the instability of heteronormative forces, queer and feminist projects began to undermine the automatic ‘we’ to these projects, revealing how it appeared as though its central figures were clueless as to the rules governing their own behaviours. In reality, as these politics recognise, there is no one pure ethical standpoint that can exist in opposition to dominant forms of

---

77 In his explanation of this closing down of inflated consciousness by the neoliberal project, Fisher makes a joke as an illustrative example. Whilst absolutely no one, he says, believe that the employees of high-street sandwich chain Upper Crust are ‘passionate about sandwiches’, the intensity of the ideology is such that we doubt what we really do know (and thus we buy the uninspiring and expensive sandwiches).

78 Ibid.

79 Ellen Willis *Beginning to See the Light: Sex, Hope and Rock-And-Roll* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992)


81 Ibid.
power because, whilst one’s critical position might not be fully co-opted, it is nevertheless in some ways always an effect of the power regime it critiques. That is, all of this is temporary, there is no persistent self and, as such, genuine individuality only emerges in collective contexts.

The relationships that Fisher describes on his way to writing *Acid Communism* in “All of this is Temporary” between aesthetics, counter-cultural music and politics were unstable. The era did not ‘express’ already existing political positions because those engaged both anticipated, and were participating in the performance of the anticipation, of a politics-to-come. In very few senses did these politics arrive, so what is of note is the confidence of the participants. It is this that inspired fear in neoliberal ideologues and engendered an era of capitalist realism to re-engineer libidinal energies and better stage manage the *status quo*. The confidence was that a ‘social and psychic revolution’ could not only happen, but was already in the process of unfolding. It is from this perspective that Fisher suggests there is a need to re-interpret capitalism realism and neoliberalism not as the ‘end of history’, but a thirty year plus hiatus.

There is an extent to which Fisher’s arguments rely on a belief that music can construct a sense of history in movement, and articulates the political meaning that we invest in that history. The following section will begin to make the arguments, further substantiated in ‘The Musicological Framework’, that music’s modality is ‘in and beyond’ (as well as sometimes overtly ‘against’). It is because music is ‘in and beyond’ that it can help people to feel alternative political educations, construct new narratives and counter memories and, thus, augment the hope and confidence necessary for people to anticipate/participate in a politics-to-come.

*In and Beyond*

Active politics can never be a singular coherence but are always subject to revision, they are temporary. Musicology informed by anti-capitalist politics assumes the basic theoretical claim that no approach or position is neutral because knowledge is not fixed. A critical (and post-capitalist oriented) musicological approach will always be grounded in a historical moment and the problematic ontology of the self because it functions in the same manner as Schechner describes performance theory, ‘a few moments of moving action “taken” during a
specific span of historically conditioned time.’ In other words, to understand struggle against and transformation beyond capitalism, anti-capitalist musicology needs means of interpretation that recognise the political limitations in perceiving unity and coherence.

The self-reflexivity of processual ‘all of this is temporary’ thinking hit musicology in the latter half of the twentieth century. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist’s *Rethinking Music* (1999) is a valuable record of the histories, revisions and projected futures that characterised the disciplines and sub-disciplines of musicology at the turn of the twenty-first century. The collection of essays shows that some of the previously dominant elements of musicological thought privilege unity and continuity. Cook discusses the various contributor’s different approaches to re-assessing musicology’s history at the end of the twentieth century, describing how in some instances they present ‘performative micro-theories’ that are experience rich and therefore open to verification and refutation, but aspiring to no scientific generality. Given that this thesis is a, or collection of, performative rich micro-theories the next paragraphs unpick some of the necessary foundations of understanding to best conceive an ‘all of this is temporary’ approach to musicology. That is, they are about how the thesis argues for approaches to musicology that are interpretative and that can open up problems of subjectivity for left politics that reach beyond the subject and the individual. An anti-capitalist musicology develops that is able to look at multiple consciousness and dynamic subjectivity.

The authors in *Rethinking Music* are linked by the perspective that ontologically, music is more closely imagined and conceived through ‘rethinking’ rather than ‘thinking music’.

‘Thinking music’ privileges one way of understanding music, the cognitive; it proceeds with the assurance that self is ultimately knowable. ‘Rethinking music’ proceeds only nervously, lacking conviction that any ontological process is ultimately knowable [and therefore] asks us to situate our understanding of music in other experiences of music-making, the human practices of bringing music into existence through ritual and belief, act and imagination, and, yes, through thought.

In his chapter “Analysis in context” Jim Samson suggests that in music analysis the subject is irredeemably implicated, to the extent that music analysis is a form of self-analysis. An anti-capitalist musicology (or micro-theory) must start from this assumption; that its ontologies of being, and of music, are inseparable from the attempts to verbalise them. Such political

---

83 Philip Bohlman, ‘Ontologies of Music’ in *Rethinking Music*, 34.
musicology is therefore, knowingly, grounded in historical moments and in the self. Simply, this points out that there are political aspects to all systems of representation. Hence, ontologies of music (and being) are inseparable from attempts to formulate insight and from the epistemologies of analysis. For Samson this means that he rejects the idea that music analysis could stand ‘in a similar relation to the work as science does to the natural world’ because musicology involves interpretation and, since interpretation necessarily involves the possibility of other interpretations, this raises ‘all the familiar problems of the “I” describing itself as an empirical explanation of the other’. 84 A defining feature of anti-capitalist musicology must therefore be that it considers highlighting motivations as important as methods.

To adopt the insights of post-structural philosophy, critical aesthetics and Marx-inspired politics in ways that face the radical consequences of such thought in musicology is a complex ambition. An initial summative assessment is thus that one problem is linking music to the world. Most observers can agree that music communicates and, perhaps, that it thus functions like a language, but there is less agreement on what music communicates, and what, therefore, exactly are the linguistic properties that it holds. As Bohlman comments in his chapter of *Rethinking Music*, “Ontologies of Music”, ‘the metaphysical conundrums that result from the inability to unravel the distinctions between music and language are legion’, and so it seems the metaphor of music as language is so deeply engrained as to prevent a ‘yes it is’ or ‘no it is not’ answer. Certainly, it leads Arnold Whittall to describe it as an ‘inescapable binary stand-off’ 85 between language and music and Kofi Agawu to remark in his chapter “The Challenge of Semiotics” that ‘the metaphor is useful to the extent that it forces its user to confront its limitations’. 86 Whilst the boundaries between music and language, and aesthetics and politics are blurred, they are flexible and permeable and bear continual politicized questioning. One line of questioning, for anti-capitalist politics, must ask if the analyses privilege continuity and cohesion.

Kevin Korsyn argues that music analysis generally privileges unity over heterogeneity and, therefore, continuity over discontinuity in “Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence and Dialogue” Korsyn states that analysis can be rendered as ‘complicit’ with

history, as each is predicated on artificial and unsustainable distinctions between text and context. The notion that musicology is or has been ‘complicit’ with Western colonial history is discussed in ‘The Musicological Framework’. Korsyn seeks to draw out the radical consequence of post-structural thought by offering an approach that draws on early twentieth century Russian radical Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of ‘dialogic’. Korsyn explains that analysts have traditionally looked for a quasi-grammatical unity in the compositions they study, but that the unity of a sentence is not an appropriate model. Rather, following Bakhtin, we should be comparing music with utterances and the use of language (rather than the grammar of prose) in real life and colloquial situations. Bakhtin suggests that this language is not unified in the same way that sentences, by definition, are. Rather, it is dialogic, in continual dialogue, and characterised by irreducible heterogeneity:

…the utterance displays a social contradiction, a collision between two social languages; real history invades the utterance in the form of these contradictions. This is not the dialectical evolution of a single consciousness overcoming otherness; it is not a monologic consciousness reducing difference to sameness. Instead, consciousness here is multiple.

This thesis sees music and politics as in continual dialogue. It must therefore be reflexive about conceptualisations of both unity and heterogeneity so that consciousness can be understood in terms that go beyond individual persons or a generalised mass of subjects. It thus employs interpretive musicological approaches that are aware of not only the limitations of ‘unity’ (as the form of social cohesion), but the pervasiveness of its ideological implications. Accounting for the mutability of subjectivity and dynamic consciousness in political theory the thesis similarly puts post-structural linguistic philosophy to work in studying popular music.

There could be said to be two main disciplinary strands in musicology that are concerned with language. Metaphysical distinctions between music and language, and the nexus of inter-related assumptions in the language used to talk about music. An example of such an assumption is the ‘performance of’ paradigm. Lauding the score, or ‘the work concept’ over all else in music experience is now felt by musicologists to have subordinated the processes of music as ‘performance’ to the product of music in (that is, ‘of’) performance (e.g. at a

89 That which constructs performers as middlemen between sound and score.
concert). For both wide-ranging concerns around music and language, however, an element of the problems is that they appear naturalised. With regards to the first major disciplinary issue, it is a widely known phrase to claim that music is a ‘universal language’. This perspective has its roots in Romanticism and a faith in music as a universal language. The belief at play in such romantic notions are that music has a special characteristic through which it appears to be, essentially, a product of the natural world. Yet as Cook makes explicit,

... music is not a phenomenon of the natural world but a human construction. That is what makes it not only a source of sensory pleasure and an object of intellectual speculation, but also the ultimate hidden persuader.

Assumptions and attributions of musical value are always the products of particular times and places. The continuity, or perceived continuities, of history lie in the stories of ideology: systems of belief which pose as transparent representations of ‘the way things are’ and, in so doing, suppress the existence of alternatives. It is the apparent naturalness of capitalism that is demonstrative of its ideological status.

Significantly, the study of music and an elevation of music to both philosophical and bourgeois status took place from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. It was in this period that the capitalist model of production became fully entrenched in the West, with large populations migrating from the countryside in search of industrial employment. Within the cities the rising middle classes occupied increasingly economic, political and cultural roles and in the arts this period is characterised by ‘bourgeois subjectivity’. Bourgeois subjectivity denotes the sense of self-exploration and celebration of the inner world of emotion and feeling that developed alongside the rise of the individual as consumer subject under capitalism. Cook explains the status of music in this period as turning away from the world to become dedicated to personal expression, ‘Because of its ability to present feeling and emotion directly, without the intervention of words or depicted objects, music came to occupy a privileged world within Romanticism, as the new mood across the arts was known.’ The idea of music as an imitation of something that lies outside of music, and music’s timelessness, goes back centuries and it is closely tied to theories of affect.

90 The paradigm is discussed in detail in ‘Deconstruction’ in chapter three, ‘The Musicological Framework’.
91 Ibid, 122.
Through the eighteenth to nineteenth century, ‘affect’ came to mean something ‘halfway between ‘mood’ and ‘passion’’ and, thus, for the inner worlds of bourgeois subjectivity, music derived meaning from its ability ‘to capture and convey such affects as love, rage, or jealousy’.93 Hardly surprising, then, that during these eras it was opera that came to be seen as a full realisation of music’s potential, because it provides the emotional backdrop for the realisation of words and drama.94 For the twenty-first century theorist of affect, Kassabian’s description is useful. Affect is ‘the circuit of bodily responses to stimuli that take place before conscious apprehension. Once apprehended, the responses pass into thoughts and feelings, though they always leave behind a residue. This residue accretes in our bodies, becoming the stuff of future affective responses.’95 The shift to processual thinking and consequent large scale changes to understandings of subjectivity and identity sees affect as a physiological process bridging mind and body. Affect is that which leaves behind what we later recognise as emotion (and that translates into identity). Affect in these renderings does not see music experience as providing a means of access to another realm, or to false universal values in bourgeois subjectivity. In this physiological definition music’s affective power is tied more to what it does than what it represents and this is reflective of music’s only relatively recently realised status as a ‘performative art’ (a transition discussed at length in ‘The Musicological Framework’).

The following paragraphs build on the above to develop the position inherent to Fisher’s analyses that music can construct a sense of history in movement. ‘All of this is temporary’ will then draw to a close with a discussion of music as ‘out there’ (‘beyond’) before moving on to ‘Politics and Popular Music’. The second section of the chapter asks if Jimi Hendrix was right to suggest that music is stronger than politics and climaxes in a case study of Hendrix’s life and music as a psychedelic showcase of the dismantling of politics, read through Fisher’s ‘psychedelic consciousness’. ‘Politics and Popular Music’ thus asserts that Fisher’s arguments are indeed able to rely on the presupposition that music articulates the political meanings that we invest in history.

Music has ‘complex performative feedback loops’ that are in interaction with its complex metaphysical meanings. In “Ontologies of Music”, Bohlman examines metaphysical routes

94 Ibid.
95 Anahid Kassabian, Ubiquitous Listening, xiii.
along which ontologies of music reveal themselves. Most common, or predominant, in these conditions are music as ‘object’, and, music in ‘process’. That music is an object is the metaphysical condition of music of which we are most familiar in the West. It means that words can be applied to music that affirm an objective status, and that name specific forms (scores, CDs etc.) and, hence, that language can be used to name and discuss music’s objective properties. In turn, music exists ‘in’ the conditions of process and, ‘Because a process is always in flux, it never achieves a fully objective status; it is always becoming something else. As a process, music is unbounded and open. Whereas names be assigned to it, they are necessarily incomplete.’ Following this assessment, Bohlman adds two less familiar conditions of ‘embeddedness’ and ‘adumbration’. These conditions name and explain how music joins other activities and is inseparable from them. It is the interaction between and among these conditions that warrant the descriptor ‘complex performative feedback loops.’ Naming the interactivity between ontological domains in being, identity, and music that all result from human activity it is these complex performative feedback loops that this thesis looks at in ‘rebellion’. Adumbration is similar conceptually to prefiguration. Music may be embedded as object or process, but it is in adumbration that it is recognizable through ‘the objects it leaves or the processes it unleashes’. As Bohlman goes on to describe adumbration,

Under such conditions, music itself is not present, but its effects or the recognition of its presence elsewhere are; it is recognised because of the shadow it has cast [...] Adumbration functions frequently as a border-crossing mechanism, allowing one to conceptualise the music of the other through shadows evident in one’s own.

Hence, the embeddedness of music in the contexts of time and space, history and culture generate the conditions of adumbration. Whilst music is metaphysically a vehicle to help us ‘know’, what music helps us to know differs dramatically, according to the operations within which it is embedded. How then might anti-capitalist musicology account for music as music: as a process that is unbounded and open, that is ‘beyond’?

In Taking Popular Music Seriously pioneer of popular musicology Simon Frith (2007) states that ‘Music is a material practice offering a transitory experience of the ideal’. The intuition here, that music is a window on, or can give access to, another plane beyond ordinary

---

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid, 19.
knowledge, goes back millennia and across historically and geographically remote cultures. In the West,

it stems from the discovery of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, five centuries before Christ, that the notes of the musical scale correspond to simple integer proportion’s [and hence] Pythagoras and his followers speculated [that] the entire universe is built on the same mathematical principles, so that the music we hear is an audible version of the harmony that binds the earth and sun and stars together.100

Platonism is not the only assertion that music is ‘out there’, some eskimo peoples of north-Western North America also claim that the universe consists of a finite number of songs, which individuals receive and perform, but eventually release back into the finite repertory bounded by the universe.101 The idea of music giving access to a world beyond is most obvious, and perhaps most common, in religious practices, and the claims that religions make for music’s transcendent qualities and the divine in which the sacred becomes the everyday through musical performance. The dependence in these contexts, between God and followers, music and the world beyond, is realised through a trajectory that begins with God and culminates in the recitations of voice. Illustrating the function of music in religion to offer a transitory exploration of the sacred, Bohlman describes Islam and ‘the recitation of the words reified as text always already in performance,’ and the Koran as, ‘modulating the voice of quotidian practice into sacred practice’.102 Across history and cultures music has provided a portal to the sacred, a beyond, that transcends the everyday.

What people hear is a result of the context in which they listen and, related to this, the in, against and beyond schema regards consciousness as something that is irreducibly public. From this, the schema can also be used to consider the role of music as music in political participation by questioning music’s qualities and attributes as music. As Scott Burnham states in Rethinking Music:

We need to understand music as music, as an autonomous language, if we want to grant it the power to speak of other things: we could not reasonably expect something without its own voice to comment on anything. Something without its own voice would be at best a mouthpiece for something else.103

To fail to do so would be to risk synthesising music and politics for conversations that amount to little more than being about the ‘spirit of the times’. Thanks to the introduction of

performance theory into musicology it is easier to see that music is more than just another form of political communication because it is not subservient to the wider context. Anti-capitalist musicology needs to be able to make arguments that music is a defence against the world because it transcends its contexts. Moving into the next section of the chapter, the argument will be that it is precisely because music is politics, and that this is political, that in music experience the vulnerability of identity is transcended.

**Politics and Popular Music**

Difference and non-identity is ontologically prior to identity classification. The belief and observation combines well with an ontology of music as ‘beyond’ in relation to time (and identity). The aim of radical theory is not to persuade identitarians to give up their particularisms, but to aid the development from within these streams of new concrete universalisms as produced by immanent critique.\(^{104}\) Recognising the social and constructed dimensions of categories of identity is a step in their transformation. In music, this can take place as active immanency; as temporal critique that is, and feels, in, against and beyond capitalism.

Axioms about music and time are commonplace because music is distinctive as an aesthetic domain in its relation to time. Music has a temporal ontology that can feel as though it defines time, and this is perhaps most familiar in its interpolation of memory (providing, for example, a vehicle for recalling ‘times’). There are therefore common sense adages about time and music that, Bohlman states, are indicative of ‘a deeper uneasiness about the difficulty of finding representational languages to describe time’\(^{105}\) and that explain the presence of time in determining music’s ontology. As ‘The Musicological Framework’ explains more thoroughly, music has an unconditional aesthetic freedom and relative autonomy: it is ‘in’ and ‘beyond’ because it has performative dimensions.

Whilst it is a complex manoeuvre to make, Butler’s post-structuralist position on universality here is of considerable note. A post-capitalist world will not be defined by identity categorisation and so, following Butler, ‘universal’ can in the meantime be rendered as an open-ended category for strategic purposes. Major themes across Butler’s body of work are questions of ‘intelligibility’, who can and cannot be thought within the terms of cultural...

---

\(^{104}\) There is further discussion of this issue in ‘Identity Politics’ in chapter two.

intelligibility, who does and does not appear as a human subject within hegemonic social relations, and by what processes of representation are that by which political articulation proceeds. Music, albeit temporally, transcends the vulnerability of identity, and can overwrite problems of intelligibility. It functions, in enabling these experiences, as a ‘future oriented labour of cultural translation’. Butler’s scholarship is not about music, at all, but the following quotation is pertinent to this research into music as politics:

I tend to conceive of the claim ‘universality’ in negative and exclusionary terms. However, I came to see the term has important strategic use precisely as a non-substantial and open-ended category … I came to understand how the assertion of universality can be proleptic and performative, conjuring a reality that does not yet exist and holding out the possibility for a convergence of cultural horizons that have not yet met. Thus, I arrive at a second view of universality in which it is defined as a future oriented labour of cultural translation.106

Music projects versions of universality and solidarity into the day-to-day because it is performative as a future oriented labour of cultural translation. There is an amplification that can be drawn out here by asking, is music stronger than politics?

In Music and Politics, Street (2102) writes that, ‘From almost the first recorded writing on politics, music has been present as a key component of the good society or as a topic upon which it is necessary to comment. This is no longer true.’107 On the first page of Music and Politics Street outlines his reasons for writing the book, ‘I would like to persuade readers that music embodies political values and experiences, and organizes our response to society as political thought and action.’108 Yet as Street states,

Just as the powerful write history, so the powerless try to re-write it, and popular music, as the most accessible of mass cultural forms, becomes a crucial site in the struggle for authorship and for the memories that give meaning and legitimacy to that struggle.109

Similarly, George Lipsitz argued in 1990 that electronic mass media were unique because of their capacity to enable people to recover a past that they would not have otherwise encountered, and it allows them to escape the heavy burden of official history, the history of their oppressors. Alternative cultural histories can then become a part of alternative political histories, because of the transformative effects on consciousness. Popular music, Lipsitz goes on to write, is a ‘product of an ongoing historical conversation in which no one has the first

107 Street, Music and Politics, 140.
108 Ibid, 1.
109 Ibid, 169.
Street’s textbook for the developing academic field of ‘popular music and politics’ interrogates interactions of music and politics with multifaceted examples such as in questions about how the State sees music, as well as how music is used and seen by citizens in demands made upon the State (the subject matter of the final chapter). The research in hand shares Street’s interest in moving beyond the ways music comes to represent and articulate political ideals and identities, to consider instead, ‘how music mobilises support of such notions.’ The anti and post-capitalist political frames that are being set here, for politically committed musicology require clear conceptions of context in order to see that music functions differently according to the character of political conflict. Music can be a cipher for existing relations and it can also play a direct part in them. Hence political musicology needs to be able to account for or link to the power of music itself as politics. To state that music is stronger than politics, as will be seen in the case study on Hendrix, is politically useful for anti-capitalism because it treats neither the politics nor the music as generalised forms of abstraction.

*Psychedelic consciousness*

Throughout, this thesis uses ‘music as/is politics’ as a heuristic to focus on what music does rather than what music is. Fisher’s notion of ‘psychedelic consciousness’ (like ‘punk performativity in the fourth chapter) is a political concept for opening up questions of how music does political work. ‘Psychedelic consciousness’ obviously relates to drugs (and LSD in particular) but expands far beyond those that actually used them. Fisher uses the Beatles as his prime example to explain how psychedelic consciousness names the changing relationships between experience and thought that were both, widespread in this era and led, he suggests, by the group. The Beatles were a huge phenomenon in the mid-twentieth century and nothing, Fisher states, had been more globally famous up until this point.

The Beatles are easily construed as the ultimate representation of ‘popular music’s’ rise to global dominance. As part of the counter-cultural era and rapid-fire political change the Beatles could proffer many perspectives on the relationships between music and politics (and the history of the entertainment industry). For Fisher the group are understood as symbolic of,

111 Ibid, 6.
or leading, a popular modernist culture that trained people to expect things to get more and more experimental as they got more popular.\footnote{112}

Similar lines of argument are drawn from Hendrix and his music in the next section. Since this thesis is interested in music as the embodiment of fundamental values and principles, both as a form of political communication and a mode of political representation (and the Beatles, after all, sang in their first albums almost exclusively about love and romance) it is through Hendrix that Fisher’s nascent theses are drawn out. Both Hendrix and the Beatles ‘suddenly’ mainstreamed psychedelic consciousness. Bearing this in mind the following transcription from Fisher’s talk is worth citing in full, both as a summary of his ideas as detailed so far, and a point of departure from which to situate the case study on Hendrix.

[There was an…] immanent transformative immediacy in the music of the counterculture. It reinforced the feelings of despair, disaffection and rage that bourgeois culture ordinarily makes us distrust. As such, music functioned as a form of consciousness-raising, in which a mass audience could not only experience its feelings being validated, it could locate the origins of those feelings in oppressive structures. Moreover, the ingestion of hallucinogens by growing numbers of the population, and the emergence of a psychedelic imaginary that touched even those who had never used acid, made for a widespread perception that social reality was provisional, plastic, subject to transformation by collective desire.\footnote{113}

The key notion at the heart of psychedelic consciousness as political trope is therefore the plasticity of reality, and, the revelation of this plasticity. Of course, the newly perceived (and spread of perception of) mutability/plasticity did not last long, and by the 1990s it stood in diametric opposition to the period of capitalist realism that followed and in which, in contrast, reality is presented as permanent, unable to change except for the worse because ‘there is no alternative’. ‘Psychedelic consciousness’ is of theoretical value in developing anti-capitalist musicology against this because it can be used to interpret or speculate on processes of transformation. That is, ‘psychedelic consciousness’ synthesises ‘popular music and politics’. It is not a matter of political conditions inspiring songs but of political processes creating conditions in which music resonates with political thought and action.

\textit{Jimi Hendrix}

The experimentalism in Hendrix’s short career was a part of the consciousness-raising and spread of discourses and affective attitudes that in the twentieth century saw the increasingly

\footnote{112} That is because each album got progressively less formulaic and concerned with romantic tropes. Later albums ‘Revolver’ (1966) and ‘Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band’ (1967) are unashamedly psychedelic and experimental. 

widespread recognition of the status quo as just one form of potential organisation of which there could be more. Hendrix’s music is testament to conditions in which there was a growing confidence that social reality is provisional, plastic and subject to transformation by collective desire. A leader of popular music experimentation at the time, Hendrix projected new musical futures and visions of ‘reality’ as mutable.

In Starting at Zero: His Own Story (2014) Jimi Hendrix’s writings and interviews are transcribed to form an autobiography of sorts. All of the words are Hendrix’s own, though not assembled by the man himself. Autobiographical statements and transcriptions from his final interview114 are also revealing about the music and politics of Hendrix and his era, and can help to explain his enduring popularity and significance. In Starting at Zero there are sections on his philosophy of ‘Electric Church Music’. Conveying his belief that music is stronger than politics, ‘Electric Church Music’ names his ‘theology’ that music can bring out wisdom, understanding and creativity in people. Hendrix expressed his utopianism and faith in music as opening up emotional and psychic scenarios that we cannot quite imagine because they are too different from those with which we are familiar. Hence, to Hendrix, life and music were inseparable, the thing was to get life and music to clash boundaries, not through soul (which everybody has) but through feeling, which everybody shares.

I really don’t like the word ‘soul’ in connection with the Experience. A Spanish dancer has soul. Everybody has soul. Music is nobody’s soul. It’s something from somebody’s real heart. It doesn’t necessarily mean physical notes that you hear by ear. It could be notes that you hear by feeling or by thought or by imagination or zero even by emotions. I like the words ‘feeling’ and ‘vibration’. I get very hung up on this feeling bag.115

Hendrix accounts for the value of music in terms of truth, feeling, and a belief that music ‘belongs’ to no one, and is therefore stronger than politics. He talks about how music makes demands on hearing so that we hear not just in terms of physical notes but by imagination, by thought and by feeling. It is demonstrative of a faith in a prefigurative power of music in which to ‘feel’ something is to have the imagination livened in a productive way that exceeds the self, and in which music practise a performative anticipation of freedom or liberation of consciousness from the strangleholds of perceived/hegemonic reality.

---

Given that life and music are inseparable, as he articulates here, it is worth asking how Hendrix puts himself in the music. Talking about how popular music goes in cycles and that it had been ‘getting real superficial and junky’ he reveals himself as part of a move to a ‘more true form of music now’, and he further explains how

... the music started getting too complicated. In order to get into that you have to be really true to yourself, and none of those cats were doing that. The idea is not to get as complicated as you can but to get as much of yourself into it as you can. I feel everything I play. It’s a release of all my inner feelings – aggression, tenderness, sympathy, everything.116

Further articulating the importance he attributes to music as lying in explorations of the self to serve the greater good Hendrix stated of his music that ‘My songs speak in different ways but when I say “I”, I don’t mean “me” but rather whoever I can relate to’. In the song ‘Room Full of Mirrors’ there is a rebellion against the self that is expressed in music, with the lyrics articulating an (in, against and beyond) escape from self-imprisonment. Smashing the mirrors of self-reflection extends the possibility for creativity and feeling by prefiguring imaginative alternatives that transcend reality from within. The lyrics state:

I used to live in a room full of mirrors; all I could see was me/ I take my spirit and I smash my mirrors, now the whole world is here for me to see.

The kind of profound insights seen here to come through ‘being’ in a room full of mirrors are Hendrix’s psychedelic consciousness. Asked if he thought of himself as a ‘psychedelic writer’ Hendrix responded that,

I just write em in a clash between reality and fantasy, mostly, you have to use fantasy in order to show different sides of reality, it’s how it can bend, as well [...] reality is not about each individuals way of thinking, y’know the Establishment grabs a big piece of that, and the Church of England and so forth all down the line.117

Hence, in the clash between reality and fantasy, as it takes place in music, we hear by imagination (and, indeed, as future oriented labour of cultural translation). Using fantasy in order to show different sides of reality is to ‘perform’ reality that does not yet exist, and to hold out for cultural horizons that have not yet met. The imagination is livened in a way that exceeds the self, beyond each individual’s way of thinking, and into a libidinal realm of reality engineering. Asked in turn if this was him ‘raging against the Establishment’118, Hendrix responded ‘Oh, it’s not raging against it. That’s the thing, if it was up to me there

116 Hendrix, Starting at Zero: His Own Story, 61.
118 Keith Allston, ibid.
would be no such thing as the Establishment.’ Again this resonates with ‘psychedelic consciousness’, as making what was previously deemed impossible seem attainable (with politics that are in, against and beyond) and that which is presented as necessary and inevitable (the Establishment) as contingent. Hendrix’s life and music showcased a psychedelic dismantling of politics and reality. Not only was his music a direct expression of this personality, ‘performance’ was his element.

His routines – tongue, teeth, splits, guitar behind the head, etc. – were present at every stage of his career – they got him sacked from Little Richard’s band for upstaging the principal and they form part of his musical character just as valid for his taste for Chicago blues or Beck-era Yardbird experimentation.

Hendrix had distinct musical identity in experimentation and an outsider anomie. He pushed alternative narratives and conceptions of musical history and new futures because he had vision. In *Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Ladyland* John Perry states that ‘Jimi felt that time was moving fast: he was always saying that his music of even six months earlier was unrepresentative’. He expressed this sense of urgency in his experimentation with new technology, feedback and instruments, and by exploiting every purportedly non-musical element of each. Hendrix, one might suggest, pushed the potentials of any piece of equipment and components not intended to produce sound not (simply) because of technical brilliance, but because he listened. The perception that society is multi-dimensional and provisional was therefore something that he could take for granted.

When you control feedback as well as Hendrix you can literally “play the stage”: every movement affects the sound being produced. As Tom Nordie wrote in *Spin*, Jimi’s body language was impossible to separate from his technique.

Hendrix had mastered technique and performance so totally it seemed natural, and this allowed his playing to become a direct expression of personality, as well as brilliantly executed performance. Hence, by putting himself in the music, he showed his audiences in performance that there are multiple ways of hearing, and thus perceiving, reality.

Hendrix sought ubiquity and to push ‘theologies’ such as Electric Church Music as far as possible into every possible person’s consciousness through his music. In his final interview, with Keith Allston, on September 11 1970, seven days before his death aged 27; the

---

119 Jimi Hendrix, ibid.
121 Ibid, 92.
122 Ibid.
following question is asked. Allston states ‘You’re quoted as saying that we’re now at the end of something, that the next stage of popular music will change the world – do you really believe that music will change the world or do you think that music is a reflection of the world?’\textsuperscript{123} Hendrix responds by saying that, yes, music is always a reflection of the world but ‘the reflection of the world is blues’ ‘and you get this other kind of music that’s trying to come around – it’s not sunshine music necessarily, it’s a more easier type of thing, with less words and more meaning. You don’t have to be singing about love all the time in order to give to the people, you don’t have to keep flashing those words love all the time’.\textsuperscript{124} Hence, he says, ‘I’d like to take part in changing reality’\textsuperscript{125} and the following comments from Hendrix on his musical development reveal a political faith in his music for the future, ‘On the whole I think it’s a mistake to try to divide different kinds of music into small categories [it is] a mixture of rock, blues and jazz, a music that’s still developing, that’s now coming, a music of the future. My rock – blues – funky – freaky sound.’\textsuperscript{126} Hendrix had a lightning ascent to fame in his short career that is representative of the kind of discontinuity that the media, especially the media of his time, struggles to explain. He made the impossible seem attainable.

Hendrix’s rise to globally famous popular musician was a blow to the perception that the fundamental social relations are fixed in place. There is a shocking example in which the ‘Dean of American Rock Critics’ Robert Christgau for his review of Hendrix at the 1967 Monterey Festival. Christgau wrote ‘Hendrix is a psychedelic Uncle Tom. Don’t believe me, believe Sam Silver of the East Village Other: “Jimi did a beautiful Spade routine.”... He also played what everybody seems to call “heavy” guitar; in this case, that means he was loud.’ It belies a racism that Perry describes as one instance among ‘a whole raft of complaints about Hendrix’s undignified performance and his irritating failure to fit existing critical categories for black performers’.\textsuperscript{127} Perry also writes that Hendrix was deeply affected by the murder of black civil rights leader Martin Luther King in 1968. At the show he was playing in Newark, when the news came in, he abandoned his usual set up and improvised instrumental blues.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{123} “Jimi Hendrix: Final Interview”.
\textsuperscript{124} “Jimi Hendrix: Final Interview”
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Hendrix, \textit{Starting at Zero: His Own Story}, 61.
\textsuperscript{127} Perry, \textit{Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Ladyland}, 99-100.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 103.
As Hendrix stated, ‘the reflection of the world’ is the blues, but he was rarely so overtly political.

Within this another part of his identity was as an American ex-paratrooper from the 101st Airborne and so, at a time ‘when rock stars from John Lennon down were sounding off against war, Jimi could have spoken out with more authority than most’ but he chose not to. Such anti-war sentiments that Hendrix did express were more anti-all war than specific. As Perry goes on to say,

Despite his reworking of “The Star Spangled Banner” and the anti-Viet Nam intentions often read into it – Hendrix was no member of the Anti-War movement. At least until relatively late in the war, when serious numbers of Vets began to join in, organised oppositions to the Viet Nam War came largely from the white, college educated, middle-class – three groups to which Hendrix didn’t belong.  

Nevertheless, despite his pseudo apoliticality (or, rather because of his in, against and beyond identity in music and being), the Black Panther Party wanted Hendrix to play a concert for them. Toward the end of his final interview Hendrix is asked first ‘Do you have any politics yourself’ to which he responds ‘not really, I was getting ready to get into all that, but y’know ... everybody goes through their stages’ and then, finally, ‘Have you had any problems with the Black Panther movement in the States?’ and ‘have they asked you to do a concert?’ One of Hendrix’s last recorded public statements is, thus, ‘well actually they ask us, which I was happy for them to ask us, I was honoured and all this, but we never did do it yet ...’ For Hendrix to have performed a concert for the Black Panther/black civil rights movement as it stood in the second half of the twentieth century would have been, I contend, an enormous challenge for the engineers of capitalist realism and neoliberal modernity. Appalled as they were by the new visibility of counter-hegemonic desire in music as politics, it would have been the ultimate expression of psychedelic consciousness.

In this direction there are substantive claims to be made for how music articulates the forms of social solidarity that become exemplary of, or for, a time. Here the contention has been that Hendrix was a central figure catalysing the faith that the culturally new and alien can install the necessary confidence that change is possible across areas of life. It is why, in

---

129 Ibid, 99-100.
130 “Jimi Hendrix: Final Interview”
131 “Jimi Hendrix: Final Interview”
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 American political culture (in general) and left movements in particular are thought to have created the contexts for radical populism in folk music, for example.
popular terms, Hendrix is remembered as the embodiment of self-experimentation characterising his epoch. Following Fisher, Hendrix, like the Beatles, forged newly relevant paths positioned on the cusp of a new modernity. Hendrix has thus provided this chapter with a performative case study for Acid Communism.

**Acid Communism**

In “All of this is Temporary” and in *Capitalist Realism* Fisher articulates the fear of the powerful at this time, that people would become ‘hippie’ on a large scale and he explains that this is why there were new forms of anxiety production on a large scale: to both get people back into work and to push the ideology of work as an inherently good thing. Countercultural politics and psychedelic consciousness also flew against the Marxist-Leninism of the time because they did not entail a straightforward rejection of everything produced in the capitalist field: pleasure and individualism were central. That is to say, even though some may be dismissive of them as capitalistic experiences, the transcendental effects of music and the pleasure and enjoyment of the individual are those which see shifts in consciousness become the basis for other kinds of transformation at many different levels\(^{135}\). Popular music therefore had significant political resonances as a form of consciousness-raising transformation that had to be deflated.

For this thesis, then, Acid Communism as a trope sharpens the musicological approach to anti-capitalism by underpinning these politics with those of post-capitalist desire. Or to put it another way, the left needs to construct that which was promised but never actually realised by the various cultural revolutions of the 1960s. Acid Communism denotes the building of left subjectivities in which post-capitalist desire and imagination have centrality. Acid Communism thus, for anti-capitalist musicology, throws up ideas around the activations of consciousness and imagination that go against the neoliberal myth that individualist competition drives innovation. Rather, in Acid Communist politics collectivity is the condition of cultural experimentation that will develop new potentials for a post-capitalist world. In combination with the following two framework chapters this chapter has helped to build momentum for an Acid Communist/anti-capitalist musicology able to recognise and examine the processes that lead, change and prefigure society against the sense of pseudo-eternity engendered by capitalism as the only *modus operandi*.

\(^{135}\) See ‘Transcendence’ in ‘The Musicological Framework’.
CHAPTER TWO

The Political Framework

The classic Marxist thesis is that a world without work, a post-capitalist world, can emerge out of capitalism. ‘Communism’ is in this sense rendered in Marx’s original writings as the end of waged labour (the freedom to do what you want and need to do without waged work as a miserable time constraint). Changes in automation and the means of production in the twenty-first century see the potential to eliminate large numbers of jobs, but as it stands this will be an exclusionary movement that will cause a lot of pain and suffering for millions more people by forcing them to become surplus labour. The dynamics of the future could, of course, play out in a number of ways and it is a matter of political contention as to what will happen. The future is at the forefront of politics in practical and obvious terms. The future is therefore important as a signifier of the social imagination.

The chapter divides into three sections: ‘Autonomy’, ‘Counter Hegemony’, and ‘Identity Politics’. The broad purpose of ‘The Political Framework’ is to outline the necessary theory to ask political questions (in ‘The Musicological Framework’) on both how music creates political ideals, and the feelings evoked by these ideals. The three core points explained are that ‘autonomy’ in the politics of the radical left is collective, that neoliberalism triumphs by transforming contradictions into productive tensions, and that affective processes can constitute counter-hegemonic interventions/power in themselves (as was the case in early instantiations of ‘identity politics’). Avoiding a modernist postulation of a central point of intelligibility to the world, the chapter continues to evoke a ‘postmodern politics of class’ and to assert that it is not possible to hold a separate Marxist position in political or cultural movements of the working class.

Various and varying layers of persuasion are necessary for wide-reaching social change. Counter-hegemonic politics that build post-capitalist desire/power are about engendering discourses of understanding against and beyond accepted realities. Counter-hegemonic frameworks can be used to ask how things will set in the cultural mind-set, and they require strategic thinking about affect. Politics understood in terms of affect and emotion are important parts, in theory and practice, of the political toolkits of the contemporary left.
Within this, the thesis celebrates music as performing emotional work of political interest. The chapter makes significant recourse to the radical left textbook du jour, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (ITF) (Williams and Srnicek, 2015) in which the authors relate future-oriented politics to the historical evolution of neoliberalism. That is, the successful politics of the right through the twentieth century are analysed to inform and guide the left in the twenty-first. Hence, this chapter will explain neoliberalism as an impressive counter-hegemonic (to the political and musical revolutions of post-war mid-century capitalism) project that over fifty years evolved to become global trajectory for the entire world. Of particular interest are the analyses in ITF of both the ‘scale-ability’ and the flexibility of neoliberal ideology. The section ‘Counter Hegemony’ will look specifically to deepen the thesis’s understanding that large scale political change only takes place as a consequence of logic that is not ‘folk political’. Between ‘The Political Framework’ and ‘The Musicological Framework’ ideas of political autonomy are rescued from neoliberalism, as well as in disparaged ideas about music’s autonomous qualities. These two chapters therefore see anti-capitalist musicology developing (in, against and beyond identity) that is interested in new ways of addressing the senses beyond representation and subject positions. The chapters will position individualism within collective autonomy, arguing that music fosters emotional resilience beyond liberal interpretations of power. Holistically the chapters state that transcendence is a social function because it has political effects and that recognising this allows for arguments around popular music experience as augmenting post-capitalist desire.

In the first instance there is a brief discussion to give substance to something of the debates and meanings around ‘modernity’ and ‘postmodernity’. These are important foundations for expanding on ‘collective autonomy’ as a political horizon for post-capitalist politics.

* * *

Discussing power and resistance within modernity in the chapter of *Commonwealth*, “Antimodernity as Resistance”, the autonomist authors Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2011) state that:

Modernities are always two. Before we cast it in terms of reason, Enlightenment, the break with tradition, secularism, and so forth, modernity must be understood as a power relation: domination and resistance, sovereignty and struggles for liberation. This view runs counter to the standard narrative that modernity emerged from Europe to confront in the colonies the premodern, whether that be conceived as barbaric, religious or primitive. “There is no modernity without coloniality,” claims Walter Mignolo, “because coloniality is constitutive of modernity.” It is constitutive insofar as it marks the hierarchy at modernity’s heart. Modernity, then, resides not solely in Europe or in the colonies but in the power
relation that straddles the two. And therefore forces of antimodernity, such as resistances to colonial domination, are not outside modernity but rather internal to it, that is, within the power relation.136

Inferring that colonialism is the predominant reason for being against modernity, the authors state that such antimodernity is, actually, within modernity. The notion of the encounter between modernity and antimodernity, and their mutuality, highlights the complexity of power relations, ‘the processes of mixture and transformation that result from the struggle of domination and resistance’.137 That the encounters of modernity reveal constant processes of mutual transformation can be explained as a postmodern mode or logic of thought. The postmodern, the post-structural (and thus the post-anarchist) see ontology and reality as constant processes in order (sometimes) to foster a post-capitalist politics of becoming. The following points from Negri and Hardt, that ‘To understand modernity, we have to stop assuming that domination and resistance are external to each other, casting antimodernity as the outside, and recognise that resistances mark differences that are within’138 can be understood as such. Theirs is an autonomist perspective and a ‘postmodern’ analysis that suggests opposing modernity requires undermining any notion of modernity as an unfinished project. ‘The Political Framework’ of the research in hand should not, thus, appear to be advocating for a stance that is ‘against’ either modernity, or postmodernity.

It is worth nothing in this light George Kastiaficas’s critique of what he perceives as a ‘mechanical Marxist’ failure to appreciate the radical gap between modernity and postmodernity, suggesting that it cripples abilities to understand the contemporary world. He places the observation against the ‘postmodernist’s’ inability to link ‘empirical understanding of the decentred autonomy of local contexts to history’, and concludes that there is a mutual incapability with the ‘mechanical Marxists’ to articulate transcendental visions for the future.139 In Kastiaficas’s words,

Locked in debate, the more the postmodernists and the Marxists contest each other’s assumptions and ideas the less likely they are to elicit what could be mutually beneficial insights offered by those they define as their intellectual opponents. At their extremes both become mechanical responses, not dialectical ones, to rapid change.140

137 Ibid, 68.
138 Ibid, 70.
140 Ibid.
Radical politics must be formed in the belief that capitalism can be superseded by something wholly different, which is also implied by the ‘in, against and beyond’ schema. These possibilities can have no fixed destination and are theorised by impermanence, therefore it makes sense to follow both Marxist politics (in activism and scholarship) and the kinds of thought invoked by the postmodern: self-reflexive, unclassifiable and new interpretations. Postmodern logic might appear to risk the fragmentation of grand narratives and decentre local contexts from history, but there is a philosophical spirit to be harnessed when in combination with Marx-inspired thought. Together these discourses can come to the rescue of new versions of the modern, and that which is unknown: the future. In this instance, they can form a dialectic ‘negative autonomism’ focused on collective autonomy. ‘Collective autonomy’ is a ‘bottom up’ approach to theorising subjectivity. It works against (and beyond) the perceived modernist reliance on positing a central point of intelligibility for the world.

In *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* Kastiaficas (2007) discusses Seyla Banhabib’s combining of critical theory with feminism. He highlights her lack thereof of constructions of a ‘we’, or sense of collectivity. Kastiaficas makes the observation that to posit individual autonomy as lying beyond community (indeed, in ways that ‘in, against and beyond’ thinking does not), is to postulate unconnected individuals as ‘building blocks’ for society in such a way as to adopt the

\[\ldots\text{atomistic categories of analysis that arose along with capital’s penetration of the collective forms of social life, categories that subverted the ancients’ assumption of a ‘we’ as opposed to the ‘I’ as the basis of knowledge and social organisation.}^{141}\]

Rather, he expresses his position that ‘genuine individuality emerges as human beings situate themselves in collective contexts that negate their individualism’.\(^{142}\) Through his attack on Benhabib the concept of ‘collective autonomy’ can be further drawn out. He accuses her of uncritically adopting this standpoint of the atomized individual, and states that she remains a modernist in postulating a central point to the world rather than conceptualising it as a ‘polycentric collective construction’.\(^{143}\) Retaining these Cartesian categories of individual subjectivity therefore means that her analysis cannot move beyond the level of the individual reflecting self. Nor can it provide adequate explanations as to how social realities are authored and edited by collective subjectivity. In the final analysis it is felt that Benhabib

\(^{141}\) Ibid, 259.
\(^{142}\) Ibid, 371.
\(^{143}\) Ibid, 257.
ignores, and is able only to ignore, the ‘conscious spontaneity’ of autonomous social movements and the constructions of ‘we’ formed in lived experience that seek to ‘accomplish the theoretical tasks that she only outlines’. In this spirit, the first section looks at ‘autonomy’ as a political concept and explains that the first ‘autonomist’ movement in mid twentieth century Italy was a consciously ‘prefigurative’ response to rapid change.

**Autonomy**

In the autonomy of the political as a mode of theorising, capital is a social relation that contains labour within it. Hence it is not possible to live outside of, or autonomously to, capitalism. ‘Capital’ is not synonymous with money here but, rather, it is a system of social reproduction. Capitalism is an expanding system of social relations that produces its own categories of analyses. Patriarchy and white supremacy are not (therefore) autonomous modes that exist simultaneous to capital, but are fundamental to the capitalist mode of production. In turn, this means that in the reproduction of capitalism, people take up processes of subjectification that constrict and dictate subjectivity and engender capitalistic identity. These processes take place in language, social institutions and so on; but they are also that which provide the range of praxis that subjectivities can take up in active subjective construction against life under capital.

‘Autonomy’, in moral and political philosophy, is contentious because the word itself is essentially contested. A theory of autonomy is, thus, a construction of the concept. Across political theories autonomy plays various roles in theoretical accounts of persons and subjectivity, and of moral obligations and responsibility that include the justifications for social policies. Composed out of two Greek words, ‘auto-nomos’ the term *autonomia* was first used in 1620 to refer to something or someone that lives by their own rule. Autonomy in this original sense is not independence. ‘Autonomy’ as a concept in contemporary radical left politics is also collective. It does not mean the same as independence (or the hyper-confidence of the neoliberal subject), or autocracy or separation from community, but relates to life within society by one’s own rule. Collective autonomy is a concept that is at a remove from presumptions of the normative centrality given to political power and authority in connection to autonomy in liberalism. It relates more to anarchist and autonomist political

---

144 Kastiafas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 257.
philosophies, and enables possibilities for including transcendental subjects that can ground practices of critique. ‘Collective autonomy’ is both individual and collective freedom and this is why it is a utopian horizon. It is ideologically separate to the basic, minimal status of individuals being responsible or independent in the meaning of autonomy in the embedded liberalism that supports capital. It functions instead as a goal to be attained, a means without end. In this thesis ‘collective autonomy’ provides a values-based organisational approach (and ideological horizon) to a study of contemporary left politics with popular music.

The word ‘anarchy’ comes from the Greek anarkhia meaning contrary to authority, without ruler. It was used in a derogatory sense until 1840 when Pierre-Joseph Proudhon adapted it to argue that organisation without government was both possible and desirable. In ‘anarchism’, as it became known, the State is a punitive institution that protects the interests and privileges of the powerful. Anarchist-communism might also be termed ‘collectivist-anarchism’ though in either moniker this names the mainstream of anarchist propaganda for more than a century. That is, arguing that property in land, natural resources and the means of production should be held in mutual control by local communities. ‘Individualist-anarchism’ also goes back to the nineteenth century, to figures in America who argued that in protecting our own autonomy and ‘associating with others for common advantages we are promoting the good of all’. On the relevance of anarchy to the twentieth century, American social critic and radical Dwight Macdonald (1906-1982), in his discussion of how it is that the State holds together the status quo, and that orthodox Marxism glorifies ‘the masses’ and endorses the State, says that ‘It is anarchism that leads back to the individual and the community, which is ‘impractical’ but necessary – that is to say, revolutionary.’ Both anarchism and autonomism attach moral value to autonomy in collectivity. These philosophies are clear that maximising the autonomy of individuals enlarges the political possibilities for collective success.

Libertarian ideals inform anarchistic practice and can be identified across histories, politics and cultures that pre-date the emergence of the word or political identification. Anarchism, that means, need not be self-identifying to be perceived, or constructed, as ‘anarchist’. Theorists can identify anarchistic undercurrents in philosophy, aspiration and in aesthetics,

146 Ibid, 2.
147 Ibid, 70.
across history and cultures. Colin Ward (2004) gives many examples that include the slave revolts of the ancient world, and the inherent anarchism to the aims of the Diggers in the English Revolution of the 1640s. Ward goes as far to state that:

Every European, North American, Latin American and Asian society has had its anarchist publicists, journals, circles of adherents, imprisoned activists, and martyrs ... a minority urging their fellow citizens to absorb the lessons of the sheer horror and irresponsibility of government.

Nevertheless, there are great gulfs between the actual progress of the large scale change that anarchist and Marxist writers and activists aspire to, and the reality of history as it has actually progressed. On the other hand, anarchist philosophy has a retrospective and enduring resilience, with anarchist ideals consistently contributing to the small scale liberations that lift human misery. This argument could be made in reference to changes in clothing fashions pioneered, as Ward describes, by ‘radical non-conformists,’ or in increased sexual liberations and freedom, the move to less punitive educational systems and in the ending of capital punishment, as well as in the Situationist and other aesthetic attempts to ‘sharpen the widespread vaguely libertarian trends’. Thus, there is tremendous potency to anarchism in politics and philosophy, but also in aspiration and aesthetics, which can be seen throughout history.

Into the twenty-first century and it is possible to talk about ‘post-structural anarchism’ as anarchist theory grounded in post-structural understandings of power. ‘Post-anarchists’ reject Cartesian concepts of the subject for a radical politics of constant becoming. There is therefore no eventual goal, post-anarchism will not come into being. Indeed it does not mean after anarchism. It is not a final, static, stage of development but, rather, includes processual philosophy in order to work anarchism with the recognition that everything is in flux, that the only permanent state is change. Post-anarchism is a permanent means without end that critiques (neo)liberal notions of language, consciousness and rationality from anarchist perspectives (arguing, that is, for how these tenets of (neo)liberal politics are inherent within economic and political power in the capitalist state organisation). Post-anarchism, in line with Fisher and Foucault, seeks to put in evidence the plasticity of reality against the status quo. As such, contemporary post-anarchist thinkers such as Saul Newman offer extensive critiques

150 Ibid, 10.
151 Ibid, 71.
152 Ibid, 75.
153 Not the conquest or seizure of State power.
of hegemony, the neoliberal subject and societies of control. Indeed, this is a post-anarchist research project in that it similarly explores how hegemony is challenged, contested and reconfigured whilst also asking how to prefigure and create alternatives as well as to engender new forms of organisation that people determine freely for themselves. In post-anarchist philosophising is, as with this thesis, a spirit of contingency and indeterminacy. Post-anarchism is, thanks to post-structural understandings of power, (de)centred on fostering relationships of solidarity based simultaneously on individual and collective freedom (collective autonomy).

Anarchist and autonomist philosophies are revolutionary politics independent of electoral processes. If the origins of ‘autonomism’ can be described as meaning to offer a political alternative to both authoritarian socialism and contemporary representative democracy in the twentieth century, then ‘anarchism’ can, not dissimilarly, be thought of as aspiring to be the ultimate projection of both liberalism and socialism in terms of collective autonomy. They are at diametric odds with the following declaration about human activity from neoliberal (and longest serving Prime Minister of the UK in the twentieth century) Margaret Thatcher in 1987. In an interview with *Women’s Own* magazine she states that:

> They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours.\(^{154}\)

Thatcher’s comment exemplifies the direct opposite of in, against and beyond/collective autonomy philosophy. In *The Subversion of Politics* Kastiaficas says the form of autonomous social movements is to expand democracy and to help individuals break free from political structures and behaviour patterns imposed from the outside.\(^ {155}\) The following short paragraph, from the SCUM manifesto written by Valerie Solanas and published in 1968, underscores what I personally mean by ‘collective autonomy’. Nominally, that forms of collective autonomy should be aligned to autonomous social movements and against the neoliberal denial of society. Perhaps the SCUM manifesto as a whole is essentially most valuable for satire and personal politics, rather than rigid theoretical ‘correctness’, though it is precisely these reasons that inspire its inclusion in contrast to Thatcher’s position.


A true community consists of individuals – not mere species members, not couples – respecting each other’s individuality and privacy, at the same time interacting with each other mentally and emotionally – free spirits in free relation to each other – and co-operating with each other to achieve common ends. Traditionalists say the basic unit of ‘society’ is the family; ‘hippies’ say the tribe; no one says the individual.\textsuperscript{156}

As the title of Kastiaficas’s book indicates, the goal of autonomous movements is ‘the subversion of politics and the decolonization of everyday life and civil society’. In the final chapter he asserts that autonomy is, and autonomous movements are, ‘Based on politics of the first person and a desire to create direct democracy, these movements oppose the false universality of the control centre under whose guise behemoth governments and corporations seek to impose their wills.’\textsuperscript{157}

To re-iterate and draw this part of the section to a close before moving on to look more at autonomist social movement: to focus on the individual can from certain perspectives appear to bring to mind connotations that run counter to the collectivist instincts of left politics, and the levels of participation needed to resist (never mind defeat) capitalism; to aspire to collective autonomy, however, does not reify the independence of individuals as living beyond community. This thesis, as with Solanas’s and Kastiaficas’s, perceives ‘collective autonomy’ when the individuality of human beings emerges because they are situated in collective contexts that negate their individualism. It is not a paradox, but indicates instead that the questions posed by the contradictions of capitalist existence need to be at a level of species discourse and, as the section on neoliberalism (and individualism) will show, include discourses of affect and emotion for theoretical accounts of developing counter-power against hegemony.

\textit{Autonomism}

‘Autonomism’ as active politics in autonomous social movements names the ongoing creation, and practice, of anti-authoritarian political and social movements and theories. Theories of autonomism first emerged in Italy in the 1960s as ‘workerist’ or \textit{Operaismo} communism. These theorists fought against the pessimism dominating Marxist practice of the time through a reading of politics in which the course of history is understood to be determined by resistance rather than domination. In 1960s Italy, autonomist politics

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kastiaficas, \textit{The Subversion of Politics}, 267.
\end{itemize}
transformed both theory and practice for Marxism as it stood in the early-mid twentieth century. Autonomists insisted on the lack of inevitability to the unfolding of capital’s law as cause for optimism, and the primacy of subjective movement. Workers rather than capital are placed at the centre of conceptions of historical change. The value of autonomous theorising is not in the notion that politics is, or can be interpreted as, an independent sphere, but how we position ourselves politically in theory and practice. As Holloway (2016) states, ‘The starting point is important because if we start with domination, if we start with structures, then there is a great danger that we enclose ourselves, that we entrap ourselves within the structures of domination that we want to criticize’. Succinctly, ‘autonomism’ names the belief that workers’ struggle drives history, and not the development of capital. Operaismo names the first theoretical trends of autonomist thought in the 1960s as it began to theorise against the standard readings of Marx. It takes as its fundamental axiom: the struggles of the working class precede and prefigure the successive re-structuration of capital. This history of autonomism reads as the desire to create a performative escape in theory at the time from the once prevailing politics in practice that could (and did) prefigure a revived anti-capitalism. Operaismo effectively sought to wish a reality into being that resisted the prevailing tendency to hold a separate Marxist position in political and cultural movements of the working class.

In the ‘Fordist’ era of the 1960s and 1970s, accompanying the theoretical and intellectual developments of autonomism, were surges of activity that comprised of students, the marginalised and the precarious seeking new expressions of commonality outside of the traditional meeting point of the mass factory and the workplace. The autonomous, or autonomous, social movements that took place in Italy through the 1960s and 1970s contrasted themselves against the standards of organised Marxism by actively working against the assumption that there was (or could be) an organically generated proletariat that would create a revolution. These activists shifted the emphases from the (Fordist era) mass factory to the ‘social factory’: to the everyday lives of people.

Contemporary autonomist feminism’s roots lie in the 1970s ‘Wages for Housework’ (WFH) campaign that began in Italy. It is an example of the radical nature of the new social factory politics, wrenching as WFH did, the focus onto the everyday lives of women. The campaign provides one of the first theoretical assertions of women as relevant object for Marxist

158 Holloway, In, Against and Beyond Capitalism, 30.
attention. The title of the campaign explains the demand in practice. The political import was the need to reveal the unpaid work by women that goes into creating profit and therefore sustaining capitalism as the work that reproduces the workers and therefore every other pillar of work (capitalism). WFH demonstrates that to struggle from a particular social relation is also to recognise the power to refuse that relation. By revealing the wage to be broader than the wage itself, the WFH campaign sought to confer power, in theory and in practice, to women. A ‘success’ of the WFH campaign (the aim to monetise housework was obviously a defeat) was not in its struggle to enter (anti) capitalist relations, but to make the point that women had never been out of them. In reality, the practical demand could never have been met, because it could only be satisfied under the kind of conditions in which it would no longer need to be raised. That is, because WFH is an excessive practical demand so contrary to the profit motive, it could only be realised as a consequence of revolutionary change from which it would cease to be relevant. There is a continued relevance to WFH in demands for political perspectives that can reveal how modes of labour shape what it means to be female. The chapter ‘Beyond Gender’ contributes to these discussions by developing the concept ‘Feeling Good’ to discuss changes in the soul as much as the workplace.

The world is of course very different from when autonomist theories first emerged in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s. At this time the Communist Party was strong, trade unions were powerful, and Stalinism remained an oppressive presence. In the transitions to a post-Fordist era, autonomous opposition movements rooted themselves in social relations outside of the sites of industrial production. In contrast to the post-Fordist era of revolutionising communication and technology, the Fordist era had generated comparatively high levels of social cohesion. In 1980 Italian autonomist theorist Alberto Melucci said of the evolving situation that:

In comparison with the industrial phase of capitalism, the production characteristic of advanced societies requires that control reach beyond the productive structures into the areas of consumption, services and social relations. The mechanisms of accumulation are no longer fed by the simple exploitation of the labour force, but rather by the manipulation of complex organisational systems, by the control of information and over the processes and institutions of symbol formation and by intervention into personal relations.\footnote{Alberto Meluccio, in Kastiaficas, \textit{The Subversion of Politics}, 245.}

Twenty-first century autonomist social theory analyses the penetration of the commodity form into previously private domains in a colonization of the life-world by capital.
Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is, in summary, a historical movement that built momentum throughout the last century. In “Neoliberalism: A Bibliographic Review” William Davies (2014) writes that whilst it is possible to trace the genealogies of neoliberalism farther back, there is now valuable theoretical work on the history of neoliberal thought from the 1920s. These works take into account the Mont Pelerin Society and academic traditions that include the Chicago School of Economics. Davies also notes that the GFC drew fresh attention to the meaning and history of neoliberalism, and so there was a proliferation of theoretical work on neoliberalism at this point. As well as pinpointing an era-defining shift in the cultural politics of capital (capitalist realism) neoliberalism can thus be grounded in the texts of its actors, analyses of its networks and consideration of the institutional forms that it takes.

Neoliberalism was the result of systematic and deliberate enactment of strategic political ambition from ideologues thinking about how to re-assert capital against the collectivising optimism of the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, neoliberalism’s optimism was in the act. The economic project of neoliberalism tightened political discourse correlative to its breakdown of previously strong labour movements. There had been an era of collectivity in social democracy, a proliferation of trade unions and rights based activism and in alternative political and musical cultures, a complementary spread of libertarian aesthetics and ethical ideals. Neoliberals sought to, and did, instigate and normalise social atomisation and competition against these new desires to instead assert the primacy of the competitive individual and the superiority of the private over the public. In other words, neoliberalism effects changes to the ontology of the self through market preferences by rendering the ‘good life’ in terms of consumption. It involved deliberate and systemic consciousness deflation to support its evolution as hegemonic project through the successful distortion and appropriation of that which came before. Not only was this the eradication of class consciousness, but also of the very concept of class. Neoliberalism therefore involved long term strategic thinking to ‘scale-up’ since the early twentieth century. In Inventing the Future the authors write that:

From humble beginnings, the universalising logic of neoliberalism made it capable of spreading across the world, infiltrating the media, the academy, the policy world, education, labour practices, and the affects, feelings and identities of everyday people ...The history of neoliberalism has been one of contingencies, struggle, concentrated action, patience and grand-scale strategic thinking. It has been a flexible idea, actualised in various ways according to the specific circumstances it encountered: from

---

Germany in the 1940s, Chile in the 1970s and the UK in the 1980s, to post-Hussein Iraq in the 2000s. This versatility has made neoliberalism a sometimes contradictory project, but one that succeeds precisely by transforming these contradictions into productive tensions.\textsuperscript{161}

Similarly, left politics that are in, against and beyond looks to transform contradictions into productive tensions. In thinking about how neoliberal hegemony was constructed, it is necessary to see beyond the specific political contents of liberal ideology. Whilst the popular perception of neoliberalism is a glorification of free-markets, it differs from classical liberalism in this sense. Classical liberalism advocates respect for a naturalised sphere of economy largely beyond State control, whereas neoliberals understand that markets are not ‘natural’, and ascribe significant roles to the State – to defend property rights, enforce contracts, impose anti-trust laws, repress social dissent and maintain price stability at all costs.\textsuperscript{162} The latter demand expanded in the wake of the 2008/9 global financial crash (GFC) ‘into the full-spectrum management of monetary issues through central banks’.\textsuperscript{163} Neoliberalism’s central function is the creation and sustenance of markets at all costs and since the GFC this has been imposed through the narrative of ‘austerity’.

Neoliberalism has further developed, or deployed, the capacity of capitalism to sell back its discontents to the consumer as commodities, by transforming expressions of opposition into the smooth logic of capital. As such, on the shift from, and appropriation of, the counter-cultural era of the mid-twentieth century to capitalist realism and the economic boom at the end of the century, Fisher describes how

\begin{quote}
The bohemia that saw the children of the bourgeoisie deflecting from their class destiny en masse has been remorselessly destroyed. If we ‘are all middle class now’, it is only because the upstart working-class culture that fed into popular modernism has been forcibly suppressed. Now everyone is an entrepreneur not because they want to be, but because they have no choice.\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

Indeed, the normalisations of social atomisation and competition engendered by the dismantling of class can appear indicative of a level of social decomposition so great that it is not especially clear what a recomposed society could look like.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[162] Ibid.
\item[163] Ibid.
\item[164] Fisher, “Revolt of the Elites,” 87.
\item[165] The 2011 so-called ‘riots’ that took place in the UK, for example, are illustrative of a systematic decomposition of UK society along lines of race, language, class and society.
\end{footnotes}
So, whilst the term was relatively unheard of before the paradigmatic shifts executed by the premierships of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher from the 1980s, its ideology was consciously being developed before this. As Davies states, whilst there are simplistic and pejorative senses of the term ‘neoliberalism’ that are attached indiscriminately to forms of anti-democratic, and pro-corporate power that can imply little more than ‘something I don’t like’ whereas ‘the more historicist approach to the concept highlights its fluidity and contingent development’. It is a consequence of long-term strategic thinking, in no small part through think tanks, through which neoliberalism achieved intellectual and ideological hegemony, and the seeming cultural ubiquity and inability to achieve anything much toward countering it in the affective politics of capitalist realism and ‘there is no alternative’.

The Mont Pelerin Society’s members consciously sought to construct a new modernity over a period of forty to fifty years. Williams and Srnicek write that though they hold opposite moral and political values, they are in admiration of the Mont Pelerin Society’s long term vision and its intention and capacity to build ‘methods of global expansion’ with ‘pragmatic yet flexible strategies unifying an ecology of organisation with a diversity of interests’. The authors introduce the Mont Pelerin Society under the subheading ‘the neoliberal thought collective’ in which they describe the intellectually and geographically disparate origins of neoliberalism.

It was not until 1938 that these independent movements were to gain their first transnational organisation, resulting from the Walter Lippmann Colloquium held in Paris just before the eruption of World War II. For the first time, this event brought together the classical liberal theorists, the new German ordoliberalists, the British LSE liberals, and Austrian economists such as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. It focused on the historical ebbing of classical liberalism in the face of rising collectivism, and it was here that the first steps were made in consolidating a group of new liberal thinkers [...] The outbreak of World War II quickly put an end to ambitious aims of this organisation, but the network of people involved would continue to work towards developing a neoliberalism.

It was Friedrich Hayek who ultimately mobilised this infrastructure into a neoliberal thought collective and thus inaugurated the slow rise of the new neoliberal hegemony. In 1945 Hayek gained the financial means to supplant the Walter Lippmann Colloquium with the Mont Pelerin Society. All the important figures in the post-war creation of neoliberalism attended the first meeting. It was ‘a closed intellectual network that provided the basic ideological infrastructure for neoliberalism to ferment.’ The Mont Pelerin Society consciously

---

166 Ibid, 310.
167 Srnicek and Williams, Inventing the Future, 67.
168 Ibid, 54.
169 Ibid.
focused on changing political common sense and sought to develop ‘a liberal utopia’ with an awareness that the ideology would need to be filtered down through think tanks, universities and policy documents ‘in order to institutionalise and eventually monopolise the ideological terrain’. The original ideologues were regarded as extreme in the 1950s. They realised themselves that the conditions when they first started were not ones in which their ideas would prosper at that point. Indeed, Hayek wrote in a letter to those that he had invited to the Mont Pelerin Society that the purpose was to

…enlist support of the best minds in formulating a programme which has a chance of gaining general support. Our effort therefore differs from any political task in that it must be essentially a long-run effort, concerned not so much with what would be immediately practicable, but with the beliefs which must gain ascendance if the dangers are to be averted which at the moment threaten individual freedom.

The strategic conception of the terrain to be occupied in order to change political common sense was that of individual freedom. They created an institutional basis in which they would be able to develop their ideas and, from this, counter power in a newly developing ideological infrastructure. With a set of institutions and a system of ideas, the neoliberals had their projects and policy suggestions ready to roll out when the time was right. Strategically, they were ahead of their times because they discovered in think tanks a potent form of institution that was perfect for their ideas and that offered them a place apart from corporations, political parties, social movement or academia: but that was able to communicate with all of them. Neoliberalism was, from the offset, a deliberate distortion of that which came before. It was a systematic denial of the utopias of collective autonomy.

As a part of these projects the ‘Overton Window’ is also a valuable concept to come from the Right, for the Left, or indeed for reaching for political change generally. It is the principle developed by Joseph P Overton (1969-2003), a senior vice president of an American free-market think tank that refers to the range/window of policies that the public will accept. The argument is that by identifying domains of acceptability in the public discourse, it is possible to shift them. In *Inventing the Future* the Overton window is described as

...the bandwidth of ideas and options that can be ‘realistically’ discussed by politicians, public intellectuals and news media, and thus accepted by the public. The general window of realistic options emerges out of a complex nexus of causes – who controls key nodes in the press and broadcast media, the relative impact of popular culture, the relative balance of power between

170 Ibid.
171 Friedrich Hayek, in *Inventing the Future*, 55.
172 Primarily including the Mont Pelerin Society though there had been think tanks before this, such as the left leaning Fabian Society.
organised labour and capitalists, who holds executive political power, and so on. Though emerging from the intersection of different elements, the Overton window has a power of its own to shape which future paths are taken by societies and governments. If something is not deemed ‘realistic’, then it will not even be tabled for discussion and its proponents will be silenced as ‘unserious’. We can evaluate the success of neoliberal ideas in terms of this by the degree to which they have framed what is possible over a period of more than thirty years.\footnote{Williams and Smieck, \textit{Inventing the Future}, 134-135.}

The Mont Pelerin Society was adept at creating an intellectual infrastructure that consisted of institutions and the necessary material paths to spread and embody their worldview. The impact of Overton’s idea contributed significantly to the success of neoliberalism in moving the windows of acceptability against the counter-cultural freedoms and newly visible libidinal desires of the twentieth century. The ideologues of neoliberalism made it appear as though they were the only modernisers and posited neoliberalism as a modernising force.

Yet, neoliberalism is ideologically incapable of delivering modernity, and that is why there is a period of deep crises consequent to the global financial crash that began in 2008. The GFC was exploited as an opportunity to reinforce the neoliberal narratives that led to the systems implosion. Post-GFC saw a rise in free-market politics and ideology expressed in the UK most starkly in the narrative of ‘austerity’ politics. In \textit{After Neoliberalism} Stuart Hall and fellow cultural Marxist Doreen Massey (2015) explain this point, that the crisis itself is used to reinforce the distribution from poor to rich because crises in capital provide the alibis for far-reaching and further restructurings of State and society along market lines.

Contributing to the success of re-enforced free-market politics was the liberal/Establishment media’s complete failure to acknowledge the depth of the crises and how the catastrophic consequences would continue to unfold. As discussed in more detail in the final chapter, the news-form is defined by an inherent need to manipulate narrative arcs (because of arbitrary deadlines) and it does so through the provision of personalised explanation and identifiable scapegoats. This, Bolton (2016) explains, is the key criterion to judge the ‘success’ of politicians and also the reason that (parliamentary) ‘Politics becomes a battle of ensuring one scapegoat receives more blame than the other.’\footnote{Bolton, “Media Bias and the ‘News’ form: A Historical Critique,” March 27 (2016).} The reified form of the market in classical liberal political economy means that the market needs to appear as an isolated economic sphere that is separate from politics and is governed by its own objective laws which, if left alone, will work for the good of the whole. The GFC was followed by neoliberal free-market...
interference with the economy (in politics and the State) that proved more difficult to scapegoat. Those on the Right tried to blame previous socialist governments whilst, on the Left, the blame was directed at the greedy bankers (or, the ‘1%’).

The usual rhetoric around crises or events that suggests that if only an individual cause could be eradicated, then the economy (and society) would return to a natural equilibrium was insufficient. Bizarrely we were told, instead, to ‘listen to the markets’ and this instruction provided the smokescreen by which deeper understandings (of the inherent relation of crisis to capitalism) and other reasons that could only have been made sense of historically, were obfuscated.

In *Can the Market Speak?*, Campbell Jones (2013) refers to popular economic guides to investors that emphasise ‘listening’ to the markets and especially the remark, made by chief economist at the International Monetary Fund Olivier Blanchard in 2011 that, ‘What has happened is that markets have become sceptical about the ability of policy makers, of governments, to stabilise their public debt.’ Jones provides many other examples in which the markets are personified and he argues that the personification establishes a rhetorical figure by which the multiplicity of actions that sustain the economy is reduced to an enigmatic agency that ‘speaks’ with one voice. The demands that we ‘listen’ to the markets are an implicit appeal to the notion that the market is governed by some manner of designer that must be obeyed. Transferring the weakness of the State to a personified yet abstract unity is a means to sustain a certain prohibition on governmental intervention and maintain the inherent unaccountability of the State.

How the nation-state sustains itself according to the sovereignty of the markets, in the acceleration of free-market capitalism from the end of the twentieth century relates to how it legitimates and constructs its subjects through individualist and competitive ideology. In neoliberalism it is through these hyper-political contexts of unaccountability (most recently imposed as ‘austerity’) that the political rationality is established through which individuals and countries could sincerely be told that they must ‘listen’ to, and suffer, in order to redress and to obey, ‘the market’. The banal call to ‘listen’ to the economy symbolises a re-assertion in the early twenty-first century of neoliberal ideology as free-market fundamentalism. It

---

further trivializes democratic values and public concern, enshrining individualism as the legitimization of self-interest and profit above all else. In enabling the impunity of those that run the economy, neoliberal ideology promotes a social Darwinism that sees misfortune as a weakness. The post-GFC insistence that we ‘listen to the markets’ is demonstrative of how new forms of social organisation and control are not the results of an unfolding capitalist rationality. Rather, the call to ‘listen to the markets’ evidences the spread of cultural capitalist realist politics (consciousness deflation) that undergirds neoliberalism. To put it another way, a huge and deep economic crash saw the political system’s ability to ‘explain away’ what should have broken it through the affective rhetoric of ‘there is no alternative’.

Since the financial crash, neoliberal politics remained in control of the important centres of power and the ability to strip and de-regulate social services, and in this sense it remains a constructivist project for the hegemonic expansion of competitive principles. It not clear either how long periods of relative stability will last nor what will be the next thing to crack in the political, ideological or economic holds of neoliberalism. The election of Donald Trump in the United States to leader of the so-called ‘free world’ may mark the slow dismantling of the neoliberal hold, or perhaps it is more simply a more aggressive iteration of the liberal, capitalist politics of always. These are some of the foundations for the post-GFC left to think about where it places its emotional affect, and how it makes sense of its cultural output in countering the hegemony of neoliberalism.

**Counter Hegemony**

If you say We, and if we say We are a question, We are a question because We are on the move, because We overflow, because We break bounds, and because if you think of our antagonism with capital as being our antagonism with the system of social cohesion, then you can say that what capital does is force us into a certain form of cohesion, a certain identity, a certain synthesis if you like.176

Insubordination is the breaking or transcendence of social cohesion and it relates in anti-capitalist theory to the spread of possibility and potentiality. Between the last chapter and the next the ideas collectively question what it means to counter hegemony/develop counter-power and to create conditions for collective autonomy in, against and beyond capitalism. The Introduction laid the necessary groundwork to relay ‘hegemony’ as a concept to conceive of and scrutinise the social as a whole in respect of the orientation of specific class strata. Similarly, this section explains that counter-hegemonic politics function, like hegemonic

176 Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 78.
politics, in the active production of subjectivities. Countering hegemony is not enforcing unity. The meaning of hegemony (and countering hegemony) will always be complicated and variable.

There are of course limitations to any suggestion that the left might simply imitate the ideological infrastructure that advanced the causes of neoliberalism. Anything like this can only be done sensibly at a level of abstraction. For the neoliberals it was an elite and technocratic driven project. It was appropriate for them, but not for those seeking to eradicate and go beyond structures of gender, race and class. As is made clear in Inventing the Future, what is of most relevance is deciphering the correct institutional forms through which radical ideas can spread, even in conditions where it initially seems that these ideas will never be taken up. As was the case for the neoliberal project this will only happen through ecologies of organisations rather than as one propositional project. Perhaps this includes a think tank structure that communicates with political parties and corporate funders. At least this appears, somewhat, to be Srnicek and Williams position when they explain that ‘folk politics are the opposite of hegemonic politics because they are not about ‘scale-ability’.

The authors explain that successes of anti-capitalist politics, and enactments of post-capitalist desire emerge from the interactions and practices of a diverse array of different groups, agents and organisations within society. Such that, alternative hegemonic frameworks are, and must be, developed across these different elements to build and maintain common, collective projects within and between differences. The successes are only thought of as perceptible to the extent that they achieve broad-scale transformation in the public ‘common sense’. Hence, shifts in hegemonic hold do not and cannot proceed merely by appealing to those who are already consciously persuaded of any counter-hegemonic merit. As Macey (2000) deciphers these points, a potentially hegemonic group, or a new ‘common sense’, attempts to absorb, challenge and transform the ideologies of allied as well as rivalled groups. Alternative hegemonic frameworks are at play in the successes of queer, feminist and anti-racist politics. These projects have had effects across non-individualised fields of subjectivity by deploying their inherent refusal to accept essentialist social forms and categories. Through counter-hegemonic ambition these projects embrace and develop the existing conditions from within which people form their beliefs and desires. As an example,

178 By which ‘success’ here means simply that people’s lives have improved.
there is now an increasing public unacceptability of homophobia in the UK. Progress against homophobia is a consequence of long-term hegemonic projects that sought to change the way that people think. It is an example that the authors of *Inventing the Future* cite, ‘Partly this has operated through explicit means, but it has also proceeded through a variety of other modes of action, from specific legal provisions to the framing of issues in the mass media, all of which was made possible by decades of campaigning.’ Decline in homophobia has thus been dependent on different groups in society influencing each other in diffuse ways and building counter power that creates different environments in which subjectivities are generated and formed. Hence, counter-hegemonic frameworks begin to succeed as an accumulation of transformative processes of counter power that change what people desire and think, and in ways that are not opposed to their freedom.

‘Folk politics’ is a concept from *Inventing the Future* to apprehend the failures of, and areas for re-orientation in, anti-capitalist activism that have continually failed to counter hegemony and develop counter power against the *status quo*. ‘Folk politics’ refer to political action of spatial, temporal, or conceptual, immediacy, but in which particular tendencies are understood to be limited. The limitations of folk politics are identified as apparent in, though not equivalent to, horizontalism, anarchism, prefigurative action, and localism. The authors are keen to emphasise that ‘folk politics’ is coined in good faith, not to castigate or to moralise, but to indicate an implicit tendency in political practices. As they put it, ‘We created the concept because we find much of value in these movements, and we didn’t want to simply denounce them *in toto*. Instead, the concept is designed to pick out a particular subset of characteristic for them.’ A folk-political tendency is, for example, to discuss how to expand prefigurative spaces but fail to do so because of a false assumption that individuals join projects spontaneously, simply a consequence of their own virtuousness. Countering hegemony, developing counter power, and moving beyond folk political logic means people are engaged on their own terms. Importantly, it is this perspective that can account for both the complexity of society and disagreement within and between its actors. To be concerned with developing counter power against hegemonic politics means not assuming that people will agree with you but that there must be (varying degrees and means of) persuasion. To persuade more and more people to left politics and toward radical thinking beyond the *status qu*

---


180 Ibid.
quo requires longer term time-scales than folk politics have been familiar with. ‘The Musicological Framework’ will suggest that music experience is active in long-term persuasion because it is both embodied and has an unconditional and unpredictable aesthetic freedom.

Inventing the Future therefore emphasises that different organisations must have different time scales in which they conceive tactically about what to think and what to do. The text deliberately underlines the importance in this of allowing that some elements of social change will necessarily happen on longer term (prefigurative) time-scales. In this sense what is to be mirrored from the historical evolution of neoliberalism is the flexibility. Neoliberalism played/plays out in different arenas, at different speeds and in different ways, across common cores. It is this flexibility that sees people adopt and accept the hegemonic codes of neoliberalism in different ways. It was (and is) not a rigid imposition of particular ideology but an impressive illustration of how successfully counter-hegemonic politics are flexible in responding to conditions on the ground; not the top-down imposition of particular politics, but sets of ideas, ecologies of organisation and affective attitudes that interact and can be culturally, geographically and temporally specific across common cores.

Social movements and popular music

As has been acknowledged, hegemonic forms of influence take different guises that can include rational debate, media framing and economies, but also cultural codes and affective attention. Theories of cultural hegemony are interested in agency in correlation to structure and how affect is active in experience and consciousness, as class rule and class struggle. Music in (and as) social movements can be active in breaking the social cohesion of capitalism because the act of convincing people in persuasion does not take place only through rational debates but at more subtle and affective levels. Popular music scholarship can in this light contribute to building cognitive maps that combine agency with ideology in order to properly fashion questions of subjectivity for anti-capitalist politics. The world is socially constructed and historically mutable, and music can, like (or as), social movements, effect breakthroughs in collective consciousness. Music and social movements are analogous in so far as they can resemble concrete universals - built up of structures, groups and ideas that relate to sensuous beings and that are active in developing people’s intuitive relations to the world. Between this chapter and the next it should be clear that the dialectic relationships
of theory and practice, of human factors and social factors, are as vital to understanding social movements as to understanding the relations between popular music and politics in terms of audience and in listening.

Kastiaficas describes how empirical analyses of the participatory patterns and aspirations of tens of thousands of people acting in social movements (such as he seeks to provide himself) can reveal the deep structures of social movements and how they expand democracy and liberty, clarify visions and remove distorted images from various epochs. Yet he also claims that for most social movement researchers, social movements are objects of study rather than something they are an active part of and so it is rare that theoretical analyses are capable of liberation from the unconscious structures that shape thinking. It is the practice of social movements that

...brings these hidden structures to consciousness, and when successful they quickly make long standing categories of domination (such as slavery, segregation, anti-semitism) into anachronisms ... even when sporadic episodes define the life of a movement, they can reveal essential issues for people.

Much musicological thought has an inherent awareness of how competing accounts of modern social movements vary in the emphases they place on culture in the picture. In *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1998) take a meso-level cognitive approach to social movements in which cultural forms and practices are central, and social movements are seen as ‘not merely political activities’. They point to ways in which the world is viewed through a frame, and suggest that it is culture that generates a ‘cognitive praxis’ which provides the resources for mobilizing social movements. They argue from within this point that music can become ‘both knowledge and action, part of the frameworks of interpretation and representation produced within social movements’. The authors perceive music and social movements as providing space and public spheres for ‘cultural growth and experimentation’, and that this entails the making and remaking of cultural traditions that are themselves generative of further political activity. Action needs organization and, Eyerman and Jamison argue, music creates that organisation by providing the cognitive praxis that constitutes ‘forms of social solidarity’ that

---

182 Ibid, 238.
thus serve as ‘exemplary social action’.\textsuperscript{185} Music is not just expressing the ideals of a movement but, rather, the music performed and experienced within social movements is

\ldots at once subjective and objective, individual and collective in its form and in its effects. Through its ritualized performance and through the memories it invokes, the music of social movements transcends the bounds of the self and binds the individual to collective consciousness.\textsuperscript{186}

Their points accord with the broader contentions of this thesis: that music creates political ideals, and the feelings evoked by these political ideals; and that both effect different levels of transformation on consciousness.

Rave culture in the 1990s is an example of a way of living the politics of a social movement. Rave, one might argue, resonates with Eyerman and Jamison’s accounts of music and social movements, though they do not refer to it themselves. Street (2012), however, underlines that raves such as those organised by Spiral Tribe and Exodus ‘were designed to give form to their ecological and communitarian ideals’, that they were not meant to be instruments of a singular political cause, but a way of living ones politics.\textsuperscript{187} Cultural analyses, he says, have looked at rave as both the ‘re-organisation of time and creation of alternative narrative’ and as an alternative social world, because it broke with the protestant work ethic and, by rejecting the rhythms of the working day, replaced, or removed, the hierarchies of the dominant order.\textsuperscript{188} It is in this light that Street points to American scholar Kevin MacDonald’s argument that social movements should be understood as ‘experience movements’: in which the prime agent, or agency, is rhythm. Citing MacDonald’s argument, which echoes that of Eyerman and Jamison, he describes that global movements involving music are, ‘Constructed around structures of representation and delegation, and none is an expression of a process of rational deliberation \ldots these movements are involved in doing, where the senses are at the heart of the action.’\textsuperscript{189} Fisher’s Acid Communism is similarly about living in one’s politics, much as this thesis asks throughout what it means to ‘live in’ popular music. Anti-capitalist musicology is itself ‘live’ theory that rejects the activist/not-activist binary and places the focus on the absolute movement of becoming.

\textsuperscript{185} Eyerman and Jamison, \textit{Music and Social Movements}, 160 -162.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, 163.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid, 173.
\textsuperscript{189} Kevin MacDonald, in Street, \textit{Music and Politics}, 173.
In addition to this idea I suggest that anarchism is aesthetics, and that in anarchism-as-ethics one might see the notion of ‘absorbing the lessons’ of the misery imposed by capitalism (the nation-state and patriarchy) as processes that are experienced, that one feels, through music. Rebellion in popular music (and/or popular rebels in music) can be seen through the lens of an anarchistic affective attitude which originates in a sense of outrage but builds its optimism in the act. Anarchistic affect links the liberation of the self and anger at capitalism in collective autonomy to change (or transcend) power relations and thus constitutes transformative processes. At various levels of persuasion rebellion in popular music is politics working (as social movements do) to transcend the bounds of the self and bind the individual to collective consciousness.

A pertinent example of activist-scholarship to bring the section to a close here is *Moments of Excess: Movements, Protest and Everyday Life* that seeks to address new and contemporary levels of practical questions. Written by ‘The Free Association’ (2011) it is about ‘moments of excess’ in which people reimagine the world and themselves, and in which they are almost ‘utopians’. Moments of excess signify the moments in which social relations and the everyday are wholly de-constituted, albeit momentarily, and of which the authors ask how post-capitalist politics can effect more kinds of these collective experiences. Moments of excess give access to a world that is wholly different from that which we have to engage with on the day-to-day and so the text considers how else people might capture these glimpses of utopia, as well as what can sustain the ‘excess’ and the imagined feeling of a post-capitalist ‘real’. It discusses a range of strategies and infrastructures in order to raise questions around new forms of coordination on the left, and following the cognitive and imaginative deficit imposed by capitalist realism. It is a contribution to left projects that are ready to take advantage of and coordinate new desires and some of its core themes are picked up in the ‘Transcendence’ section of the next chapter.

---

Identity Politics

‘Identity politics’ is a nebulous, amorphous term and identity politics appear to have become somewhat hegemonic as a form of political discourse. The term ‘identity politics’ conceals a distinction between movements in the mid-twentieth century targeting the structures of capitalism defined by racial and gendered oppression, and more recent developments in the twenty-first century in which ‘identity politics’ are no longer about social structures, but the recognition of particular groups, classifications and individual identifications. Broadly, there has been a shift into the twenty-first century, from movements against social structure, to liberal politics that abstract identity from power and from class.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of large scale political movements that were based in identitarian narratives about the injustices done to particular social groups. Because the term came about to name the rights-based activisms and aspiring revolutionary praxis of the mid-twentieth century ‘identity politics’ were, in their initial formations, meant to suggest that some of the most radical politics come from individual and group identities. It was the first instantiation of the demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied. As the entry for ‘Identity Politics’ in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes:

Identity politics starts from analyses of oppression to recommend, variously, the reclaiming, redescription, or transformation of previously stigmatized accounts of group membership. Rather than accepting the negative scripts offered by a dominant culture about one’s own inferiority, one transforms one’s own sense of self and community, often through consciousness-raising.

A similar point on consciousness-raising is provided by the Combahee River Collective, a black feminist identity politics collective. They made the arguments that:

As children we realized that we were different from boys and that we were treated different – for example, when we were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being ‘ladylike’ and to make us less objectionable in the eyes of white people. In the process of consciousness-raising, actually life-sharing, we began to recognize the commonality of our experiences and, from the sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression.

191 For instance, Hilary Clinton tweeted about ‘intersectionality’ during her 2016 presidential campaign, and thus revealed how unthreatening discourses of identity, born from revolutionary politics, have become to the American ruling class.
These were politics of identity that challenged the colour and gender blind socialism of the time. They were meant as constructive attempts to deepen radical left politics. The scope of political movements that are described as ‘identity politics’ today is much broader, and it is beyond the reach of this section to offer a historical survey. Most especially given that, ‘it was barely as intellectuals started to systematically outline and defend the philosophical underpinnings of identity politics that we simultaneously began to challenge them.’

Identity politics are not something that one can straightforwardly be ‘for’ say, as an empowering mode of public discourse, or ‘against’, since to have identity is to have subjectivity. These politics have too complex a history and theoretical implications for models of the self, for political inclusiveness and for possibilities of solidarity and resistance.

Nevertheless, Marxists have long been known for lamenting the appearance of identity politics and perceiving them as shattering the promises for universalism, even accusing identity politics as being representative of the end of radical materialist critique. By way of an example, in 1996 Marxist academic Eric Hobsbawn published a polemical piece called “Identity Politics and the Left” in the New Left Review in which he argued that all identity politics detract from universalism. He fails, however, to acknowledge in this piece that his own image of universal culture is imbricated with his role as an academic of European history. In turn, surely most political thinkers would agree that some notion of identity is indispensable for contemporary political discourse, even when they are opposed to the conditions of contemporary identity politics as the institutionalization of liberal democracy. In the twenty-first century anti-capitalist activism must imbricate itself with identity politics. Anti-capitalist politics must push through and struggle against liberal visions of the world and simplifications of how power operates by countering liberal interpretations of marginalised people that see oppression through the narrow lens of identity to the exclusion of meaningful analyses of power.

Power operates through unequal and unfair dynamics and this explains how capitalism relies on cheap and unwaged labour from oppressed genders and minorities as well as how these power dynamics socially reproduce its waged labourers. Fighting sexism and racism is, and can only be, inter-related because these oppressions intersect with all other forms of oppression: it must be collective emancipation. Liberal feminism, on the other hand, denies

---

194 Ibid.
women political agency because it perpetuates the idea that power expresses itself through identity rather than political action and material reality. In such politics, ‘woman’ is posited as an all-encompassing category that poses the rights of women as the rights of individuals whose oppression exists in a vacuum, and whose liberation can be gained through legal reform. More radical analyses recognise this as a failure to understand that race and gender are axes of class and not simply individual struggles (but that class is that which forms the structural contradictions that forms the background to other identities). Hence, the liberation of women is integrated with all other oppressed people because race and gender are performative movers of history that work in and beyond the level of the individual.

‘Identity politics’ are not antithetical to autonomist or anarchist politics but it is the compartmentalisations of new social movements and a failure to comprehend (or accept) the contradictory character of identity politics that obscures the existence of a common class enemy and that therefore theoretically obliterate in advance the possibility of transforming society as a whole. This is how Kastiaficas argues the point when he posits that ‘identity politics’ are the preconditions of a universal identity of human beings as a species. That, in other words, reformulations of ourselves as autonomous individuals in collective contexts can only be achieved by not treating as secondary, the different categories of oppression imposed on people. He elaborates on this in this passage:

The road from the abstract universal of modernity through (the positioning of white males) to the future formulation of a concrete multicultural universal necessarily passes through identity politics. Unlike the proletariat, no one identity is that vast majority of society, nor is one by itself able to stop the functioning of the system and reconstruct it, therefore, multiple centres of revolutionary thought and action are historical necessity, posing the features of a decentered future in the making.

Kastiaficas recognises that together subjectivities build movement and transform the solidarities between individuals and collectives that thus enact political change and social transformation on differing and potentially increasing scales. Whilst different identity antagonisms and group energies seeking to achieve their own unique forms of emancipation are not coming together (because they cannot) through one propositional project, ‘identity politics’ can be necessary self-defence. Identity politics can be symbolic of potentiality, marking a sense of freedom in individual and collective conditions of existence. Identity is furthermore a valuable theoretical framework through which to connect questions of self-perception to State institutions, formed in their very inception, as they were, through

---

195 Kastiaficas, The Subversion of Politics, 250.
196 Ibid.
racialized and gendered class oppression and violence. As such the thesis continues to follow Gibson-Graham in advocating a ‘postmodern politics of class’ for a post-capitalist orientation toward class becoming and transformation (and not toward identities and struggles defined by capitalism and us/them politics).

**Conclusion**

By way of conclusion the chapter ends on a summary of its main points that will underline the chapters that follow. Firstly, that theoretical constructions of ‘autonomy’ are at the vortex of complex reconsiderations of modernity such that retaining Cartesian categories of individual subjectivity mean that analyses do not/cannot move beyond the level of the individual reflecting self. The in, against and beyond schema can, however, provide explanations as to how social realities are authored and edited by collective subjectivity. Autonomist politics have been explained as a way of reading the course of history in which it is determined by resistance rather than domination (prefiguration). There is a lack of inevitability to the unfolding of capital’s laws, yet neoliberal actors had a clear strategic conception of the terrain, that of individual freedom, to be occupied in order to change political common sense. Similarly,

The goal of an autonomist analysis is to understand the changing shape and mediating instantiating forms of political antagonism, which is the very form of class composition for the emergence of social movements.197

The autonomist movement in the 1960s and 1970s in Italy saw a period of creative self-valorisation. Whilst it was defeated, the political import of movements like WFH remains, when they are seen as a shift that prefigured the current trends in re-defining political action, and reinterpretations of ‘revolution’ as the breaking of social cohesion (rebellion). In the same era, neoliberalism was evolving to counter the historical ebbing of classical liberalism in the face of rising collectivism. Neoliberalism appears in 2018 to be either increasingly discredited and/or morphing into new and further Right visions. The target of anti-capitalism remains, either way, neoliberalism and, central to this is the argument that scale matters. It is not a simple matter of opposing ‘x’ on the basis that it’s ‘bad’ but consciousness-raising and augmenting the potency (the confidence) of the subjugated. It might be possible on this new

---

terrain to realise what people wanted but did not get in the revolutionary idealism of the 1960s and 1970s and it is therefore necessary to continually pose questions around the kinds of emotional affect the left needs to create and distribute. It should not be seen as a weakness of the feeling or strength of emotions in this era of counter-culture and nascent ‘identity politics’, that the potential for radical change was appropriated and disfigured by neoliberalism. On the one hand it is necessary to take an autonomous standpoint in order to see ‘capitalist realism’ as the successful move to counter these ideologies (but not necessarily exhaust them) and, on the other, to return to them in order to ask what a twenty-first century post-Fordism that is not neoliberal could look like, and this is the philosophy of Acid Communism.

The chapter has suggested that identity politics have a certain hegemony as a form of political discourse and that this can serve the interests of capitalism by keeping the politics of identity separate from systemic analyses. It has lent instead toward arguments, ideas and demands for the recognition of humanity (including in categorical identities) that pose the total upending of epistemic, political, social and economic foundations in responding to, and re-imagining, colonial and post-colonial modernity. For this it has followed Inventing the Future to suggest that folk political logics, as a myopic form of defence, are inadequate and that this should inform broader projects of post-modern class politics. Realisations of post-capitalist desire take place through counter-hegemonic projects that are active on varying time scales and that break and prefigure radical ideas into mass consciousness at differing, including distributed, levels. These projects need to instil confidence that further change is possible and leverage the ways in which these processes take place in contexts of collective autonomy. Collective autonomy refers not to unified subjectivities, but synthesised unities of individuals such as exist in music experience and social movements. This chapter, and the one that follows, take risks to avoid getting trapped on a flat plane of postmodern equivalence by bridging the disparity between ‘mechanical Marxism’ and perceptions of decentred autonomy in popular music and in politics.

The identity politics of the mid-twentieth century were liberation struggles with a universalist view of freedom. The new social movements of the time embraced identity in order to abolish it. The gay liberation movements of the 1960s were less about the pageantry of identity and more about urgent demands to end violence (from the police, from psychoanalysts and other institutions). That is, it wasn’t simply about recognition, and these politics did not reify
homosexuality as an identity that represents a person’s unchanging essence. As such, even
the left social movements that gave birth to the term ‘identity politics’ do not easily fit into a
mould for the term. The onslaught of neoliberalism saw the political discourse deliberately
shifted to take on essentially liberal world views that moved identity politics from social to
personal liberation. Hence, the moniker ‘identity politics’ is complex and loaded and it
throws up tensions between the relations of a politics of identity and a politics of post-
identity. Really the term can describe little more than the form that identity political
movements take under changing circumstances. Radical left, post-modern class analyses of
identity do not treat oppression (and empowerment) as something that essentially happens to
individuals. Personal identity is not (ultimately) something to be defended like private
property. Identity reveals social and collective problems, the solution to which is to create
more opportunities for public discourse and the construction of shared forms of social power
and collective autonomy. In this thesis identity is critically viewed as social processes that are
dialectically linked to class relations and structures of domination. The next chapter combines
this with arguments around how music changes/transcends power relations in ways that
liberate the self in collective contexts.

Popular music scholarship can provide theoretical work on constructions of ‘we’ beyond
Cartesian categories of the individual subject. The purpose of the thesis is to create
frameworks and arguments that show how popular music/ology might contribute to the
accumulation of processes that change what people desire and think (on their own terms).
Popular music is active in the concrete persuasions that are necessary to politicize people and
popularise left politics. ‘In, against and beyond identity’ is an anti-capitalist political trope
with a post-capitalist orientation suited, as this chapter suggests, to strategic thinking in
popular music and politics about the transformation and transformative power of
consciousness and emotional affects in, for instance, identifying domains of acceptability in
public discourse with the intention of working towards shifting them.
CHAPTER THREE

The Musicological Framework

The in, against and beyond schema places a visceral focus on the body to show that anti-capitalist politics need to work with the rage and pain caused by capitalism to assert the inherent dignity of human beings as a species. Music is a performative and embodied generator of political meaning in, against and beyond capitalism because music provides access to different affective ranges of experience. Affect is a physiological process that works on bodies. It is through affect that music functions as a form of consciousness-raising. Hence, as the previous two chapters have suggested, when we join in with music, we become complicit in the visions it creates on our own terms and we can ‘feel’ alternative political cultures. The chapter will add substance to the arguments that there is a performative ‘in’ and ‘beyond’ to music experience in order that anti-capitalist musicology can valorise the imagination as an experience of transcendental post-capitalist knowledge. It focuses on musicology to explore the types of movement the imagination is capable of engendering. It is the imagination, after all, that fuels political action and thus determines the future. In, against and beyond is cemented in this chapter as an immanent mode of theorising that can be adapted in musicology to ask questions about how music performs emotional work of political significance for post-capitalist politics.

It examines how musicologists have come to look at how hearing, or perceiving, ‘meaning’ in music and sound can have gendered, social and political implications. They have been enabled to do so by expansions across the arts and humanities that show how in ‘performance’ there are modes of knowledge production beyond the written word (and score), and that modes of performance can be related to other modes of performance. The first of the three sections, ‘Deconstruction’ further explains how and why deconstructive practices need to keep the liberty for which they are put to work at play. The first half of the second, and longest section, ‘Reconstruction’, also examines expansions in musicology that stretch methodological and disciplinary boundaries around perceptions of listening, ‘so that we begin to understand who we are and what we’re doing when we’re listening, whenever and wherever that listening happens.’

198 Kassabian, Ubiquitous Listening, 117.
‘Reconstruction’ suggests that there is anarchy to listening and it is a conversation about collective autonomy.

Music creates political ideals and the feelings evoked by those ideals and, in both senses, catalyses degrees and transformations of consciousness. It is the purpose of this chapter to extend the first chapter and argue that popular musicology has a lot to offer anti-capitalism. Aligning music and musicology to, or within, anti-capitalist politics requires combinations of frameworks that can recognise human subjectivity as ‘in’ and ‘against’ but that are also rooted in some sense of hope or conviction in the ‘beyond’. The beyond is where capitalism is, or can feel as though it may be, superseded. In music experience there can be affective processes that aid this conviction. One sense of the ‘beyond’ in music experience is in the transcendence of capitalism’s everyday mundanity, the ‘non-subordination’ that is picked up in ‘Beyond Gender’. This chapter will look at a range of scholarship to support the idea that music addresses us within the horizons of our experience at the same time as it escapes them and, that in this, music performatively conjures realities that do not (yet) exist. Music, as it materially signifies, transcends, and thus prefigures, imaginative alternatives.

If music is ‘beyond’ time, then we transcend time (and ‘reality’) from within, in our experiences of music. In a sense, music takes possession of its listeners. The case study on Hendrix in the first chapter began to introduce these ideas, in the suggestion that music is politics, that music is ‘future oriented’, a ‘labour of cultural translation’ and, as this chapter develops these points – that music has a ‘transcendent universality’. Further to this that transcendence beyond society is a social function because it has political effects. It was in the transcendent universality of music, in the alternative music and political cultures of Hendrix’s revolutionary era, that the participations had a confidence in a politics-to-come, and in music experience, participated in shared anticipation. The following short section prefaces the chapter by further introducing the theme embedded within some of the core themes of the first chapter, that of the revaluation of the imagination for post-capitalist politics. Following this ‘Deconstruction’ continues the theme of exploring the erosion of previously hegemonic beliefs as it explains how the belief in the absolute aesthetic autonomy of music once determined the study of music. Throughout, the chapter places theoretical work on the aesthetic autonomy of music into the politics of how people feel and prefigure alternative political cultures.
Attitudes to music are linked to conceptions of political subjects and order. There are hidden structures of rationality undermining the power of the imagination that some left critique perceives as having plagued the twentieth century with determinist narratives and melancholic certainties. These processes are thought to undermine the potentials for enacting non-capitalist futures, and so these theorists believe that left politics must revalorise the imagination. Such a theoretical approach can ask questions about the experience of transcendental knowledge whilst being aware of how constructions of human subjectivity ground these practices of critique. The final section ‘Transcendence’ will draw the chapter to an end with arguments around these ideas that require the following few paragraphs’ further foundations.

Marx only mentioned music once, in *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (written in 1857-1858), in which he uses the piano and pianist to draw out a point about productive labour. John Stuart Mill, one of the most influential thinkers in the history and evolution of liberalism, had slightly more to say about music. He stated that, ‘Nowhere (except in some monastic institutions) is diversity of taste entirely unrecognised; a person may, without blame, either like or dislike rowing, or smoking, or music, or athletic exercises, or chess, or cards, or study’199. It would appear in this quotation that Mill thought of music as an autonomous aesthetic that could be taken or left, that it was politically safe to ignore because it is external to, or autonomous from, politics. For both Mill and Marx humans are conceived in developmental terms, and so the political routes taken are not dependent on art or music, but on scientific knowledge and instrumental control.200 Whereas in *The Musical Human: Rethinking John Blacking’s Ethnomusicology in the Twenty-First Century* (2006) re-evaluations are made of Blacking’s work that highlight the importance he placed on the musical vitality of a society and relate them to music’s utopian possibilities. Blacking places the ‘musical human’ into an understanding of music’s power and cultural efficacy, by tying it to music’s emancipatory significance.

---

200 Street, *Music and Politics*, 143.
Whilst this chapter does not look at Blacking’s work (1928-1990) in any significant detail, there is thorough recourse to Roger W. H Savage’s, “Being, Transcendence and the Ontology of Music” in which he reflects in detail on Blacking’s suggestion that some music transcends its social function by creating worlds of virtual time. Savage makes the argument that Blacking opened the way to deeper understandings of the ontology of music.²⁰¹ Such music, ‘music that is for being’, enhances human consciousness by heightening temporal experiences and affecting consciousness of time so that time itself appears to be transcended. The feelings in music experience of transcending the limits of ordinary time is a transcultural phenomenon, and Savage shows that there is hermeneutical value in broad considerations of how, these ‘limit experiences are among the privileged ways that different cultures respond to the human condition.’²⁰² The ideas in Savage’s essay aid arguments about the radical consequences of music as figuring a sense of being beyond time, with a power to unfold its own worlds. Here they are used to support the thesis’s macro arguments around the social and political functions of music (for anti-capitalism) as politics in process and in which anarchistic ethics and aesthetics constitute experiences of collective autonomy. More simply put, popular music revalorises the imagination, because it has emancipatory significance in its enhancement of both being, and in the provision of transcendental ‘knowledge’ of a world beyond capitalism.

Some argue that the imagination functions politically when it offers resilience – in this, that music is a defence against the world because it transcends its context. Music allows people to be, or to feel, outside of the status quo and everyday reality. Politics of the imagination run through Foucault’s analytic of power. They are at the centre of his concerns for thinking about the method of analysis, the outside of power, itself. Foucault argued that the images liberalism manifests of itself and of its subjects are ways in which power has been concealed in the West since the advents of liberal democracy in the seventeenth century. The images liberalism manifests of itself are therefore the sources of individual and collective struggles with and against liberalism. Reid explains that he develops for his own work a Foucauldian approach to images and imagination. In the interview, “Julian Reid on Foucault – Applying his Work on War, Resilience, Imagination, and Political Subjectivity,” he states that:

Ideas about images and the limits and powers of the imagination run throughout Foucault’s works from beginning to end. In fact his very first essay, published in 1954, was itself titled ‘Dream, Imagination and Existence’ [...] not only a scathing critique of psychological and especially psychoanalytic treatments of the image and imagination [...] but an argument for a revalorisation of imagination as an experience of transcendental knowledge.

The comprehension of liberalism as a regime of power must take account of the unprecedented scale of the imagination at work in its development, as well as the functions of power in its ability to mask itself in hiding the work of that imagination. Power maintains itself through the mystification of power. Whilst there is not space in this project to investigate Foucauldian theorisations of imagination in extensive detail, the revalorisation of the imagination as a line of enquiry in this light is important. It is a perspective on ‘reality’ and how to have or perceive ‘reality’ as not to belong to reality (or be complicit with it) but to move beyond it, because in some sense the perception is outside. In ‘music for being’, limit experiences, music provides different affective and emotional relationships with reality. Music can renew the ‘real’ in accordance with the feeling or mood it expresses because it is ideologically flexible and meaning will never be static. As Savage expresses it, ‘music projects possibilities of a world that is a fitting place for human habitation.’

For this research in, against and beyond identity: music fosters emotional resilience because it has utopian sensibilities in the mutability of subjectivity, and this is political.

In The Neoliberal Subject: Resilience, Adaptation and Vulnerability (2016), co-authored by Julian Reid and David Chandler, the focus is on taking the literature on ‘resilience’ in new directions beyond liberalism, and liberal interpretations. Whilst, as they explain, the leading psychologists concerned with resilience claim responsibility ‘not just for developing the concept from out of its psychological origins into the international political and social framework it has now become, but for the peace and reconciliation in former war-torn countries where resilience is now said to exist’ the property of ‘resilience’ needs to be better explicated as that capacity of the self that is imagination. The imagination plays a role in recovery and development after traumatic experience and so Reid states that, ‘It is even possible, some psychologists of resilience maintain, that the torment of the present heightens the need to imagine a future and thus increase the very powers and potentials of imagination

---

itself. The Neoliberal Subject theorises and attempts to work with this point but also understand the work that the imagination performs on social and political scales beyond individualist psychological and psychoanalytic approaches. A crux of the argument for their study on the imagination and human subjectivity is that there can be no greater or deeper grip on the ‘real’ in the natural or the social sciences. These emphases need to be reformulated and reconsider the relations of image and the imagination. The political import of the text is thus that we, anti-capitalists and/or those against-neoliberalism, must conceive political functions to imagination without reducing the imagination to a resource in a life of endless survival. As Reid explains, there are ‘Images of many kinds. In effect there is no such thing as “the image” or “the imagination” in the ways that neurosciences and its ideologues, so powerful today in the social sciences and in the framing of governmental policies, suppose.’ The Neoliberal Subject suggests that we instead develop typologies of the many different kinds of images and imagination that exist and this chapter looks at musicology as well primed to do so. Indeed, that a post-capitalist oriented musicology of the future can look at collective transformations of desire beyond present tense survival.

Music opens people up to the world by enabling them to explore new dimensions of feeling and mood, and in a ‘fictitious’ mode. It re-describes affective dimensions of experience that, in Savage’s eloquent description, evince, ‘the vital significance of the epoché of reality effected by music’s worlding power. By putting the practical exigencies into suspense, music transcends the real within the immanence of the world it creates.’ In blunter terms, music creates different worlds of time and thus ‘gives’ dispositions that open people up to the world anew. In this power to create special worlds of time (transcendence), music stakes out the borderlines of the future and this evokes Bohlman’s description in the first chapter of the divine presence in everyday religious ontologies of music. Music gives both a sense of the depth of dependence and non-mastery of the future in proportion to the heights of the feelings of transcendence that it also proffers. The enigma of time’s ‘inscrutability’ in music experience, as Savage articulates, opens us up to the world anew by refiguring the meaning of time. Music prefigures affective relations and ways of inhabiting the world. The feelings of transcendence that music evokes in experience can be opened up in theory to acknowledge the political (and politicizing) significance of these experiences.

---

206 Ibid, 262.
207 Ibid, 264.
Anti-capitalist politics should work with the profoundly human power to subordinate the ‘real’ to the image (as in the masks of liberalism), because it is subordinating the ‘real’ to the image that makes it conform to what we imagine, or re-imagine. Hence, as the chapter further persuades, music can make the impossible seem attainable, and political musicology can be active in the construction of politics that reveal what appears as inevitable and necessary as historical contingency. As previously discussed, ‘bourgeois subjectivity’ in the nineteenth century saw the institution of an ideal of aesthetic cultivation that justified and elevated music’s autonomous standpoint. The investment in music in these ways, and the absolute aesthetic autonomy through which music was perceived to transcend society and politics, ‘reinforced the bourgeois concept of a state of aesthetic freedom to which cultivated individuals gain access through an education to art’.

For twenty-first century anti-capitalism transcendence in music experience can be, as in this thesis, explored in terms of pleasure and individualism. Pleasure and individualism are fundamental to the functioning of twenty-first century capitalism and they are also those affects through which the confidence that change is possible can be instilled. Following trends in contemporary post-capitalist thought, this future oriented musicology thus argues that pleasure and individualism evoke aesthetic processes that take ‘judgement to enactment’ and ‘victimhood to potency’. The following section locates ideas of music’s absolute aesthetic autonomy more fully in historical contexts in order to consider carefully if/how affective processes might still be perceived to operate autonomously.

Deconstruction

Nineteenth and early twentieth-century ideologies informed the study of music to support claims for music’s self-sufficiency and construct a timeless autonomy to music that underscored the Western European classical tradition. These are the political origins of music analysis and the historical contexts of musicology. ‘Deconstruction’ evaluates the intellectual heritage of musicology which, until the latter half of the last century, is most closely aligned to that of Western art music. Within this tradition the ideal of the aesthetically autonomous work was instrumental to Western art music’s cultural hegemony. The concept of the aesthetically autonomous work, in Savage’s words, ‘legitimated the metaphysics of music at

---

the expense of analyses of music’s social value and significance’. Expansions in musicology moved the discipline past these false choices. Music ‘sends’ people in ways that heighten and intensifies senses of self and community, and thus its vital significance relates to its autonomous standpoint, as well as society, culture and politics. Evolutions within the history of musicology and the re-conceptualisations of music as a performative art have expanded the horizons for the study of music. Following this section, ‘Reconstruction’ and ‘Transcendence’ are therefore able to look at listening and anarchy in a reckoning with, rather than abandonment of, music’s autonomous affects.

As this thesis seeks to consistently demonstrate and argue, epochal shifts in the twentieth century are important in thinking about how the world is organised in the present, and how the continuities and discontinuities of politics, in this instance in musicology, may play out into the future. The next paragraphs address the question of why there was a major paradigm shift to New Musicology, and show that the inadequacies of previous frameworks in musicology had become limiting. It is from here that it explains the subsequent shift in musicology to embrace the paradigms of performance studies.

‘New Musicology’ was a result of the postmodern disquiet that hit the academy in the latter half of the twentieth century. These theorists demanded to know if music could truly be autonomous and argued that it could not. Illustrative of transformations in the philosophical spirit of the time, it was deconstructive practices that drew New Musicologists to question the possibility of a central point of autonomous intelligibility. There have long been different degrees attributed between music’s aesthetic constitution and social construction, but what is of interest here is the discrediting of the belief in the aesthetic autonomy of music as characteristic of modernity. As seen in the previous chapters, deconstructive practices, or indeed ‘postmodernism’ in general, face accusations that objections to power are made in an absence of substantiating moral and ethical bases. In, against and beyond is an immanent mode of theorising for ‘music and politics’ that can negotiate the double-bind of deconstructive criticism. Nominally, that deconstructive practice must keep the liberty, or freedom, for which they are put to work at play. In, against and beyond is a schema through which to account for the historical de-contextualisation that postmodern analyses can

210 Ibid.
211 Also referred to as Critical Musicology.
engender. As a conceptual trope in, against and beyond can shore up broader relations
between politics and culture through which ideas of freedom are imagined.

Reflecting on the spectrum of musicology as it developed into the postmodern era, Savage
suggests that at one end there is ‘traditional musicology’ with formalist precepts that justify
‘tearing works from their worlds’ and that acknowledge no ideological influence or content in
music and, at the other end, there is Critical Musicology. Savage’s take on this end of the
spectrum is that, ‘by confronting traditional musicology’s methodological violence with the
ideologically constructed character of discursive social practices [it, New Musicology] seeks
its justification in the idea that all knowledge is relative to the disciplinary practices that
produce it and in which it circulates’. 212 In Rethinking Music (1999) Cook also summarises
the disparity between early twentieth century and later postmodern influenced musicology.
He states that the history of musicology and music theory for his generation has been one of a
loss of confidence and ‘an uneasy tension between a self-aware critical stance and the day to
day practice of musicology’. 213 It was, he says, the major disciplinary shifts in the latter half
of the twentieth century to ‘postmodern’ paradigms of critical theory that threw both the
disciplinary integrity of musicology and its relationship ‘to the rest of the universe’ into
question. A purpose of Rethinking Music is, thus, to review the dramatic expansions and
reinvigorations of the musicological agenda to take place (primarily) in the decade after 1985.

In 1985 leading musicologist Joseph Kerman published Contemplating Music: Challenges to
Musicology214 which, as Cook states, ‘created the vacuum that was filled by what came to be
called ‘New Musicology.’ 215 At this point, not only were the comfortable distinctions
between the objective description of fact and the subjective judgement of value further
problematized, but the power of this distinction as it had previously functioned as assumption
was increasingly made explicit. Formalism and positivism in musicology are revealed in this
era of New Musicology to have each embodied a stance of previously unproblematic
authority. Since, as Cook say, ‘few except exhibitionists’ would openly admit to being hard-
core formalists or positivists in the aftermath of the changes effecting the discipline, then we
might see musicology as, on the whole, having previously held an ‘attitude’ and a ‘sense of

212 Roger W. H Savage, “Criticism, imagination, and the subjection of aesthetics,” Philosophy and
213 Cook, Rethinking Music, v.
214 Joseph Kerman Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,
1985)
215 Ibid.
an established discipline’ in which there is known work to be done and ‘known ways of doing it.’\textsuperscript{216} Yet, at the same time, Cook also warns that ‘we seem to be well on the way to creating a disciplinary myth that divides musicological history into two discrete ages, the old and the new.’\textsuperscript{217} The ‘rethinking’ to which Cook’s edited collection of essays bears witness is designed to offer conscientious and self-conscious accommodations between established methodologies and new horizons. Similarly asserting that music has in, against and beyond aesthetic-political qualities is a flexible way to synthesise ‘popular music and politics’.

New Musicology continually, and controversially, annexed new terrain by expanding the musicological agenda with an empowerment of the female voice in musicology, openness to multiplicity of interpretations, and a studied avoidance of value judgements. Yet for Cook and the other authors, this rapid fire era of post-1985 New Musicology might now be characterised by ‘a reluctance to encompass any rapprochement between theoretical approaches’ because new theoretical positions were ‘taken up and cast aside.’\textsuperscript{218} Furthermore, that it may not be ‘entirely unreasonable to complain that New Musicology deconstructed everything except the disciplinary identity of musicology’.\textsuperscript{219} For instance, New Musicologists absorbed the dissipation of boundaries characteristic of the postmodern disquiet at this time, but generally left the musicology/music theory boundary intact. The authors in Rethinking Music are less interested in controversy and more concerned with careful cultivations that see value in ‘musicology of the provisional’.\textsuperscript{220} It is a similar self-reflexivity to which Holloway aspires when he warns against a ‘new positivation’ of thought in Marxist theory. There is a shared wariness in contemporary political theory and musicology about controversy as a form of certainty.

In Challenges to Musicology Kerman (1985) argues that music analyses up to this era combined the worst attributes of nineteenth-century ideology and naïve scientific positivism, because it was predicated on a monolithic conception of organic unity. Musicologists presumed that music is ‘there’ regardless of what we think it is. They ignored wider cultural constructs by perceiving musical works as timeless (and thereby autonomous) entities. As Cook summarises Kerman, music analysis was therefore a solution in search of a problem,
reliant on assumptions of universal attributes to music that exclude historical contingency, executed solely through mechanical procedures. In providing purely formalistic explanations for socially mediated meanings, music analysis thus held out false promises for ‘unmediated, unproblematic familiarity with the music of other times and places’, and the impact of New Musicology in the wake of these assessments was thus poised to be great.221

‘Performance’ for the study of music, until these sea-change shifts in the latter half of the twentieth century, meant the realisation of the score in sound. In “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance” Cook describes musicology’s interest in ‘performance’ as having been limited, because it was determined by a paradigm; the, ‘performance of’. The ‘performance of’ music paradigm saw music’s performances as essentially reproduction. Other forms of ‘performance’ could not be otherwise conceived. The ‘performance of’ music provided the terms through which a musical score is judged and made legitimate. This means that ‘performance’ as ‘process’ (rather than simply product) is subordinated and, Cook states that, in the ‘performance of’ paradigm, this subordination was built into language. It is through these processes that musical scores became worthy of the canon, and accorded a place in the Western classical music tradition. Conceptually, the limitation is that matters of musical autonomy come down solely to interpretations in the ‘performance of’ pieces of music.

The traditions of Western classical music understood performers and performances to be ‘jointly performing’ autonomy. Hence, the processes determining the canon were, as Cook puts it, functioning in ‘the manner of religious ritual’ because of the inherent insistence on music as an intrinsically meaningful cultural practice. Cook uses an analogy of how the concert hall for classical music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries performed ritualistic functions, much as the courts of the early seventeenth century had in their ‘performance of’ monarchy, and the royal chapels too, in the ‘performance of’ the possibility of happiness in the afterlife.222 The purpose of “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance” is to explain these conceptual paradigms as constructing process as subordinate to product in music, and show that they were deeply ingrained into the study of music from the beginnings of musicology as a discipline. Furthermore, and in Cook’s words, that the

221 Ibid.
Nineteenth-century origins of the discipline lie in an emulation of the status and methods of philology and literary scholarship, as a result of which the study of musical texts came to be modelled on the study of literary ones [...]. We are led to think of music as we might think of poetry, as a cultural practice centred on the silent contemplation of the written text, with performance (like public poetry reading) acting as a kind of supplement. Post-1985, musicology was able to suggest that the nineteenth-century models had reified the musical work to the extent that the history of music had come to appear as the history of a series of canonical works. Post-colonialism and ethnomusicologists also demonstrated that the philosophical presuppositions underpinning these formations are a part of the cultural self-modelling of the West in colonial representations of itself as a sovereign entity. For instance, in his discussion of how the West narrates its own rise and dominance through the Western European classical tradition, Leo Treitler (1995) states, in “Toward a Desegregated Music Historiography”, that it is ‘history functioning as myth, providing the criteria for the representation of music.’ Hence, the emphasis on the finished product and the ‘performance of’ music, in the history of musicology, has been recognised as denoting values that whilst (once) accepted as universal and transcendent, are in fact dependent on historical factors.

Expanding notions of performance signal a shift in which the distinctions between process and product are now a matter of emphases. Process and product are no longer seen as opposed paradigms, but constructed, or opposed, but in the sense of occupying positions within a continuum. With the implications therefore raised for what music is and does, in these re-descriptions of music as an irreducibly social phenomena, then more recent interest in and analyses of music as a performative art are the logical outcomes of historical developments and tensions in musicology. Expansions across the arts and humanities acknowledged that in ‘performance’ there are modes of knowledge production beyond the written word, or score. The previously hegemonic understandings of ‘autonomy’ in music were as a kind of intellectual property to be delivered securely from composer to listener, and they devalued music as a performative art. Musicologists thus began to see music as a performative generator of social meaning and there is now ample scholarship that sees music in terms of both process and product. Before the impact of critical New Musicology and ethnomusicology, the study of music was locked into pre-determined epistemological stances.

223 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
With the notion of fixity under attack across the academy, and the entrance of alternative theories of performance, musicologists now redress the over-emphases on what performance represents over what it does.

Politically committed musicology is, as a consequence of these sea-change shifts, better placed to expand on the subversive potentials of music (such as extending the virtues of capital in ‘Feeling Good’ as the next chapter ‘Beyond Gender’ will articulate). As such this section ‘Deconstruction’ should be read as an outline to the argument being made - that a belief in the autonomy of music need not be betrayal of prejudice in favour of the discredited concept of the aesthetically autonomous musical work. The hegemony of Western art music and the Western European classical tradition was the Romantic apotheosis of music (and art’s) absolute autonomy in the twentieth century.

In the twenty-first century, musicology that is provisional/anti-capitalist can approach questions of autonomy and transcendence quite differently. Through music’s embodied qualities, a musicology oriented to the future can explore how, to use Savage’s words, music ‘offers a cultural reply to the aporias of existence’ because it enables people to embrace the common mortal condition in response to music’s mode of being. Listening is a central performative process in the performance and prefiguration of transformation and social change.

‘Reconstruction’ will relate listening to agency, music to ethics. The section suggests that there is ‘anarchy’ in listening because listening pushes theoretical abstracts (such as universality) to effect movement between our positions as classed, gendered and racialized subjects.

**Reconstruction**

Studying listening in its different aspects is likely to be speculative work rather than empirical, because what people hear and experience is the result of the specific context in which they listen. The increasing scholarship on listening, and ‘haptic’ connections of the senses to the dissolution of boundaries, perceive affect as bodily. This complements anti-

---

identitarian politics. The in, against and beyond schema can speak to theories, including those of listening, around how subjectivities internalise capitalism, whilst accepting that the ways in which people come to think of themselves, and of politics, changes (and always amidst the inconsonant logics of politics as they play out in material reality). The section gives some indication of how ‘listening’ can be interpreted across ‘fields’ of subjectivity, and thus how the senses collect and collectivise our attention beyond the individual and the collective. It then looks at the strategies of anarchy in John Cage’s music to draw ideas around the anarchy of listening (and transcendence) together, and into the chapter’s anti-capitalist dissection of musicological thought on music’s mode of being in relation to time.

At a baseline of meaning, ‘listening’ can sensibly be conceived of as directing attention to what is heard, gathering meaning, and interpreting sound. Hearing and perceiving meaning in sound evolves from multi-modal encoding of auditory information in which sound informs an assemblage of multi-sensory experiences and conceptualisations, and these can have gendered and other social and political implications. The production, perception and interpretation of sound can be individual, collective and distributed, private, public, intentional or accidental, because sound is inherently interactive. The meaning of sound, and of music, comes through presentations and representations within social constructions, appropriations and amplifications. These effect the operations of the mind in the body and the body in the mind. Listening embodies music and as Bohlman writes, it is embodiment that metaphysically loosens music from itself as an autonomous language.

The body, furthermore, metaphysically loosens music from its own autonomy, mapping it on to other physical practices, such as ritual and dance ... The fear about music’s identity intensifies once discussion of the body as a site for musical production begins. Although we want our musical experience to be intensely personal – that is, to perceive them as lying within us as individuals – we often don’t want to think about them as such; we prefer to deny the possibility of a language to describe the music that resides within. If we turn to the body, then, the fundamental dilemma about music’s ontologies resolutely refuses to go away. Can music be about itself? Must it be about other human practices? Do its substances come from within or from without?227

In this the political functions of aesthetic consciousness are intimately connected to the politics of the body. This is how music is understood, particularly in popular musicology, to have proximity to identity. Music’s close proximities to identity are performative and embodied. In this a performative effect of music is that it provides access to different affective ranges of experience outside of the everyday and already known. Heavy metal is a good illustrative example, and a concise way also to demonstrate that music is a performative

means through which gendered identity is thought and lived (thus, listening and agency) in advance of the next chapter.

Masculinity, like femininity, is amorphous (because categories of gender are not stable) and must therefore be constantly resignified in order to sustain itself. In *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993) Robert Walser joins arguments that society denies males adequate means for exercising the power upon which masculinity depends. He does so in order to describe how heavy metal music offers occasions for ‘doing’ identity work. It is a dominantly physical genre that is definable by associations with the life of the body. Most obviously these include sex, drug-induced heightened sensory experience and aggression. In heavy metal, the music works within the mind and the body simultaneously to build power and control up in vocal extremes, distortion, high volume and virtuosic technique on the guitar; and thus develop a machismo image in which these combinations can create a sense of hyper-masculinity. It is in this light that Walser talks about heavy metal as articulating ‘controlling power’ and ‘transcendent freedom’ and in which ‘notions of gender circulate in the texts, sounds, images and practices of heavy metal and fans experience confirmation and alteration of their gendered identities through their involvement with it’. The performative and embodied expressions of gendered identity in heavy metal can be collective as well as individual. Music videos and concerts (with heavy metal music videos often being recordings of concerts) emphasise audience engagement in crowd surfing and hand gestures such as the devil sign, and raised fists. Whilst such performative experiences are temporal, the heavy metal genre nevertheless has material, emotional effects on individual and collective minds and bodies that effect constructions and perceptions of masculinity (and, indeed, femininity). Music always interpenetrates with life and the body because it needs listeners.

Listening is a performative bridge to conceive of affect as that which both comes before conscious apprehension and is the stuff of future emotional response. The idea that affect is physiological response has already been mentioned in the thesis because there has already been some account of Kassabian’s *Ubiquitous Listening*. In the following passage Kassabian

---

228 Walser, Robert, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 120.
229 Ibid, 122.
(2013) explains how the physiology of listening is on a spectrum that includes differing degrees of consciousness and attention.

By *listening*, I mean a range of engagements between and across human bodies and music technologies, whether those technologies be voices, instruments, sound systems, or iPods and other listening devices. This wipes out, immediately, the routine distinction between listening and hearing that one often finds, in which the presumption is that hearing is physiological and listening is conscious and attentive. I insist, instead, that all listening is importantly physiological, and that many kinds of listening take place over a wide range of degrees or kinds of consciousness and attention. So, the term *listening* here pushes against most of its routine use in scholarship.

In under-writing the routine distinctions between hearing and listening, Kassabian marks her scholarship as distinct from the modernist presumption of narrative as an organising principle that has been inherent to dominant musicological presumptions of expert or attentive listeners. She discusses the abstract formal relationships heard by Adorno and ‘fellow expert listeners’ and, in isolating the following line from Adorno’s *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1976) explains that his typology of listener valorises the expert listener above all other. Adorno writes that, ‘Spontaneously following the course of music, even complicated music, he hears the sequence, hears past, present, and future moments together so that they crystallise into a meaningful context.’

The identity of Adorno’s ‘expert listener’ is revealed by the predication and ability to recognise and follow musical narrative. The presumption of such expert listening has been well documented in music’s disciplinary practices. It is cultivated not only by Adorno, but by many theorists, as well as Western art music institutions. These include the academy and symphony orchestras as performative forms of the hegemony of the Western European classical tradition. Noting this, Kassabian indicates that presumptions of concentrated, expert listening are primary among the forces that produce and reproduce the canonical European and North American repertoire, and it is this that brings her to her fundamental point. If expert and concentrated or structured listening produces the canon, then other modes of listening must produce and reproduce other repertoires. Indeed, a similar position is being drawn out by this chapter. Kassabian’s ‘distributed subjectivity’ is a means to conceptualise that from a post-capitalist perspective there is anarchy to listening.

It is in the place of organised, expert listening that Kassabian therefore proposes careful thinking about how we listen to ubiquitous music (‘those musics that fill our days’) and she

---

230 Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening*, xvii.
231 Theodor Adorno, in, Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening*, xvii.
asks how this kind of listening engages us in sensual and sensory affective processes that situate us in fields of ‘dynamic’ subjectivity. ‘Fields’ of dynamic and distributed subjectivities is a conceptual means to denote processes set in motion by affect that listening to ubiquitous (and other) musics with varying kinds and degrees of attention evokes. Ubiquitous musics, she writes

...are listened to without the kind of primary attention assumed by most scholarship to date. That listening, and even more generally input of the senses, however, still produces affective responses, bodily events that ultimately lead in part to what we call emotion. And it is through this listening and these responses that a nonindividual, not simply human, distributed subjectivity takes place across a network of music media.²³²

Keywords are italicised here (by Kassabian) in order to set up the main body of her argument: non-individual subjectivity means that musicological models should mutate along with new uses of music, and, that disciplinary boundaries should be stretched to incorporate more speculative work. In order to summarise for her own research that ‘Text, context and reception create each other in mutual, simultaneous, and historically grounded processes’²³³ she refers to Ola Stockfelt’s 1997 article “Adequate Modes of Listening” and the arguments made within that different settings and sets of musical features are co-productive and produce different modes of listening. It is within these processes that the affective processes of listening (distinct from, though defined by, hearing) take place, and through varying degrees of attention that place us within fields of subjectivity.

Kassabian thus explains that the aurally evoked effects of affect that work on subjectivities can intentionally be called into being. This is how sensory branding and affective marketing work (across distributed subjectivities) to make our means of thought shared, a line of enquiry brought out by Kassabian especially in the chapter ‘Would you like some world music with your latte?’ Sound affects feeling and can modify behaviour. In ideological processes that does not mean that music functions as coercive shouting, but as soft hegemonic codes. In the words of political theorist Liu Li, ‘the ruling whisper wields a hegemonic soft power and sneaks into our social unconscious without being questioned’.²³⁴ If a ‘field’ of subjectivity loosely parallels (though is distinct from) what was once simply called an identity or audience then, as Kassabian states, ‘Where we once thought about representation and subject positions, or identities and histories, we are now confronted with

²³² Kassabian, Ubiquitous Listening, xi.
²³³ Ibid. 7.
²³⁴ Liu Li, in Street, Music and Politics, 146.
the task of understanding new ways of addressing our senses ... and collecting (and collectivising) our attention."^{235}

Jacques Attali makes similar demands in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*^{236} when he states that ‘For twenty five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible.’^{237} Fortunately for Kassabian and Attali, listening is a growing area of study in musicology. For example, in *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*, Mark Smith argues that there has been too little attention paid to the role of soundscapes in helping the ruling elites in the nineteenth century define what it meant to be Northern, Southern, slave or free and that the most fundamental identities of this period were constructed in sound.^{238} The soundscape of the North, he contends, was rooted in industrial capitalism, and the soundscape of the South, in the control of slave labour. There is also Veit Erlmann’s collection of essays, *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality* which aims to explode the myth that hearing, traditionally regarded as the second sense, is somehow less rational than the first sense, sight.^{239} Similarly, in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* Erlmann accounts for hearing in larger cultural processes.^{240} It contrasts the typical treatment of vision as the defining sense of the modern era which, Erlmann argues, has been a powerful vehicle for colonial and postcolonial domination. He thus intends to show that the ear, as much as the eye, offers a way into experience. He asks questions such as ‘did people in Shakespeare’s time hear differently from us?’ and ‘in what way does technology affect our ears?’ in order to explain that our mind’s relationship to the world has been assumed to rest on distance (in a Cartesian separation from the body), but that a new epistemology of the senses, including listening in musicology, is emerging.

These reflections on listening bring up questions of time, and the mode of being through which music exercises its efforts. On this Savage describes music as ‘linking the measurement of time to that of a present that is conceived in terms of attention (the present),

---

^{235} Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening*, 115.
^{238} Mark Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (North Carolina: University North Carolina, 2001)
memory (the present of the past), and expectation (the present of the future).\textsuperscript{241} The politics of aesthetic consciousness are thus tied through affective processes to these threefold slippages between past, present and future. More, then, than questions of taste, they are ethical judgements. The final section ‘Transcendence’ looks in more detail at emotions and ethics in relation to music and agency. In the next half of ‘Reconstruction’, however, these discussions develop ‘anarchy in listening’ in relation to collective autonomy through the anarchist praxis of John Cage.

\textit{John Cage}

The first artist to be discussed in detail in this thesis, Hendrix, was situated amidst Fisher’s theories post-capitalism. The second, John Cage, is introduced by way of Fisher. Fisher’s politics, like Foucault, were on how to make the impossible seem attainable. He also wrote about mental health. In an essay on his K-punk blog, he makes parallels in his politics to clinical depression where, he says, that in particularly acute cases, it is recognised that no verbal or therapeutic intervention will reach the patient. Alongside this, he says we must learn lessons from how neoliberalism, as deliberate counter-hegemonic strategy (‘the result of systematic and deliberate thinking about how to break labour and assert capital’) made the impossible happen. The slogan, he says, should be ‘pessimism of the emotions and optimism of the act’ and he qualifies this in the following sentences. For clinical depression,

\begin{quote}
The only effective remedy is to do things, even though the patient will, at that time, believe that any act is pointless and meaningless. But ‘going through the motions’ of the act is an essential pre-requisite to the growth of belief ‘in the heart’ [...] belief follows from behaviour rather than the reverse. Similarly, the only way out of cultural depression like now is to act as if things can be different.\textsuperscript{242}
\end{quote}

Influenced by the 1960s experimentation, ‘performance studies’, as it began to emerge as a discipline, established as a fundamental ‘principle’ that whilst a performance (including of a piece of music) might be the same one heard or seen by many people, the ‘event’ in which the recording is played will always be different. Elaborating on this, and acknowledging that the context of every reception makes each instance performatively different, Schechner states that, ‘The uniqueness of an event does not depend on its materiality solely but also on its interactivity – and the interactivity is always in flux’.\textsuperscript{243} John Cage was a part of, and had a

huge impact on, the experimentation and flux that was at the heart of 1960s dissent in music and politics. He described his music and philosophies in similar terms, ‘People paying attention to vibratory activity, not in reaction to a fixed ideal of performance, but each time attentively to how it happens to be this time, not necessarily two times the same. A music that transports the listener to the moment where he is.’

John Cage (1912-1992) was a composer with a visionary aesthetic who can be described as a libertarian anarchist. Cage’s music and writings are informed by political and philosophical, including overtly anarchist, strategy, and an ethics of non-violence through which he sought to inspire others to change the world. Along with other experimental composers in the mid-twentieth century, his performance-oriented work helped to shift and dissipate boundaries in music and musicology. In his writings, autobiographical statements and compositions, representations of an ideal polity come through a non-hierarchical focus in which he sought to propose questions rather than offer solutions. He refuted the ideals of a fixed performance for his music in order that there could be an emphasis on decisions of form over content and intention over acceptance. His focus was not on the result but the process, and not simply the interpretation of result, but the presentation of it in performance. His ‘silent’ piece, 4’33” subverted the discrete work of art. In an anechoic chamber Cage discovered that silence was not the absence of sound, but the unintended operation of his nervous system and the circulation of blood.

In the late forties I found out by experiment (I went into the anechoic chamber at Harvard University) that silence is not acoustic. It is a change of mind, a turning around. I devoted my music to it. My work became an exploration of non-intention. To carry it out faithfully I have developed a complicated composing means using I Ching chance operations, making my responsibility that of asking questions instead of making choices.

It was as a consequence of these observations that Cage composed ‘4’33”’, as four minutes and thirty three seconds of ‘silence’ in which it is famously demonstrated that it is possible to frame any action, sound, or perceived lack of sound, as music. It was a radical composition that redefined the score by extending its parameters. The division between performer and

245 Ibid.
audience no longer exists, because the music is heard, made or interpreted differently by everyone and in each performance. Cage’s politics were future-oriented, and he reveals something of this, and silence, in the following comments. On his shift to an interest in percussion he says,

The strings, the winds, the brass know more about music than they do about sound. To study noise they must go to the school of percussion. There they will discover silence, a way to change one’s mind; and aspects of time that have not yet been put into practice.\(^\text{246}\)

Much as in Savage’s threefold present, re-conceptions of time are at the heart of John Cage’s social thought. In the chapter “Music and Society” of *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage* William Brooks (2002) has interesting things to say about Cage’s anarchist strategy, his thoughts on anarchy, and how they relate to conceptions of time and social change. In the first instance, Brooks describes Cage’s philosophy of time as

Not a continuum, in which past flows into future through the present, but three distinct conditions: past/present/future. The self is poised in the nothingness between these, so that they interpenetrate without obstruction: in a condition of constant readiness, the self both accepts and imagines (and so also for Cage’s music).\(^\text{247}\)

Within this philosophy, Cage was an optimist who felt that ‘beauty yet remains in intimate situations; that it is quite hopeless to think and act impressively in public terms\(^\text{248}\) and so, Brooks says, Cage’s overtly political pieces appear to be ‘something of an aberration, a ‘public’ effort undertaken only when situations are wholly intolerable’.\(^\text{249}\) His more usual practice was the creation of music that would open people’s minds through ‘non-obstruction’ and he often talked about this in terms of ‘anarchy’. Not ‘anarchy’ as, as Brooks puts it, ‘mindlessness or riotous self-indulgence’\(^\text{250}\), but a non-obstruction applied in art to prevent taste and judgement from obscuring, in Cage’s words, ‘the very life we’re living’.\(^\text{251}\) Non-obstruction can be applied in art and daily life as a self-discipline by which personal desire is prevented from impeding another person’s actions. In all of his music what Cage therefore poses is to position the self, consciously, in ‘the nothing between separation and continuity’\(^\text{252}\) (and this is a philosophy he learnt in his study of Zen Buddhism). Politically, or analogously, the leap here is to (and ‘against’) relationships in society which, Cage believed,

\(^\text{246}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{250}\) Ibid.
were manifested above all else in the imposition of law by governments, and that forget ‘the necessary space between individuals’. He railed against this imposition of uniformity and philosophised instead, for what is rendered in this thesis as collective autonomy.

That is, implicit in the imposition of law by governments is that change comes about through the efforts of groups of individuals, which Cage resisted. Yet, he also saw an overemphasis of individual autonomy as pernicious. He felt anarchy was the way to deal with sweeping distinctions between oneself and others. Here, Brooks and Cage’s comments are guiding on how Cage, like this thesis, celebrates radical left politics as (anarchy) being ‘collective autonomy’.

Anarchy requires that every individual remain poised between autonomy and connectedness, refusing obstruction of self or others but not refusing interpenetration. The anarchic citizen strives to be "as careful as possible not to form any ideas about what each person should or should not do," but at the same time "to appreciate, as much as possible, everything [each person] does do – even down to [the] slightest actions" (Cage 1981, pp. 99-100). “Anarchy,” Cage writes, “really does have The future/people are talking about/ it is creative conduct/ As opposed to/ subordinate/ conduct it is positive/ individualism to follow a way of thinking/ that proposes you can assume/ for your own acts/ responsibility/ Visibly/ responsible/ first to yourself and then to society ...”

Cage’s anarchism was non-violent; it was based on ‘usefulness’. Anarchy that is motivated by conflict, he believed, perpetuates the impossibility of change. On this point he wrote that ‘An impracticable anarchy is one which provokes the intervention of the police ... If the object is to reach a society where you can do anything at all, the role of organisation must be concentrated on the utilities’. Bringing about ‘revolution’ is, therefore, about usefulness, rather than using ideology to test ideas and actions. As he says, ‘I’m not interested in objecting to things that are wrong. I’m interested in doing something that seems to be useful to do”.

Hence, he was a composer. It is in this sense that

virtually every piece he made after 1950 was intended to further, one way or another, changes of mind and in society. The range of strategies is astonishing; with each new notation, with each novel technique, could be associated a parallel social intervention. Each work, like each individual, is rightly situated in the nothing between relatedness and autonomy; and the experience of the work – always in and of the present – invites contemplation of that nothingness.

Clearly, his compositions sought ‘anarchy’ and they were necessarily anti-authoritarian, often confronting performers and audience with an absence of authority. Probably the most striking
model of anarchy from Cage’s compositions, Brooks states, is offered in Musicircus (1967), ‘a work so anti-authoritarian that Cage never even wrote a score for it’. The John Cage Trust describes Musicircus thus:

The idea of this composition is nothing more than an invitation to any number of musicians willing to perform simultaneously anything or in any way they desire. The manuscript is a list of musicians for the first performance, including a diagram for their positions in the performance space; it also indicates various works by Cage and Erik Satie that were performed, as well as a few non-musical works.259

No performing force, time length, coordination or direction is provided in Musicircus because it is about invitation rather than directive.

This brings about neither ensemble nor counterpoint, but rather simply coexistence. Sounds are both discrete and interconnected; both musicians and spectators have the opportunity to situate their understanding at any point on the spectrum between individuation and aggregation.260

The lack of focus, or ‘central point of intelligibility’, in Musicircus is deliberate, because these are the necessary corollaries of anarchy as Cage conceived it. The performers in Musicircus confront, as in Cage’s other compositions, the absence of authority, and they determine the rules governing their own behaviour. Brooks explains that Musicircus belongs to a category of compositions in Cage’s body of work, as ‘those which seek to produce change by asking (never requiring) performers to confront the absence or breakdown of conventional ways of working.’261 This is optimism in the act: the creation of collective autonomy through ‘individualism to follow a way of thinking’. These are utopian implications that are also made explicit in Cage’s use of silence. In the Concerto for Prepared Piano and Orchestra (1951-52) silence bridges non-obstruction and interpenetration. In the following passage Cage describes the piece.

The pianist, who, in the second movement, follows the orchestra as a disciple follows his master, in a sort of antiphony, then comes to join the latter in his impersonality. At the same time I grant more and more space to silences. Which may signify that I ceased becoming a composer. The silences speak for me, they demonstrate quite well that I am no longer there ... They say nothing. Or, if you prefer, they are beginning to speak Nothingness!262

There is also here an indication of the relationship between individual and ensemble that Cage found problematic, and, Brooks says, Cage consequently went to considerable lengths

---

258 Ibid, 221.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
to avoid investing authority in either conductor or soloist, so that ‘the soloist (an individual) learns to transcend ego, to enter into the ensemble (an anarchic community)’.\(^{263}\) Across many of Cage’s works then, the performers confront the breakdown of convention in the interests of ‘collective autonomy’. Their obligation becomes, therefore, a responsibility to themselves and their actions, and not an imagined totality. Another strategy comes from his later compositions. Especially in the series of *Etudes* composed in the 1970s there is a near impossibility of a correct performance. This is because the music is so deliberately complex that it (and it intends to) demands sheer virtuosity. In the following assessment from Cage, the motivation for making such difficult practical demands is clear and explicitly social.

I had become interested in writing difficult music, etudes, because of the world situation which often seems to many of us hopeless. I thought that were a musician to give the example in public of doing the impossible that it would inspire someone who was struck by that performance to change the world, to improve it [...] That has not happened but I remain optimistic and continue to write music which is, after all, a social art – it is not finished even when other people play it; it requires listeners too, and among them even sometimes the composer. Thus pieces of music can be taken as models for human behaviour, not only providing the possibility of doing the impossible, but showing too, in a work performed by more than one person, the practicality of anarchy.\(^{264}\) (Kostelanetz 1993, p.106)

Here Cage echoes Fisher, the situation is hopeless and change does not appear realistic, but there must be optimism in the act through human behaviour. The difficulty of the music requires the confidence of the performer to demonstrate, or exemplify, rather, a commitment. As Brooks puts it, ‘In its very intractability the music is meant to build the skills needed to transform the impossibilities of our social situation: persistence, resourcefulness, discipline.’\(^{265}\) The performers are invited into new relationships with each other (and the sounds that they make) and thus, even if for the listeners the music may not model new social relations, it has social implications (belief follows from behaviour). Brooks summarises:

> For if the tasks of the performers are reconceived, if a workable anarchy can come to inform their music making, and if the music they make can enter into daily life, then surely the transformation of daily life itself is at least conceivable.\(^{266}\)

‘Chance technique’ is the third category of compositional techniques through which Cage addresses social change. These are techniques (such as the use of the *I Ching*) that shift the focus from intention to acceptance, from result to process, ‘They select one alternative from a field of possibilities, but with no presumption that that alternative is in any way


\(^{264}\) Cage, “Music in Society,” 222.


\(^{266}\) Ibid, 224.
preferable’. Cage was clear that chance techniques are not mysterious sources of the ‘right
answers’ but the means of, ‘Locating a single one among a multiplicity of answers, and, at
the same time of freeing the ego from its own taste and memory, its concern for profit and
power, of silencing the ego so that the rest of the world has a chance to enter into the ego’s
own experience whether that be outside or inside.’ Chance techniques deny that
satisfactory answers lie exclusively in the domain of aesthetics (judgement, taste,
interpretation) because, in shifting the focus from product to process, object to action, the
response, where it is to be found, will be in the domain of ethics. That is, in the rightness of
actions and not the rightness of objects. As Brooks concludes, ‘A performer’s work is thus
relocated in life itself, and especially in the life of a society: determine the right thing to do;
act so as to further the general good. Music interpenetrates with life.’ On the one hand
Cage offers endless and innovative streams of proposals about social change and the future,
and on the other, he insists on accepting the present as it is, without judgement. This is
because he thought any effort to affect the condition of the world tomorrow is futile, unless
its present state is accepted ‘in full and without qualification’. Cage thus distinguishes the
present from the future, as he does acceptance from action. As he says, ‘I can work in the
society as it intolerably structured is, and I can also work in it as hopefully unstructured it
will be in the future’

All of / creation/ endless / interpenetration / together/ wiTh / nOnobstruction.

Through these descriptions of Cage’s life, work and philosophies of anarchy some important
points for the thesis on listening are underlined. Firstly, that listening is constitutive of
collective autonomy. Listening does not forget the necessary space between individuals, but
creates it and so, in distributed/dynamic subjectivity it is possible to conceive music and
listening as autonomous and interpenetrating. Secondly, that in the complex metaphysical
relationships that music has with time, ‘performance’ reconceives listening and relocates, as
non-obstruction and interpenetration, the performance of listening in to society as a whole.
Finally, then, that there is anarchy to listening connects conceptions of social change to
radical left politics.

267 Ibid.
270 Ibid, 226.
272 Ibid, 222.
Transcendence

Music performs socio-psychological functions because it effects perceptions of reality and affects imaginative alternatives to existing social conditions (in combatting senses of boredom or hopelessness, for example). By authorising transcendent explorations of possibilities in a way that no other modality endorses, music could thus be seen as emancipated from social function. Yet, in this sense, transcendence is a social function, because it has political effects. The suggestion in this section is that these syntheses of music and politics be seen through the lenses of the force of ‘the absolute movement of becoming’; of how the working class shape the evolution of capitalism.

* * *

In *Music and Politics* there is an interesting discussion of eighteenth-century philosopher Rousseau’s significance to the contemporary field. It comes through how he added a ‘sense of music’’s relationship to identity and emotion and their place in the formation of human society’. Rousseau is accorded this significance largely on account of his posthumously published 1781 essay “Origin of Languages” in which he argues that music has a power greater than the other arts because it generates feeling directly, and this is how it is able to evoke our sentiments, because ‘sounds act on us ... as signs of our affection, of our sentiments.’ Music, Rousseau perceives, reveals humans as ‘sentient thinking beings’. As Street explains Rousseau’s observations, it is music that allowed human beings to pass from a time in which communication served only to satisfy physical needs, such as for food and water, ‘to one in which it orchestrates our collective, social existence’. Rousseau saw music as pivotal to societies as communication because it was how existence became less about, say, providing directions, and more, about expressions of emotion and forming bonds. Sound, music and hearing cater for collective social needs such that Rousseau said, ‘Music ... brings man closer to man and always gives us some idea about our own kind’. The emotions, particularly compassion, find expression in the ways that sound becomes the basis for co-organised existence. It is not just music holding up a mirror to reality, or mimicry of particular emotions, but making them present. Music is revelatory, because music is a means to express the feelings and passion that are fundamental to social existence and, here is the crux: that predate the emergence of reason.

272 Street, *Music and Politics*, 142.
274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
276 Street, *Music and Politics*, 144.
American philosopher Martha Nussbaum also puts music before reason. Her perspective is that music provides access to emotions in ways that language cannot, because ‘it remains difficult for language to bypass the intellectual defences we have developed as we cope with the world’. Music, however, ‘can bypass habit, use and intellectualising’. Nussbaum does not mean to imply that music is a ‘universal language’, but to romanticise the capacities of music differently, as able ‘to pierce like a painful ray of light directly into the most vulnerable parts of the personality’. This is not a universalising, or totalising, observation because it depends, in reality, on an appreciation of specific cultural traditions and skills. From within these, music can, Nussbaum states, ‘embody the idea of our urgent need for an attachment to things outside ourselves that we do not control’. So, her account is a romantic vision of music and its place in life, that can be linked to larger sets of claims about the role of compassion in personal and communal relations. Relatedly, the argument throughout the thesis is that music creates political ideals and the feelings evoked by these ideals and this effects politics in communication and transformations of consciousness. In this, it is a romantic or transcendental lens that also sees agency in music experience in terms of emotion and ethics oriented to a world beyond capitalism.

These ideas can be related back to Blacking’s concept of the ‘musical human’, and (to follow Attali’s request) the idea of humanly organised sound to underline music as a phenomenon replete with utopian resonances. The concept of a ‘soundly organised humanity’ is inseparable from a community or cultural group’s efforts to maintain itself. At least, this is what Savage appears to infer when he states that the ‘Utopian features of particular societies should not be allowed to conceal the fact that, in a world distinguished by a plurality of cultures, each community keeps faith with itself by maintaining itself in accordance with its practices and beliefs’. Indeed, music provides a privileged point of entry for questions of identity not only because it is produced by and produces discourses of identity, but as a way of ‘feeling’ collective autonomy. Every struggle for a community or cultural group’s recognition presupposes a group’s self-representation in cultural signs. Hence, no culture, Savage says following Paul Ricoeur, exists without a system of symbolic representations.

---

279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
through which individuals and groups articulate their ‘social experiences, their positions in society, their feelings, and their dispositions.’ According to Ricoeur, for human beings, there is no nonsymbolic mode of existence (Ricoeur 1986b). All self-understanding is always already an interpretation mediated by cultural signs and works. In cautioning against an apology that, “for the sake of difference ... makes all differences indifferent” (Ricoeur 1992: 286), Ricoeur alerts us to the fact that the plurality of cultures arises from the different ways of life according to which each group maintains itself. Cultural works, modes of conduct, ethical evaluations and senses of belonging are therefore integral to a historical community’s continuing understanding of itself.283

Here Savage reverses apologies for ‘identity politics’ that fail to recognise there will always be a plurality of ways in which people preserve their own heritage in light of lived experience and expectations.

The quest for identity, especially in music experience ‘is oriented as much toward the future as it is toward a group’s or community’s anchorages in the history or histories that sustain it.’ The thesis is interested in, as per Kassabian, understanding subjectivities as processes within and across discrete bodies and objects and ‘affect’ as that which ‘snaps across gaps (between neurons, between objects and organs, between bodies’). In both these points, music ‘performs’ politics, because listening engages people politically. The argument to be made here is that anti-capitalist musicology can give amplitude to how music intensifies the sense of belonging that is the hallmark of community. In other words, feelings of community identity in music experience underline music’s emotional role in creating the compassions (convictions, anger, pleasures) through which affective processes constitute interventions in themselves beyond individual subjectivity. Savage points out how this must also self-reflexively recognise ‘that this heightening of the feeling of belonging escapes the subject’s will to mastery [and that] this feeling attests to a sense of dependence that runs counter to any modernist hubris’. He suggests understanding music’s transcendent experiences (or ‘limit experiences’, trance or ecstasy) as evincing a feeling of dependence in the face of time.

Transcendence is an extensive area of scholarship. A core belief of this thesis is that transcendence in music experience can be dissent – and these can be theorised in flows of rebellion, or on continuums of in- to non-subordination. It is in this light that the research interprets Fisher’s development of Acid Communism, a style of thinking to augment post-

---

282 Ibid.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
285 Kassabian, Ubiquitous Listening, 116.
286 Ibid, 11.
capitalist desire (transcendence). Acid Communism as an extension of ‘capitalist realism’ explains the need to identify subversion in pleasure as rebellion. Music cultures had significant resonances as forms of consciousness-raising in the last century, and thus transcendence broke social cohesion, showing the status quo up as mutable.

Music has an unconditional aesthetic freedom because of its relationship to, or mode of being in, time. In manifesting qualities of being ‘in’ the future, and following Cage, music promotes self and shared understanding beyond (though within) everyday, present tense conditioning. When we hear music it addresses us from within our individual interiorities and the experience can, albeit temporally, enable us to transcend everyday reality from within (placing us in the nothingness between relatedness and autonomy). Savage articulates how music addresses us both within the horizons of our experience whilst it also escapes them, ‘A work evinces the point of futurity’ he explains ‘that gives the paradox of a work’s singularity and its exemplarity its depth’.  

By this he means that singular works of music surpass the circumstances that condition their creation by addressing new audiences in new contexts and situations. Value therefore exists in both music’s singularity and in this performativity; bridging different audiences, listening in different contexts at different times. The following description from Savage succinctly captures this researches recognition of music’s performative dimensions ‘in’ and ‘beyond’.

Music exercises its power to redescribe affective dimensions of experience through creating different worlds in which the ordinary sense of time is surpassed by a “time beyond time” or a feeling of “being out of time” – in short, by “eternity.” In refiguring the other of time, these surreal worlds avow the depths of feeling of belonging by virtue of their ecstatic heights.

The feeling of being both in and ‘beyond’ time brings about deeper connections with the world with respect to how we inhabit it. In anarchistic theory music’s mode of being is thus a condition of its utility.

Historically, the hermeneutical critique of Immanuel Kant on transcendence (1789 – 1914) had effects for nineteenth-century aesthetics that lend support to Blacking’s appeal to the artistic value of music. In the following centuries there was a subsequent institution of an ideal of aesthetic cultivation, and justification therefore of music’s autonomous standpoint as

---

a sphere of total freedom from the practical world. Savage describes his allegiance to Kantian aesthetics in light of this in “Criticism, Imagination and the Subjectivation of Aesthetics,” when he states that music effects ‘understandings of who we are though modulating and transfiguring our outlooks on the world in which we inhabit and in which we act.’ In rejoinder to this he underlines his belief that the aesthetic freedom of music is unconditional and, to support this, he isolates philosopher of hermeneutics Hans-Georg Gadamer’s explanation of Italian Enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico’s assessment that

What gives human will its direction is not the abstract universality of reason but the concrete universality represented by the community of a group, a people, a nation, the whole human race. From this the section in hand therefore suggests there is a provisional universality to music beyond the abstract universality of reason, and that this bears description as a ‘transcendent universality’. The ‘in’ and ‘beyond’ dimensions of music always and already hold out the possibility for the convergence of cultural horizons that have not yet met and it is in this aesthetic freedom that music’s performative dimensions are, or can be conceived of as, future-oriented labours of cultural translation.

* * *

In the study of music, as per ‘Deconstruction’, distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity, individual and collective, are continually revised and complicated. In the move across the humanities to emphasise process and the lack of fixity to reality, the intersections of past/present/future opposition are also politicized. For the paradox in which transcendence is a social function that opened the section, Savage’s descriptions of the aesthetic freedom of music, which also include as ‘utopian plenipotentiary’, name the inherent freedom in music to the limitations imposed by the world outside of itself (its transcendent universality). Hence, there are practices of freedom inherent in music that are available in experience and constituted in process. It confers power, or works as utopian envoy, because it forms both pure states and hybrids between binary distinctions. The chapter contends along with Savage that, in manifesting qualities of being ‘in’ the future, music promotes self and shared understanding beyond the everyday and present tense conditioning.

Music ‘performs’ politics because of the aesthetic capacity to capture historical experience, and the passion, powers and desire that fuel political action into the future, through the movement of the imagination. For this, ‘enchanted’ is similar conceptually to the way that ‘transcendence’ has been rendered in this chapter. Jane Bennett (2006) describes enchantment as the active and potentially disruptive power of the human body in

...a mood of lively and intense engagement with the world [that] consists in a mixed bodily state of joy and disturbance, a transitory sensuous condition dense and intense enough to stop you in your tracks and toss you onto new terrain, to move you from the actual world to its virtual possibilities.  

Enchantment as a kind of transcendence leads to more sustained practices of communality and escape from subjection. Bennett argues that this embodied communality accumulates a willingness to become communal subjects. She explains that the affects are not those traditionally linked to left politics. Enchantment is not ‘the outrage and anger that cluster around heroic struggles, or the cynicism and righteousness that operate in left political movements as a powerful emotional undertow’, but a theoretical idea of the enticing utopianism of the growing recognition that the other is what makes the self-possible. Recognising that it is the force of the absolute movement of becoming that shapes capital gives amplitude in theory to music experience as intensifying the sense of belonging that heighten senses of community (of collective autonomy) in practise.

It seems that until the New Musicology the study of music provided largely formalistic explanations for socially mediated meanings. Musicologists now recognise that this held out false promise for an unproblematic (and unmediated) familiarity with the music of other times and places. Not only does this tie into the West’s colonial representations of itself as a sovereign entity, it has provided a contrast in this chapter to the complex, transformations of the imagination that are needed to resist liberalism’s image of itself. New Musicology made explicit the power of the conceptual and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study of music, but this should not mean that we divide musicology into two discrete ages of the old and the new. Such certainty of thought is at odds with the self-conscious accommodations between established methods and new horizons needed in anti-capitalist politics and post-capitalist imaginations. The core theme of performativity circles the ideas in this chapter which has continued to show how the performative can be placed at the centre of both the political and musicological. It can be used in the political, in order to stress the active social

---

constructions of reality and the musicological for ideas around music’s authorisation of temporary explorations of alternative.

Through the performative, this chapter has suggested, that consciousness-raising takes places through music in ways that challenge entrenched assumptions of capitalist culture, Such as in enabling people to overcome individualism and create (if only imaginatively) potent collectivity.
CHAPTER FOUR

Beyond Gender

This chapter demonstrates that class-based anti-capitalist politics are ‘beyond gender’. It continues to be about prefiguration and rebellion, as well as continuums of non-subordination to insubordination. It looks in particular at the idea of non-subordination in music experience in order to suggest that ‘feeling good’ is productive for political transformation. After detailing the theory of being beyond gender identity, it looks at the changing and gendered politics of work through pop292 music at the end of the twentieth century. It then translates some of the ideas posed into George Lakoff’s scholarship on thought and language as embodied, and situates them further within responses to Frith’s question, ‘why do songs have words?’. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the Marxist concept of self-valueisation can look at the creation of spaces for women in punk from Patti Smith to riot grrrl and on to Pussy Riot as ‘punk performativity’. Holistically the chapter ties pop music (and punk) to individuality and collective autonomy as a post-capitalist conceptualisation of the

Creation of new forms of community energized by pleasure, fun, eroticism, and connection across all sorts of divides and differences; and experimentation with a communal class process in which interdependence and incompleteness are accepted as enabling aspects of individual subjectivity. These productions speak to us when we turn to thinking about how we might cultivate a politics of postcapitalist possibility.293

Whilst the above quotation comes from Gibson-Graham’s analyses of British film the Full Monty, it relays that the basis of solidarity, collective autonomy, is the acknowledged interdependence of self and other. As in the previous chapter, in Bennett’s ‘enchantment’; collective autonomy in music experience is understood as ‘the enchanted solidarity of those who exist in recognition of their interdependency’.294 Bifo, writing on the death of Mark Fisher, makes analogous observations about ‘desire’. Desire is, like power, not a singular force but evolving and polycentric. It is:

292 ‘The term ‘pop music’ was first used in the 1950s as a blanket term for music that is instantly appealing, chart-oriented and aimed at the teenage market. Pop music is often regarded as the softer alternative to rock, constituting songs that are relatively short and aimed at commercial recording. The basic elements of pop have remained fairly stable: the music is generally accessible and tends to focus on the vocals, with an emphasis on memorable hooks and catchy choruses. Pop music lyrics are often centred on romantic love.’ From Julia Winterson, Rock and Pop Theory: The Essential Guide (FaberMusic & Peters Edition: London, 2014), 120.

293 Gibson-Graham, A Postcapitalist Politics, 18.

the pro-tension of a body towards another body, a pro-tension that invents worlds and builds architectures, roads, doors or bridges, but also abysses and depths. So when the individual or collective body has become incapable of relaxing and having pleasure, when breath becomes nervously fragmented, then we either get to transform desire into cruelty or we chose not to desire.\footnote{Franco Beradi, “How do we explain depression to ourselves? Bifo remembers Mark Fisher.”}

These opening gestures are a means of contrast against the painful ideology engendered by capitalist realism that ‘there is no alternative’. Empathy makes social solidarity possible, and it is in compassion that the complicity of free people against power can come about. This relates back to the strong/weak theory distinction already addressed and the point that, in practising ‘weak’ theory, it is easier to de-exoticize power and to accept it as mundane, pervasive, uneven, multiple. Like desire, power takes multiple forms, spatiality and temporalities, and has different modes of transmission, reach and effectivity. In making these points Gibson-Graham are likewise reflecting on contemporary changes to the grammars of revolution and anti-capitalism. Their argument is that post-capitalist politics can bring about ‘A differentiated landscape of force, constraint, freedom’ in which ‘opportunity emerges and we can open up to the surge of positive energy that suddenly becomes available for mobilization.’\footnote{Gibson-Graham, \textit{A Postcapitalist Politics}, 8.}

The overriding purpose of this chapter is to coin ‘feeling good’ as a post-capitalist political for a study of popular music that recognises radical potential in positive, autonomous (from capitalism), experience.

Anti-capitalist musicology with post-capitalist politics must today bring about the proliferation of different political, affective and emotional economies to the Marxism’s dominating the twentieth century, and this requires a hospitable orientation to the objects of thought. Citing Hannah Ardent’s argument that we need to ‘foster a love of the world’, Gibson-Graham say similarly that post-capitalist politics need to ‘draw on the pleasures of friendliness, trust, conviviality, and companionable connection’\footnote{Ibid, 6.}. They also cite Wendy Brown’s succinct assessment of the twentieth century in which ‘To be a leftist is historically to be identified with the radical potential of the exploited and oppressed working class. Excluded from power yet fixated on the powerful, the radical subject is caught in the familiar ressentiment of the slave against the master’.\footnote{Wendy Brown, in Gibson-Graham, \textit{A Postcapitalist Politics}, 5.} What Brown and Gibson-Graham mean is that the emotions of left politics have been shored up in contrast to, and by definition as, the weak against the strong, and that these are habitual feelings that must be replaced with projects that foster a future-oriented politics of becoming. Hence, the drive of this chapter is
to use ‘feeling good’ as a concept to interrogate how, in becoming aware of the barely conscious contours in habits of thinking that block possibility, we can produce new affective relations to the world.

* * *

The first section merges a detailed account of Butler’s *Gender Trouble* with analyses of Patti Smith’s song ‘Gloria’ from her debut album *Horses*, to demonstrate ‘beyond gender’ politics working first in practice and then in theory. It demonstrates that performativity is integral to political movement and change in gender emancipation.

Gender is accountable to historical analysis. Masculinity and femininity are not stable essences, but varied and changing social constructs. These perpetually renegotiated constituents of identity are active in transformations of capitalism. Capitalism, from its very inception, has depended on gender as an axis of oppression and, thus, gender is a performative mover of capitalism’s evolution. Part of causing gender trouble is the subversion of reductive and essentialist understandings and means of social categorisation that position people in everyday life; and a resistance of those notions of ‘humanness’ that depend on there being two coherent genders. It has been argued that in music’s performative dimensions music can be seen, in an appropriation of Butler’s phrase, as a ‘future oriented labour of cultural translation’.

That music addresses us within the horizons of our experience, but also has retrospective and prophetic dimensions, is something that Patti Smith understood well. Particularly given her allegiance to a Rimbauldian transgressive aesthetic, Patti Smith’s punk aesthetic is a championing of music as holding prefigurative powers. As she sought to locate a sense of how sound animates action, her revolutionary debut album *Horses* (1975) can be heard as both ‘beyond’ and before Butler’s theoretical work on performativity and gender. Knowingly separate to the Women’s Liberation and ‘second-wave’ feminist movements of the time, Patti Smith was performing the ‘beyond gender’ theoretical work to come from Butler’s seminal queer text *Gender Trouble* over twenty years before it was published. Both women re-articulated the feminist standards of their time, whilst expressing a reluctance to call themselves, in a straightforward way, feminists. Rather, they paint pictures of feminism, like gender, as contestable categories, and question the myth of identity as common ground.
Butler writes that:

There is no single or abiding ground from which feminism can or should speak ... these are exclusionary practices which paradoxically undermine the feminist project to broaden the field of representation.299

Challenged on her lack of participation in second-wave liberation movements in 1975, Patti Smith quipped in an interview for *New Times Magazine* that ‘As far as I’m concerned, being any gender is a drag.’300 To explain that Patti Smith’s punk displaces heterocentric assumptions, it is necessary to give an account of the theory of being ‘beyond gender’, and how Butler and Patti Smith both place their faith in the revolutionary power of the word as able to bring into being new worlds of reference as they were in the process of their transformation. Both women reject essentialist constructions of subjectivity and binary distinctions such as sex/gender and man/woman. Their pictures of gender and feminism are nuanced, and go against common sense understandings of the individual and the subject that are taken for granted in Western discourses. The individual subject as taken for granted in discourses of education, politics and media is presumed to have stable existences prior to the cultural fields it negotiates. Yet gender, as Butler rigorously explicates, is tenuously constituted in time. There is no ‘doer’ behind the deed of gender because there is no real ‘being’ of gender that lies beneath its performance. Simone De Beauvoir inches towards the same conclusion in her famous line in 1949 that ‘One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.’ De Beauvoir’s acumen remains central to queer theorising. In 1986 Butler composed an essay titled “Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir’s Second Sex” that includes prefigurative expressions of the controversial claims that she was to make four years later in *Gender Trouble*. In the following sentences from 1986, it is unsurprising that Butler would eventually reject binary systems of thought outright.

Simone De Beauvoir does not suggest the possibility of other genders besides ‘man’ and ‘woman’, yet her insistence that these are historical constructs which must in every case be appropriated by individuals suggests that a binary gender system has no ontological necessity.301

Sharpening her own insistence on the need to instead focus on the productive gaps that exist between constructions of binary gender, Butler observes of De Beauvoir that ‘Her theory of

---

gender, then, entails a reinterpretation of the existential doctrine of choice whereby ‘choosing’ a gender is understood as the embodiment of possibilities within a network of deeply entrenched cultural norms."\(^{302}\) Butler aimed to extend De Beauvoir and show, through this extension, that her analyses were limited by an uncritical reproduction of the Cartesian distinction between freedom and the body. The ontological distinction presumed between the mind (as freedom/consciousness/the soul) and the body is recognised in much contemporary feminism as constitutional in its support of relations of political and psychic subordination. The established cultural associations of the mind are with masculinity and power, whilst the feminine, along with subordinate femininity, is associated with the body. Hence, Butler is enthusiastic about De Beauvoir’s syntheses of the terms of mind and body, but explains that she nevertheless maintains the distinction. Butler therefore radicalises the already radical De Beauvoir in her demonstration that De Beauvoir resists but underestimates, and thereby remains symptomatic of, phallogocentrism. In her amiable critique and eventual extension of De Beauvoir, Butler uses theory to de-naturalise dominant conceptions of gender and problematize the relationship between constructions of gender and the perceived naturalness of biological sex. ‘Sex’ and ‘gender’ are nuanced terms, and expressions of gender have no necessary or inherent relationships to sex. In Butler’s analysis she is not opposing nature, or the presumed natural order of things, as such, but invoking it to set out the limits circumscribed by the heterosexual politics of Western cultural life. Her motivation is to develop theories of resistance to the cultural hegemony of the binary of gender and to subvert the links to heteronormative politics that enable people to move ‘beyond gender’.

In her explanation of ‘heterosexual hegemony’ and the politics of heteronormativity, Butler gives examples in which denaturalising heterosexual norms actually reinforces them. Clichés of drag and camp on television (Julian Clary and Graham Norton are British examples) work to confirm what counts as ‘straight’ and ‘not straight’. They cannot be counter-hegemonic, because they are binary products of a heterosexual, heteronormative entertainment industry. In *Bodies That Matter* she says that the entertainment industry thus provides a ‘ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness.’\(^{303}\) Yet, Butler felt that there was a dominant misreading of *Gender Trouble* which perceived her to be suggesting that parody and drag are the only effective means of gender dissent. In fact, she does not advocate this kind of voluntary reading of

\(^{302}\) Ibid, 37.  
gender or seek to imply that gender can be an arbitrary choice that may be subject to change on an *ad hoc* basis. She was quite clear in 1988 that this is not her suggestion.

In a sense, the prescription is not utopian, but consists in acknowledging the existing complexity of gender which our vocabulary invariably disguises and to bring the complexity into a dramatic cultural interplay without punitive consequences.304

‘Performativity’ as developed by Butler is a queer strategy of conversion that understands every reference to sex and gender to be part of the continuing formations. In ‘working the trap’ of performativity, enactments of gender and sex can destabilise these performative norms. For *Gender Trouble* performativity is explained as a project of translation. In the process of translation, non-normative practices can call into question, undermine and resist the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality. By demonstrating that homosexual assumptions can be constructed against and therefore by the standards of heterosexuality, Butler contributes questions of subversion and working the trap of performativity to post-capitalist politics. That is, thanks to the widespread influence and impact of *Gender Trouble* many more people have been provided with tools through which to figure out their own complex relations to gender. With wider-reaching recognitions of the constructed nature of gender (and the changing political conditions of gender’s emergence) it is possible for more people to live in gender non-conforming ways. It is a crucial piece of theoretical work opening up countless avenues for radical thought that, in turn, continue to enable people to live more freely by effecting transformations on consciousness at various levels.

Butler made clear that *Gender Trouble* hinges on allegiance to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and that they are both texts that do not end with resolution, but demand to be understood from within their own irresolution. Likewise, the in, against and beyond schema hinges on ‘negative dialectics’. It can also be used as a mode of theorising to understand ‘identity’ as that which is never resolved but, rather, is an endless process of ‘becoming’. Identity is ‘process’ and Butler and Holloway explain this by drawing on dialectics to ask not just how identity is constructed, but to question the conditions of its emergence and leverage potentials for subversion. *Gender Trouble* focuses on two expressions of performativity in this light, ‘resignification’ and ‘subversive repetition’. Repressive gender norms sustain themselves through repetition, but there is room for subversion in forcing these norms to resignify. Again, this is not about freedom of choice in enacting gender, but the potential for

---

translation. Testament to the coherence of Butler’s articulations of performativity for resisting and subverting gender norms, it is possible to show that Patti Smith was doing precisely this, before the specific neologisms and theoretical language was formed.

Popular musicologist Sheila Whiteley describes Patti Smith as ‘a self-styled asexual who refused to be complicit in her female identity.’\textsuperscript{305} With the release of her debut album *Horses*, (1975) she quickly became known for her confrontational style and image. Her musical style on *Horses* is hard to categorise. It is an avant-garde album produced by ex-Velvet Underground member John Cale, an unconventional and innovative fusion of punk, rock, and performance art that moves between singing, speaking and stream-of-consciousness. It is said to flit 'between tune and word without giving precedence to either, creating not so much love songs as stream of consciousness performance pieces with loose narratives.'\textsuperscript{306} Whilst they do not always reference Butler directly, many popular musicologists, including Sheila Whiteley, Richard Middleton and Mike Daley, execute theoretical analyses of Patti Smith’s music that are leveraged here to show how Butler’s theories for ‘repetitive’ gender subversion work in practice.

‘Gloria’ is the lead song on the album, and Butler’s abstractions in theory are in evidence in practice in music. It would be inadequate to say that ‘Gloria’ is a ‘cover’ of the original version as written and recorded by Irish band Them in 1974 fronted by Van Morrison. Patti Smith’s version is a critical recasting of Morrison’s tale of sexual conquest. She adds her own text and her performance of the song differs significantly from the original. In particular, this is due to the altering of her pronunciation of words for expressive ends.\textsuperscript{307} Daley (1997) suggests that this is therefore a performed critique of the male coded rock narrative and points to the ‘parodic and deconstructive effect of her performance within the social context.’\textsuperscript{308} By this he means that, because ‘Gloria’ was well known to the North American audience at the time of release, and thus that Smith’s ‘textual and performative variations would be especially foregrounded and ‘marked’ for much of her audience.’\textsuperscript{309} In her alterations, Patti Smith plays up the sexual angle, but does not change the male perspective.

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid, 235.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid, 236.
Thus, by singing a tale of male conquest in a female voice she creates another ‘dialogic layer’
that performs, or deconstructs, the machismo of rock’ n’ roll. Butler’s ‘subversive repetition’
(a tenet of gender performativity) explains that it is only within categories of identity that
require compulsory repetition (male and female) to sustain their existence, that subversive
repetition is possible because,

‘We need categories to subvert them [...] It is when we are within the categories that we can be against
them because the limits of a category are intelligible only within the rules governing that category,
within the constituted effects of that category.’ 310

Implicitly identifying as the masculine figure in ‘Gloria’, in a relationship that includes a
feminised partner, Patti Smith gives the lyrics a new plurality of meaning. She highlights the
instability of masculine and feminine, male and female, as identity categories, by
subversively repeating them. For Daley, this weakens Van Morrison’s power as author
because she ‘travesties his sexual prowess.’ 311 Certainly, by using vocal extremes and
switching registers, she invokes the original song, and does so for her own ends. Retaining
the lyrical content of the male perspective, her added vocal techniques play on sexual
ambivalence such that, as Daley observes,

As the performance progresses, Smith uses a number of different kinds of voice quality to point up
subtle meanings in certain words and phrases. Morrison’s vocal performance, on the other hand,
maintains almost obsessively a raspy, nasal sound [...] Smith’s inclusion of this quality alongside
breathy, ‘creaky’ and clear voices relativizes and re-contextualises the affective meanings of that hard
voice quality. 312

Whether or not Patti Smith therefore ‘weakens’ Van Morrison’s sexual prowess because of
this is not of concern here. That she executes a playful, successful critique and grab for his
power, is. In Butler’s terms this is ‘resignification’ in practice, as Patti Smith quite literally
‘mimes and displaces the conventions of the heterosexual hegemony.’ 313 By repeating, but
resignifying, Van Morrison’s identity as frontman in the original ‘Gloria’ she also establishes,
employing Butler’s phrasing again, ‘the instability of the very category it constitutes.’ 314 Patti
Smith decentres the dominant male rock singer and thus inverts, as Middleton describes it,
‘the traditional structures of sexual positioning.’ 315 Placed alongside the theory of Gender

310 Judith Butler, in Alecia Youngblood Jackson, “Performativity Identified,” Qualitative Inquiry 10 (2016),
682.
311 Daley, “Patti Smith’s ‘Gloria,’” 238.
312 Ibid, 239.
313 Ibid, in Youngblood Jackson, “Performativity Identified,” 682
314 Ibid.
Trouble, ‘Gloria’ is a song of expressive possibilities for dissolving the sedimented contradictions of gender in Western culture in practice. As Arthur Rimbaud, a heroic figure of liberation for Patti Smith, wrote ‘Woman will discover the unknown, will her world be different from ours? She will discover things that will be strange and unfathomable, repulsive, and delicate’\(^{316}\) and, as O’Brien concludes, ‘Smith became rock ’n’ roll’s preacher, its salvation.’\(^{317}\) Later in the chapter the ‘godmother of punk’ (as she became colloquially known) is shown to have opened up a space not only for herself, but, as history shows, a succession of other women in punk performativity.

**Three Songs**

The three selected songs move in chronological order from the counter-culture and industrial factory based Fordist era, in Patti Smith’s ‘Piss Factory’ (1974), to neoliberal transitions into a post-Fordist landscape in Dolly Parton’s ‘9-5’ (1980) and finally, with Destiny’s Childs ‘Bills Bills’ (1999), into the cultural hegemonic hold of neoliberal feminism. These songs focus on the 1970s to the 1990s and the section employs autonomist theory as a mode of interpretation. Autonomist social theory came about not to name new categories, but to understand the transformation of forms of labour occurring within them, and to recognise the possibilities that they contain. The first song is, arguably, the first punk record. The second two are solid ‘pop’ hits in which there are ‘feel good’ spirits or affect to the music. Simply, they have an upbeat tempo, major key and familiar chord sequences. Anti-capitalist musicology here uses autonomist theory to interpret the changing and gendered politics of work revealed by these songs, and to suggest that these politics are subverted in the pleasure (and unconditional aesthetic freedom) of ‘feel good’ pop music.

‘Post-capitalism’, a world without work, is a contemporary articulation of the classic Marxist ‘communism’ as the end of waged labour. The left today is developing counter-hegemonic projects and politics for liberating, emancipatory movements against work. Counter-hegemonic politics are about persuasion and they ask how things will set in the cultural mindset in the production of discourses of understanding. An aspect of this will necessarily be an anti/post-work philosophy to undermine the ideology of work as an inherently good thing. Fisher (2017) articulates a sense of what counter-hegemony means for this ‘anti-work’

\(^{316}\) Arthur Rimbaud, in O’Brien, *She Bop*, 112.
\(^{317}\) O’Brien, *She Bop*, 114.
section of the thesis, when he states that anti-capitalists must ‘develop an account of the world that treats our perspectives not as subjugated, insurrectionary, or disruptive knowledges, but as potentially constitutive of a different world.’ Ultimately ‘Three Songs’ develops a concept, ‘feeling good’, through which to ask questions about the ideological, subversive functions of pleasure that affect left consciousness. It argues that in ‘feeling good’ there are transformations on consciousness that, as accumulating processes, enact the post-capitalist desires that could (as part of wide movements emancipatory politics) bring an end to waged labour.

**Piss Factory**

‘Piss Factory’ (1974) is the B-side to Patti Smith’s first single ‘Hey Joe’ and the lyrics are about workers’ autonomy. The autonomy of the worker increased in this era. Capital reacted, however, to the demands of the emergent class subjectivity in the 1960s and 1970s which had demanded an end to the regimented boredom of the production line, as well as for sexual autonomy and self-expression. It transformed the demands into new regimes of labour. Work became more precarious, profitable and destructive and the gendered dimensions of work were also subject to change, as will be seen later in ‘9-5’ and ‘Bills’. ‘Piss Factory’ started off as a poem rather than spoken song and Rimbaud is a dominant presence. Explicitly following Rimbauldian philosophy within this, Patti Smith takes up language as performative in order to enlist the audience into new ways of listening. ‘Piss Factory’ re-describes possibility and desire in a Fordist context, and uses punk aesthetic to undermine the ideology of factory work as holding any inherent value. The song suggests instead that resistance comes through an assertion of oneself as an embodied political subject.

In “Rimbaud and Patti Smith: Style as Social Deviance”, Carrie Jaures Noland (1995) discusses nineteenth-century poet Rimbaud’s influence on the radical French movement of the 1960s that is often linked to the first incarnations of punk, the Situationists. She relates the presence of a combative counter-cultural rock music tradition in punk to poetry, and Rimbaud especially. In her discussion of Patti Smith, Lucy O’Brien cites key Situationist activists Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman’s doctrine that ‘The discoveries of modern poetry could provide the blueprint for countercultural activity, especially, if not exclusively, in areas

---

traditionally foreign to high culture.’319 ‘Piss Factory’s’ lyrics ‘Me and Rimbaud together in
the bowels of a Piss Factory’ are an identification of Patti Smith’s music and poetry with both
the state themes of Rimbaud’s poems, and the conceptions of verbal art they embody. Rimbaud’s poems, Noland explains in detail, are about the valorisation of forms of verbal art that use noise and chaos as synaesthesia for both a linguistic practice and a phenomenological model. Rimbaud uses metaphors that suggest the transgression of the phenomenological order through the transfer of attributes associated with sight to ear, and vice versa. Synaesthesia was Rimbaud’s rhetorical means for figuring a ‘travail nouveau’ or ‘nouvelle harmonie’ as means of escape from the cultural and linguistic institutions that could only guarantee the persistence of old forms.320 ‘Piss Factory’s’ poem documents the miseries of Patti Smith’s job in a non-union factory following her graduation from high school in 1964. At the factory she took refuge not only in the words of Rimbaud’s *Illuminations* (1886), but also in the image of his ‘defiant and restless faceless’ which she had taped to a pipe in the factory.

Patti Smith stated in an interview with the journalist Lisa Robinson in 1976 that ‘I’m starting to learn about sound as opposed to linear motion with language. It’s like pumping blood into words.’321 She testifies to the Rimbaudian transgressive aesthetic as is in evidence from the alliterative ‘p’s in the opening lines of the song, ‘Sixteen and time to pay off/ I got this job in a piss factory inspecting pipe.’ The lyrics immediately draw you into a recognisable situation, repetitive labour, and poetically heighten it, whilst also revealing that it is to be a song about desire and liberation. The music merges with the words to disarticulate the socially constructed systems of thought that Patti Smith feels in the curtailing effects of capitalist production. Reflecting on the stultifying effects of repetitive labour, she uses repetition as literary technique throughout and expresses it in two voices. First, in her own ‘Had to earn my dough had to earn my dough’ and then those of her co-workers as they try to put her down, ‘You ain’t going nowhere, you ain’t going nowhere’. As Whiteley says, her music is characterised by ‘Aural puns, repetition and intensive vocal energy’ and it is this which ‘forces the listener into a different way of listening.’322 ‘Piss Factory’ transgresses the effects

of capitalist conditioning until she announces finally in the last lyrics that ‘I got something to hide here called desire/ And I will get out of here/ And I will travel light/ Oh, watch me now’.

Pointing to the deadening effects of repetitive labour (capitalism), Patti Smith pre-empts what Marx foresaw: increased automation would mean difficulty in finding new ways to put people to work and therefore to control them socially. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the expropriation of surplus labour unified working class experience in the workplace. In the twenty-first century automation, immaterial labour, and globalisation alter the global economy and hollow out the job markets. Un-employment and under-employment, along with ‘zero hour’ contracts in the UK, and generalised precarity, have become normal and normalised. Further automation is possible, and, as part of a ‘world without work’, desirable but currently this is a stalling process due to an excessive supply of cheap labour. That is, labour coming from low-income countries, hyper-exploited prison labour and unwaged reproductive labour are all cheaper for capitalism than investing in new machines. These contemporary processes can be traced back to the cultural and political climate at the time of ‘Piss Factory’s’ release, and to the fear identified by Fisher that people would become ‘hippie’ on increasing scales. New forms of anxiety production working were developed to push to an ideology of work as holding an inherent dignity that even those that are not in work must suffer. Listening to ‘Piss Factory’, especially on the immediate impact of release, conceivably transforms feelings of alienation into non-capitalised structures of feeling; as the listener joins Patti Smith to revel in the illicit thrill of anti-work subjectivity, undermining the belief of capitalist factory managers that there is inherent value to labour.

‘9-5’

Nine to five, yeah they got you where they want you/ there’s a better life and you think about it don’t you/ it’s a rich man’s game, no matter what they call it/ and you spend your life/ puttin’ money in his wallet.

As the punk attitude of the mid-twentieth century dissipated and there became an era of high capitalist realism (though before neoliberalism accelerated) Dolly Parton released ‘9-5’, a pop song which would become culturally hegemonic. Unlike most other popular music genres at the time, women made great strides in the country music industry. As O’Brien states, ‘A powerful and autonomous section of the music business as a whole, country has often influenced and crossed over into pop, creating performers who straddle both spheres, such as
Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette and ‘Little Miss Dynamite’. Dolly Parton’s biggest hit, ‘9-5’ remains a pop song that one might expect to hear at an office party or as a mobile phone ringtone. ‘9-5’ is, like ‘Piss Factory’, a clear iteration of an anti-work politic. The ‘feel good’ song embodies a desire to escape the affective, physical and mental straightjacket of waged labour.

Want to move ahead/ But the boss won’t seem to let me in/ I swear sometimes that man is out to get me.

‘9-5’ was released in 1980, the year that Ronald Reagan was elected to President and thus just preceding the onslaught of neoliberal reforms he would unleash. In the UK and US in the 1980s Reagan and Thatcher oversaw the deregulation of financial services, attacked the trade unions (and the workplace rights that their presence had come to represent) and thus actively targeted the working class. In turn, Dolly Parton’s 9-5 world gave way to the twenty-first century ‘world of work’ which is yet more affective and atomised (and no longer definable by the mass factory). It is precarious and lacking the basic representations that trade unions had brought in. The gendered division of labour as seen in the lyrics ‘boss man’, became the demand that not only does the worker do the job, but they also emotionally identify with it.

The lyrics pre-empt the subsumption of the labour process into the subjectivity of the worker. Kathi Weeks and Silvia Federici take autonomist social theory into the twenty-first century, and explain how the obligation to work in dreary industrial Fordist factory jobs is now transformed into a post-Fordist capitalism, in which the creation of new arenas of profitability has spurred the gendered colonisation of the lifeworld. In The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries (2011), Weeks traces the 1990s postmodern critique of consumer culture and the colonisation of life by the markets, to the twenty-first century colonisation of life by work. ‘Wages for Housework’ revised gender-blind Marxism in the 1970s and acknowledged the impact of modes of labour on subjectivity by showing how uncompensated labour shapes what it means to be female. Weeks moves the autonomist analysis on again from the impact of modes of labour on subjectivity, to show that labour is itself a process of subjectification. A prime example is the feminized all-smiles service industry, where seeming to love your work is a fundamental part of your job. In Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle (2012) Fedirici makes an unambiguous political response when she states, ‘A woman can do any job without

323 O’Brien, She Bop, 195.
losing her femininity, which simply means that no matter what you do you are still a cunt.'  

In these texts Fedirici and Weeks stake out alternative critical strategies that hang on the distinction between life and work in order to develop visions of what subjects could become in contrast to what they are. Post-capitalist musicology can be designed for co-productive context that join in with these projects.

They let you dream/ Just watch ‘em shatter

Parton sang from the perspective of a woman learning to survive through her own resourcefulness, and as O’Brien says, she did so from within the conditions of the country music industry which ‘expected its women to be sweet, versatile and, above all, non-complaining’. The lyrics are a powerful example of worker’s subjectivity and with ‘9-5’, an effective class analysis of the work-place. Thus, Dolly Parton renounces the boss man and encapsulates the white-collar relationships of workers to work in the class composition of labour as it began to be defined by neoliberalism. It is both ‘beyond gender’ and runs counter to the ‘American Dream’. The lyrics undermine the ideology that work benefits the workers and demonstrates the divergence between the American Dream and reality as gendered. Dolly Parton describes how despite her ‘service and devotion’ to the company, a ‘fair promotion’ is the decision of a single manager (who is always a man) and that she therefore feels trapped between her working routine and allotted position in the company. ‘9-5’ is therefore a concise depiction of the need to supersede capitalism as a feminist endeavour.

‘Bills Bills Bills’

Destiny’s Child was one of the 1990s R&B girl groups to achieve superstardom. In 1995 they signed to Columbia and hip-hop Fugees impresario Wyclef Jean helped them to develop their ‘trademark staccato, rhythmic style.’ As O’Brien goes on to describe, the group had a ‘trademark sound of bass rhythms, baroque samples and daring vocal harmonies’. She includes them in her category of ‘R&B rebels’ as those that risked rewriting the rules on soul music. Destiny’s Child released ‘Bills’ at the height of an unprecedented economic boom that was a consequence of the post-1979 financialisations and de-regulation in which credit

---

325 O’Brien, She Bop, 268.
326 Ibid, 313.
327 Ibid, 314.
became unsustainably cheap and house prices were at an all-time high. Within these processes capitalism is a system of social reproduction that will only transform itself when the current situation is no longer tenable and thus it began to incorporate aspects of the mid-twentieth century’s radical politics into the facades of bourgeois liberalism. Elements of second-wave feminism that had been undermining expectations of women and their perceived role were appropriated, and the promises of collectivity neutralised.

Women’s liberation movements expanded the category of the personal to include political structures. In the following passage from *Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty*, Silva (2015) comments, from a contemporary perspective, on the disintegration of the collectivity that had been engendered by the rallying slogan ‘the personal is political’ in the 1960s by neoliberal politics. In feminist social movements,

> …self-awareness, or naming one’s problems, was the first step to radical collective awareness. For this generation, it is the only step, completely detached from any kind of solidarity; while they struggle with similar, and structurally rooted problems, there is no sense of ‘we’. The possibility of collective politicisation through naming one’s suffering is easily subsumed within these larger structures of domination because others who struggle are not seen as fellow sufferers but as objects of scorn.  

Fisher summarises a key conclusion made by Silva as a part of this project, that:

> In conditions where they could not depend on much outside themselves, the independence they were forced to develop was both a culturally-validated achievement and a hard won survival strategy which they were reluctant to relinquish.  

From this perspective it is possible to see that the Beyoncé Knowles-led chart hit ‘Bills’ contains lyrics that are indicative of these moves to a focus instead on personal responsibility, individuals and choice

> You’re slowly making me pay for things/ Your money should be handling/ And now you ask to use my car/ Drive it all day and don’t fill up the tank/ And you have the audacity/ To even come and step to me/ Ask to hold some money from me/ Until you get your check next week.

---

329 Fisher, “No Romance Without Finance.”
These lyrics suggest relationships between heterosexual men and women as increasingly between atomistic individuals isolated from collective experience. Though there aren’t any sex signifiers to rule out a subversive queer reading, heard as the voice of heterosexual women in the 1990s, they point to the nightmare of both waged work (to pay the bills) and social reproduction (to reproduce the workers). The rights of women to enter the workplace are granted, but with the consequence that they have to work harder. Representative of the double-shift (first at work and then at home) perhaps it can be heard as a reflection of the shift to meritocracy and individualist advancement in which there develops a feminism that has little to do with collective emancipation. Feminists in the mid-twentieth century had hoped to prefigure a world in which democracy and social solidarity went hand in hand with collective gender emancipation. Yet the lyrics, ‘A baller, when times get hard, I need someone to help me out/ Instead of a scrub like you, who don’t know what a man’s about’ released into the mainstream of popular consciousness at the end of the century invoke the critique of the family wage but (to use Nancy Fraser’s words) harness ‘the dream of women’s emancipation to the engine of capital accumulation’. The cultural effects expressed by ‘Bills’ are suggestive of the soft hegemonic cultural successes of capitalist realist ideology. Fisher argued that those seeking to dismantle the effects of this era must be creative and optimistic, however, about finding potential for counter hegemonic politics - even in what could be regarded as reactionary cultural expression.

*Pop music as propaganda*

In this light I will bring Adorno further into the discussion and distinguish the anti-capitalist musicology of this thesis from an Adornian approach to ‘pop’ or ‘popular’ music. In “On the Fetish Character of Music” Adorno writes that music ‘inhabits the pockets of silence that develop between people molded by anxiety, work and undemanding docility’. He argues that what we might now call ‘pop’ songs (to indicate a large subsection of ‘mainstream’ popular music) rather than Adorno’s ‘popular’ music, appear individual and different, is part of the illusions of capitalism that maintain ideological control. Adorno was famously scathing about pop music and its role in mass culture. He drew his analyses from classic Marxist renditions of exchange value that, as discussed in ‘The Musicological Framework’, do not

---


offer music a place. Adorno saw popular culture as mere commodity. It possesses value from which the music industry produces profit, but little else. Those who listen to pop music are implicated in this absence of worth at the reception end in their role as consumers. Unlike the music he perceived to be erudite and worthy of ‘expert listening’, the industrialised nature of popular music production and commodity process for Adorno meant that listening was necessarily less careful, and enjoyment more simple. Indeed, that the pleasure derives simply from familiarity.332 His politics imply that listening to pop music as recreational activity is thus debased, because it allows for the control of capital to be determined by a passivity that, in turn, makes listeners less likely to agitate for power through social unrest. Rather, this thesis argues, it is better to take an ‘optimism in the act’ approach. Thus, if people ‘feel good’ listening to pop music (whether it be Dolly Parton or Destiny’s Child) this affect is valuable to post-capitalist movement and affect. Whether or not pop music can naturalise moral imperative and thereby work in a support capacity for capitalism, it is not sufficient to argue that this is because of numb passivity at the reception end. This idea poses affective politics as formulated solely in a world of rarefied abstraction and in the mind.

Adorno did not think that politics could be read from artistic intent or assumed to be inscribed in lyrics, but that pop music performed its pacifying functions – as propaganda – in pleasure. He felt that art should confront its audience with the ugliness of the world. His arguments in “On the Social Situation of Music” suggest that music is like critical theory ‘under the same obligation as theory to reach out beyond the current consciousness of the masses’.333 Music should not ‘preach to the saved’ but provide an uncompromised aesthetic.334 Early popular musicology saw similar Marxist arguments, and approaches to pop songs as though they were exclusively forms of propaganda. These theorists sought to understand the domination of capitalism, for example, in the swaths of songs about fantasies of love and romance, and musicologists therefore saw pop music’s central themes as being about the patterns of sexual relations that are felt to be the most appropriate for capitalist society. There is a continued focus in the next sections on questions of how music operates within systems of compliance and resistance, but they are focused on subversion over domination.

---

334 Ibid.
Feeling Good

More specifically, these sections explain that music is an embodied aesthetic, with relative autonomy, that creates forms of political experience by making us feel things that we would not otherwise feel. As Jameson (1991) outlines in *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, mass culture and consumerism have conservative functions but they nevertheless arouse utopianism, and so the presentation of social fantasies is risky, because the maintenance of hegemonic ideologies can never be complete. It is a line of thought that complements Holloway (2016) when he states that, if

\[
\text{Capital is all the time saying to us faster, faster, then it inevitably comes up against our insubordination, our nonsubordination, our incapacity to subordinate ourselves sufficiently for the requisites of capital ... the constant acceleration that the existence of capital implies comes up against this force of nonsubordination or insubordination.}^{335}
\]

This quotation from Holloway iterates the autonomist perspective that the crises of capitalism are the results of the force of workers; and that this includes their incapacities and refusals to subordinate themselves sufficiently to the dynamic of capital. The hidden processes of non-subordination are that they have insubordinate effects and, in developing this idea, my position is, like Holloway’s, distinguished from the historical tendency in autonomist social theory to theorise class struggle from the viewpoint of open struggle. No matter how ideologically complicit music may appear to be, in the pleasure and individualism of pop, people can be seen to have ‘enchanting’ experiences in which they are, on some level, actively refusing to subordinate themselves totally to the mundanity of work, to capital.

In 1989, in the essay “Why do songs have words?” Frith begins by looking at the ‘tiny’ field of popular music sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s, and how they traced the American mood in pop music with popular ideology, but focused exclusively on song words.\(^{336}\) He uses this point of departure to discuss ‘lyrical realism’ and theories of a direct relationship between pop lyrics and society (in the day-dream as saleable commodity, for example). Noting that one might trace paradigms of femininity in pop, he turns to content analysts and reflection theorists who see pop music as little more than a reflection of the sentimental ideology of capitalism, representative of the patterns of social relations that are felt to be the most appropriate for the social order. Frith’s argument is that it is, as argued in this chapter

\(^{335}\) Holloway, *In, Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 14.

already, not a question of equating the popularity of pop music with agreement over the lyrical content. Rather, it is a question of equating enjoyment with fantasy and the imagination, which is different for different audiences.

The once exclusive focus on pop lyrics was not surprising, Frith explains, because until the mid-1960s British and American popular music was dominated by Tin Pan Alley, the New York centre of the popular music industry, whose values derived from its origins as a publishing centre. The concentration on the lyrical themes of pop music was therefore a reflection of the way in which songs were packaged and sold, ‘Most of these songs did, musically, sound the same; most lyrics did seem to follow measurable rules’ and this confirmed what analysts took for granted, ‘that it was possible to read back from lyrics to the social forces that produced them’.337 The first systematic analysis of pop song words by J.G. Peatman (1942-1943) was influenced by Adorno, and so it stressed lyrical standardization, stating that all successful pop songs were about romantic love and could be classified under one of three headings (‘frustrated in love’, is one example). Frith states that for Peatman, therefore, ‘this narrow range reflected the culture industry’s success in keeping people buying the same thing, but most subsequent content analysts, writing with a Cold War concern to defend American commercial culture, have taken pop market choices seriously’.338 It was in an ideological sense, then, that the arguments began to be developed that pop song lyrics reflect the emotional needs of their times. It is in this context that the history of the American ‘mood’ began to be traced through shifting themes in pop songs, and there was a stress on the importance of pop songs as a record of new sexual mores.339 The general idea became that songs can be read as examples of the popular ideology, and the emotional needs of the public. Frith’s position is that the theoretical assumptions at play are inadequate and he states that content analysts are not innocent readers. The flaws in their method are obvious.

For a start, they treat lyrics too simply. The words of all songs are given equal value; their meaning is taken to be transparent; no account is given of their actual performance or their musical setting. This enables us to code lyrics statistically, but it involves questionable theoretical judgement: content codes refer to what the words describe – situations and states of mind – but not to how they describe, to their significance as language. Even more problematically, these analysts tend to equate a song’s popularity with public agreement with its message – the argument is that songs reflect the beliefs and values of their listeners.340

337 Ibid, 77-78.
338 Ibid, 78.
339 Ibid.
340 Ibid, 79.
Frith’s next argument is that these lyrical realist interpretations of lyrics as a form of ideological expression are not suited to the mainstream of mass music, although they can be with ‘folk’ forms of music (country music, blues, soul) where there is a more obvious ‘real closeness’ with their consumers. In these genres it is more conceivable that lyrics could be taken as a popular expression of need and Frith’s discussion thus becomes about the extent to which there is a direct relationship asserted ‘between a lyric and the social or emotional condition it describes and represents’. Folk song studies, for example, assume that folk songs are a historical record of popular consciousness; but for Frith there is still the important question of whose ideology is reflected in such definitions.

He goes on to explain that all comparisons of lyrical realism (versus the lyrical banality of pop) assume that songs differ in their effects in ways that the effects can be read off ‘good’ and ‘bad’ words. Such that, ‘For mass culture critics ... the problem of pop is that fans treat all songs as if they were real and have a false view of life accordingly’. This is a suggestion that Frith finds bemusing. The lyrical realists position, that there are ‘corrupting consequences’ to the (lyrical banality of the) hit parade, is taken up by Marxist critics in their accounts of pop’s ‘class function’. Frith provides the example of Richard Hoggart’s position that ‘real needs to dream are being satisfied by debilitating thin fantasies, concepts of well-being defined in terms of conformity’. Such approaches see pop songs as a form of propaganda. The following quotation from Hans Eisler on ‘entertainment music’ is another sharp illustration of pop rendered as such. For Eisler, it expresses

…a mendacious optimism that is absolutely unjustified, a flat pseudo-humanity, something like “Aren’t we all?” a stuffy petit-bourgeois eroticism to put you off. Feeling is replaced by sentimentality, strength by bombast, humour by what I would call silliness. It is stupid to the highest degree.

Frith’s scepticism comes down to how these reflections rely on pop lyrics, yet are apparently ignorant to how the same music can be used in different ways by different audiences. In making this point he goes back to 1950 when David Riseman pointed out that ‘the same or virtually the same popular culture materials are used by audiences in radically different ways and for radically different purposes’ and follows it with Norman Denzin’s argument at the

---

341 Ibid, 82.
342 Ibid, 80.
343 Richard Hoggart, in Frith, “Why do Songs have Words?”, 81.
344 Hans Eisler, in Frith, “Why do Songs have Words?” 82.
345 David Riseman, in Frith, “Why do Songs have Words?” 89.
end of the 1960s that pop audiences only listened to the beat and the melody, the sound of a
record, and so, the ‘meaning of pop’ was ‘the sense listener’s made of songs for themselves;
this could not be read off lyrics as an objective ‘social fact’’.\textsuperscript{346} Of his own work in the 1970s,
Frith states that he ignored lyrical analysis altogether, assuming simply that the meaning of
music ‘could be deduced from its users’ characteristics’.\textsuperscript{347} It remains the case that, for him,
lyrical content cannot be explained with reference to consumer ‘moods’. Regardless, Frith
shows that the lyrical banality of pop music cannot be defended with the line of argument (as
per Riseman) that ‘nobody listens to the words anyway’. As Frith says, ‘Popular music is a
song form; words are a reason why people buy records; instrumental hits remain unusual’\textsuperscript{348}
and so, in conclusion, whilst people may not listen to most pop songs as ‘messages’ there
remains the question of ‘why do songs have words?’ How do song words ‘banal words,
unreal words, routine words’ function?\textsuperscript{349} An answer lies in lyrical songs as the sign of a
voice. As Frith explains:

A song is always a performance and song words are always spoken out, heard in someone’s accent.
Songs are more like plays than poems; song words work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning
not just semantically, but also as structures of sound that are direct signs of emotion and marks of
character. Singers use non-verbal as well as verbal devices to make their points – emphasis, sighs,
hesitations, changes of tone; lyrics involve please, sneer and commands as well as statements and
messages and stories.\textsuperscript{350}

These comments on performing conventions can make sense of how people can enjoy
lyrically complex music (such as, for example, Bob Dylan’s) even when they do not speak or
understand the language. Performance constructs a sense of both the singer and ourselves as
listener, because it is their task to make a public performance a private revelation; ‘It’s not
just what they sing, but the way they sing it that determines what a singer means to us and
how we are placed, as an audience, in relationship to them’.\textsuperscript{351} Pop lyrics open language up to
interpretation in performance, and so different pop forms (disco, punk, country, rock) will
‘engage their listeners in different narratives of desire’.\textsuperscript{352} Words and music work differently
for different types of popular music and audience and, having gone beyond the arguments of
lyrical realists and content analysts, Frith argues that pop consciousness depends on the use
of the voice to open up identity. His conclusion resonates with the discussion of ‘Bills’ earlier

\textsuperscript{346} Frith, ‘Why do Songs have Words?’ 89.
\textsuperscript{347} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{348} Ibid, 90.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{350} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid.
in the chapter and the central current to the thesis – music has an unconditional aesthetic freedom and relative autonomy. It is ‘that song words matter most, as words, when they are not part of an auteur-ial unity, when they are still open to interpretation – not just by their singers, but by their listeners too.’ From here lyrics can be related, instead, to how different people use the same music to experience and imagine different sorts of community. Politically, it is a matter of searching, optimistically, for the significance of the emotional effects that music performs on subjectivity (individual, collective, dynamic). In this sense it is the same point of theoretical departure from which one could question why we enjoy music with lyrics about people’s suffering.

Richard Middleton writes that, popular music, as can be seen in its modes of performance and reception,

most frequently requires by its very nature a group of individuals to communicate either among themselves or with another group, and thus most popular music and dance has an intrinsically collective character not shared by the visual and verbal arts.

Different narratives are bound to appear from the same song for different listeners and groups of listeners in different eras. Indeed, there is an anarchy to listening and one might add, in this light, that pop music without lyrics (whilst rare), or lyrics without overt politicized reference, cannot therefore be indicative of an apolitical character. The same words, the same tune, the same noise, can be performed and heard by different people in different ways. ‘Bills’ could, to my mind, conceivably be performed with different techniques, genre codes or conventions for the articulation of feeling in which it is possible to hear it as a release of political anger; a rejection of an era of deflating consciousness by neoliberalism. In any case, it would be misguided to argue that Destiny’s Child work in support capacity for the capitalistic cultural hegemony of liberal feminism because the lyrics do indicate the need to reject the ideological sentimentality that separates out paid work from social reproductive labour.

The pleasure of ‘pop’ music is that we can ‘feel’ tunes, and they are performed in the imagination. What is at issue, that mass culture critics sidestep, is fantasy. To respect music that one may find at some level ideologically objectionable is to have respect for the social

353 Ibid, 93.
354 Richard Middleton, Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 74,
roles of music and to allow for the role of ‘feeling good’ in expanding and transforming imaginative capacities. Music fosters emotional resilience and can enable a sense of change within the lived experience of music that might not feel achievable in the real world. In some sense music thus changes tangible reality in, for example, cultivating habits of thinking. Radical politics can take strength and inspiration from cultural forms that promote feelings of collective joy.

* * *

It is neither necessary nor desirable to conceive of class composition in ways that subordinate feminism to class, or vice versa. Thought and language are embodied processes, so it does not make sense to talk about music, emotion or affect in purely abstract terms of the mind. Feminism rejects the Cartesian distinction between mind and body, because this is the binary upon which patriarchal subordination is predicated. The body is subjugated to the mind and regarded as indifferent to signification (and thus immaterial) because patriarchy reduces the meaning of the body to that which can be attributed to it by the consciousness of the mind. Hence, as seen in both Butler and Patti Smith’s feminism, there is an insistence on the need not to figure the body as mute facticity and to enable readings, and listenings, of sex and gender that see them as the violence done to reason and to emotion, by virtue of separating the two along sexed lines. Feminism is necessarily invested in rethinking politics and performance from a place other than the written word. Performance studies provides theoretical lenses for historical analyses of ‘performance’ practices and thus address the schism between literary and embodied cultural practice that excludes forms of embodied knowledge from analysis. Diana Taylor captures the reach of this point when she states that ‘Western culture, wedded to the word, whether written or spoken, enables language to usurp epistemic and explanatory power. “Performance studies” allows us to take seriously other forms of cultural practice as both praxis and episteme’.355

Political linguist George Lakoff reappraises the role that metaphors play in the social and political lives of human beings. Metaphor is traditionally seen within Western scientific traditions as a purely linguistic construction, but Lakoff shows that metaphors are primarily conceptual constructions that are embodied, and are thus central to the development of thought. Indeed, that the development of thought has been the process of developing

metaphors. The following brief discussion of Lakoff’s work supports the conceptualisation of ‘feeling good’ as enabling people to feel empowered by enhancing their capacity for productive relationships with others.

Concepts of morality arrive by conceptual metaphor, because metaphor is significantly constitutive of emotion. Demonstrating that the conceptual is inseparable from the emotional (and vice versa) is the basis of arguments made by Lakoff to insist that (and how) affect is about well-being and morality. As he states, ‘The metaphorical concepts that define the various forms of morality arise from the recurrent relations between well- and ill-being on the one hand, and everyday experiences on the other.’ Primary metaphors such as Affection is Warmth and Anger is Heat occur all over the world. These ways of thinking metaphorically are decomposable into embodied metaphor in terms of the brain’s reward system. Lakoff explains how it is possible to predict the bidirectionality of metaphors across the world because, from the perspective of brain circuitry, ‘It’s the same, if not necessarily the same circuitry, it’s the same type of circuitry’.

There is brain circuitry that releases hormones in certain brain regions that we experience as ‘affect,’ either positive or negative. This neural system has to do with achieving goals and maintaining normal homeostasis. It determines when you feel good or bad – when you have a sense of well-being or ill-being.

The brain circuitry for positive and negative affects connects to morality and well-being because it is bidirectional with the body. Lakoff therefore shows (not dissimilarly to Frith) that we are not ‘stuck’ compartmentalising our thoughts and feelings into the boundaries of language, because language is determined by our thoughts and feelings. At the same time, his explanations also show that we cannot just think anything, only what our embodied mind permits.

Politics are emotive, and anti-capitalist politics articulate capitalism as evolving social relations that are un-dignifying and cause pain and anger. It is not necessary to shock audiences into the awareness that something is wrong with capitalism because we are already affectively aware of the problems. Anti-capitalists should look to expand on the kinds of thinking that help to articulate the wrongness of capitalism through the possibilities inherent

---

357 The reason it is not Warmth is Affection is, as Lakoff explains, because the brain is always computing temperature, but not always computing affection.
359 Ibid.
within our awareness of it: that is, to work with the rage, pain and mundanity caused by capitalism, and not simply explain it. As a space in which the normative rules of the everyday do not apply, music has unpredictable affective responses. Yet, from the perspective of the brain’s reward system and circuitry, it would seem that whilst the ‘feel good’ affects of pop music might not touch everyone, when they do, it will be in a similar neural sense. Bearing this in mind, non-subordination is central to subverting capitalism because non-subordinate processes become active in further transformations of consciousness. This is pertinent given, as Kassabian puts it, identity is the trace of affect, and affect is about well-being and morality. A post-capitalist world will be free of identities shaped and distorted by capital and it will be won by looking widely, and optimistically, for what and how affect and identities are shaped in, against and (and in the interests of superseding) capitalism.

Against the powerful pressures of the habitual ways of thinking that characterise some leftism, William Connolly (2006) makes the declaration that: thinking works ‘in the layered corporeality of cultural beings’ and ‘bounces in magical bumps and charges across zones marked by differences of speed, capacity and intensity’.

Thinking should not be thought of as subsumed by representation and knowledge because it is creative (as well as representative). In Connolly’s words, ‘its creativity is aided by the fact that the process of thinking is not entirely controlled by the agents of thought.’ Pop music that makes people ‘feel good’ can, when rendered as non-subordination, be understood in experimental terms. ‘Feeling good’ re-educates by convincing bodies to adopt different attitudes (antithetical to the rage and pain of capitalism) that the imagination transforms or entertains as belief. ‘Feeling good’ produces new affective relations with the world (optimism in the act) that need not augment the perceived ideological codes of lyrical content. This is in the advice Gibson-Graham provide in the following lines:

We can work in the conscious realm to devise practices that produce the kind of embodied, affect-imbued pre-thoughts that we want to foster. And in the daily rehearsal of these practices we can hope that they will become part of our makeup, part of a cell memory that will increasingly assert itself without resort to a conscious calling.

Pleasure and individualism, in these lights, are not the products of capitalism’s individualisation of collective problems. Working the trap of performativity in the conscious realm to produce embodied, affect-imbued pre-thoughts can allow for the possibilities of

361 Ibid.
post-capitalism that do not neutralise the potentially disruptive and unpredictable effects of desire in an age of neoliberal individualism.

* * *

What remains of this chapter continues the lines of enquiry followed so far, and concludes by suggesting the prefigurative processes that moved from Patti Smith to Pussy Riot across epochs bear conceptualisation as ‘punk performativity’. It is not so much a suggestion for future research, but demonstration of how the interests and arguments developed thus far might be further applied, using anti-capitalist musicology centred on political activity in the twenty-first century. Pussy Riot’s impact (in 2012) on both activist politics and scholarship (across the social sciences and humanities) was huge. The chapter suggests ‘self-valorisation’ and prefiguration are valuable conceptual lenses to look at the punk feminist collective through as they are able to take performativity into account.

**Self-Valorisation as punk performativity**

Self-valorisation’ is a translation of the Italian word *autovalorizzazione* appropriated from Marx and altered in meaning. The concept allows for a Marxist focus on experimentation. It contributes to autonomist transformations of Marxist theory and re-orientation of Marx’s original writings to focus on workers and subversion rather capital and domination. It has grown in meaning to describe various autonomies from capital, as well as all kinds of self-activity, in the constitution of society and human subjectivity. In Marx’s original writings the term refers to the self-valorisation of capital, ‘everything involved in its expanded reproduction’. This, as American scholar Harry Cleaver (1971) explains, is fundamentally the expanded reproduction of class relations. Nowadays it can refer to every element of that relation such that ‘Capital successfully ‘self-valorises’ when it is able to juggle/manage the class relationships at all points successfully to achieve the expanded reproduction of those relationships.’ ‘Self-valorisation’ has renewed meanings from autonomist theorists that discuss working class activity that carries within it

The basic positive, creative and imaginative reinvention of the world that characterised the ‘living labour’ that capital-the-vampire has fed on but which is always an autonomous power that has frequently recaptured capital’s controls and limitations and that will ultimately, hopefully, be powerful enough to break free completely and craft new worlds beyond capitalism.

---

364 Ibid.
365 Ibid.
In its expanded meaning, from the reproduction of capital to the autonomous self-development of the working class, the prefix ‘self’ need not (though equally can) denote individuals. Self-valorisation can be used to denote self-activity not just in individuals, but also (dynamic) groups and class that reaches beyond (reaction to) capital. The study of self-valorisation, as with the conceptual tool of prefiguration, is bound by its nature to include past forms that are destroyed, appropriated, or forgotten by capital but nonetheless provide tools with which to consider future-oriented politics in the present. By way of example, disco provided the template for successive waves of dance and pop music. It was a genre that grew out of a convergence of a number of subjugated groups in the 1970s – LGBT, black people, and women – it was mainly produced by and for the working class. It was a self-valorising genre. Self-valorisation can be applied to music experience to argue that music affects self-governance and autonomy in self-valorising processes that augment possibilities for collective autonomy.

Music is a performance of power. It creates counter-publics that act as sites for the transformations of society. The following quotation from Kathleen Hanna (singer with the American band Bikini Kill) captures the idea that it is in ‘self-valorisation’ that music’s distinctive powers can produce both community and social change.

> I like that music engages people’s bodies and can be simultaneously intellectually and physically stimulating. I also like that concerts create an immediate sense of community. I’ve found that the only way change occurs is if we taste it for moments and then seek to make it a part of our everyday. I guess that’s one reason I like working in the performing arts, to be able to create community instantly while exploring the power of the moment to go from horrible to glorious and back again depending on the performance locale and will of the crowd.366

In her ‘definitive history of women in rock, pop and soul’, O’Brien states that various female artists tried to push back the gender boundaries in popular music through the 1960s and 1970s ‘in the face of crushing supergroup ‘superiority’’.367 By the late 1970s an unexpected space opened up within which women were discarding rock’s language altogether. O’Brien says of Patti Smith in this era that,

> In identifying rock as a religious experience complete with a notion of ecstasy, working a crowd until they submit totally to the sensuality of just being, Smith articulated rock’s power with greater eloquence and authority than any man before her.368

367 O’Brien, She Bop, 131.
368 Ibid, 114.
The space created by women in punk proved, however, to be ‘both their inspiration and their nemesis’. The first wave of punk in Patti Smith’s time heralded less of a feminist grassroots change than anticipated. By the 1980s, as O’Brien observes, there was a submission of the scene to a few high profile and extremely determined individuals. Through the stultifying era of hard capitalist realism and into the 1990s, Viv Albertine, member of 1970s female punk outfit The Slits, remarked that ‘The whole climate changed in the ‘80s – music reverted back to a careerist option’. There was, as Albertine and O’Brien attest, a ten year gap until a new generation of bands ‘got political’ again, and women playing punk and rock became a form of direct action. It was ‘riot grrrl’ that became ‘the agent of revolution’.

Tobi Vail, Bikini Kill’s drummer, said of riot grrrl ‘For girls to pick up guitars and scream their heads off in a totally oppressive, fucked-up male-dominated culture is to seize power ... we recognise this as a political act’. Julia Downes writes from the UK of this new era that, as

An American import, riot grrrl used punk sounds, sight, and productions to challenge and resist the gender power relations of music subcultures. In this sense riot grrrl has been described as “an expansion of punk rock”.

Riot grrrl intentions were explicitly to disrupt gender power relations and encourage politicized participation in music cultures from girls and women. Downes explains how this worked against the hegemonies of punk culture as they stood. It is not, she says, that punk culture was essentially male, but that it was (or is) socially (re)produced as masculine. She writes that from the 1970s ‘Punk corporeal practices and sounds became vital sites for the construction, exploration, and consolidation of heterosexual masculinities’. As she explains, ‘despite women’s contributions and legacy in punk culture […] punk women’s resistance was constrained by hegemonic gender relations that leaked into punk subcultures. In the early 1990s, riot grrrl provided direct critiques of gender power relations within punk subcultures. These included fanzine-production sessions and weekly women-only meetings, and it ‘opened up possibilities for women to access and assert power without resorting to a simplistic repression of the feminine and valorisation of the

---

369 Ibid, 131.
370 Ibid, 160.
371 Viv Albertine, in O’Brien, She Bop, 161.
372 O’Brien, She Bop, 161.
373 Tobi Vail, in O’Brien, She Bop, 161.
375 Ibid, 207.
376 Ibid, 208.
Emphasising that riot grrrl collectively created ‘emotionally charged counterpublics in which to claim cultural autonomy and contest power’ Downes states that riot grrrl gigs ‘became crucial sonic sites for the production of catalytic moments that subverted the gender order and opened up possibilities for everyday cultural activisms.’

In the 1970s and 1990s, as this chapter has shown, punk (rock) and feminism opened up cultural spaces for the proliferation of women’s sub-cultural resistance. From Patti Smith to Dolly Parton to riot grrrl (and, arguably, Destiny’s Child) the gendered double standards were underwritten by self-valorising processes in music experience. Here, punk performativity.

The ontological connection music has to desire is therefore seen to self-valorise in the production of subjectivity. Whilst ‘self-valorisation’ will always be limited by the context in which it occurs, and some punk as well as pop may be perceived as instruments of political apathy, it is a means of interpretation to look for cultural spaces in which people ‘feel good’ enough, and empowered enough, for further transformations to occur. Self-valorisation as a post-capitalist lens of interpretation can acknowledge the inextricability of aesthetics and ideology, but without having to reduce aesthetics to ideology in ways that risk dismissing positive, transformative, effects that even the most unlikely cultural output may have.

Pussy Riot

It is as self-valorisation that one might argue that possibilities for disarticulating seamless performances of gender, as theorised by Butler in the 1990s, were realised in practice by Patti Smith in the 1970s. It can also be argued through drawing on ‘prefiguration’ and ‘self-valorisation’ that the early performance period of Patti Smith unleashed, impacted on and provided a utopianism for women in punk from which self-declared avant-garde dissidents Pussy Riot’s 2012 ‘Punk Prayer’ drew some of its (performative punk) strength. The following final sections of the chapter make this argument and also demonstrate that for both the Western reception to Pussy Riot, and the discipline of popular musicology; the apparatus that surrounds it serves to condition reception. In both instances, this is the Cold War. It is in this light that Nicholas Tochka thus advocates examinations of popular musicological

---

378 Ibid, 216.
discourses, analytical categories and research agendas to see how they have been shaped by ‘global regimes of knowledge and truth both before and after 1989’.

The English language name for the Russian feminist collective ‘Pussy Riot’ references the 1990s US born riot grrrl feminist punk movement: it thus frames ‘Pussy Riot’s’ image and politics for maximum transnational appeal. A project to provoke anti-Putin and anti-corporate awareness, agency and movement, Pussy Riot began with a variable membership united by the values of feminism, anti-authoritarianism and opposition to Vladimir Putin (though with opinions that range from anarchist to socialist and liberal left). Dominant representations of the women (across the UK and US) during their conviction, trial and imprisonment during 2012 ignored their anti-capitalist politics to place them instead in pre-existing narratives of liberal democracy and a complementing cultural logic of art as commodity that the collective did not promote.

The ‘Punk Prayer "Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away"’ is well known: a punk performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow in 2012; and a dissident spectacle that mobilised global public opinion by spotlighting local abuse and shaming the Russian State in condemning its actors. In Russia it worked as both spectacle, a symbolic disruption of order; and as antagonism, a disruption of the symbolic order. Two members of Pussy Riot suffered incarceration as a result of the YouTube clip. Pussy Riot intended in their methodology of ‘media raids’, to co-opt both local and international media networks into an intensification of their performance-based-activism. Before the ‘Punk Prayer’, members of Pussy Riot were active in anarch-art collective ‘Voina’. They had already been performing ‘media raids’ on Russia’s major political symbols, including a prison roof top, state museum and a judicial court, all of which were designed for dissemination via the internet. On the impact of the ‘Punk Prayer’ in “The Pussy Riot Complex: Entering a New Stage of Academic Research into a Viral Russian Controversy,” Yngvar Steinholt writes that

A few weeks before the activists entered the church and while tens of thousands of Russians were demonstrating against Putin’s return to the presidency, a video showing eight masked women with guitars, feminist flags, and purple stage smoke on the Red Square Lobnoe mesto began circulating among scholars with an interest in Russian contemporary culture.

---

Pussy Riot marked a fresh branch of Russian performance art ‘armed with punk and new media’. Five years on (and five short YouTube videos later), academic research is ongoing and covers the feminist collective’s addressing of ‘women’s rights; LGBT rights; police brutality; free speech; elite consumerism; the alliance of state, church and security apparatus’. Much of this research has some concern with the predominant simplifications of the events, and shows that there are ‘richer dimensions in Pussy Riot’s work than can be related to civic, human rights, democratic, and free speech activism in a strictly Western understanding of those terms’. That is, researchers are asking what is lost when Western cultural narratives take centre stage and apply logics of cultural mimesis to the Russian punks. Tochka is one such example and in “Pussy Riot, freedom of expression, and popular music studies after the Cold War” he argues that popular musicology ought to be looking at the ‘effects of liberal ideology, constructions of aesthetic-political value, protest and dissent’; and historicising them as ‘imbricated in a particular worldview that represents itself as humankind’s ‘natural’ condition’. Tochka examines the Anglo-American reception to the performance, detention, trial and conviction of three members of Pussy Riot. He demonstrates that vestigial ‘elements of a Cold War form of knowledge about not only the essential difference between ‘the East’ and ‘the West’, but also the political potentials of popular music’ endured in the response. In this light it is worth including a brief description on the ‘cultural Cold War’ from Frances Stonor Saunders, who explains that:

During the height of the Cold War the US government committed vast resources to a secret programme of cultural propaganda in western Europe [...] A central feature of this programme was to advance the claim that it did not exist [...] Its mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of ‘the American way’.

The Western reaction to Pussy Riot’s conviction catapulted the trial into Western public discourse. Officials at the White House and Downing Street, international organisations (including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) and a host of Western popular musicians released statements condemning the ‘heavy-handed overreaction to artistic expression’ of the Russian authorities’. The popular musicians taking part in these

382 Ibid.
383 Ibid, 395.
384 Tochka, “Pussy Riot, freedom of expression,” 309.
385 Ibid, 304.
387 Tochka, “Pussy Riot, freedom of expression,” 305.
reactions framed the group as members of a global “community of artists” bearing universal artistic rights and obligations” that “presumably” as Tochka notes “the supporters also deemed themselves to hold and exercise.” In a letter to UK newspaper The Times, Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker penned a letter signed by a number of peers that reads as a caricature of Cold War imbued liberal values.

We believe firmly that it is the role of the artist to make legitimate political protest and fight for freedom of speech [...] Dissent is a right in any democracy and it is entirely disproportionate that they face seven years in jail for what we consider a preposterous charge of ‘hooliganism motivated by religious hatred’.

Western commentators hardly go out of their way to support activists facing disproportionate prison sentences in their own countries. Nonetheless journalists, politicians and musicians fought to assert their belief in ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘the right to legitimate protest’. Tochka describes how the popular musician is, in this rhetoric, ‘A figure endowed with not only natural rights, but social obligations, “the artist” as defined here approached the classic liberal conception of the free-floating ‘intellectual as watchman’. A core pillar of modern liberal democracies, the notion of ‘freedom of expression’ – and Russia’s lack of this freedom – provided soft hegemonic evidence about the nature of the global order. In claims about the universality of the Russian women’s rights there was an aesthetic link made between ‘free expression’ and ‘free society’, yet this was ‘constructed as strictly coterminous with the English-speaking West’. The liberal response betrayed, for Tochka, two domains of knowledge. The first domain assumed a global order organised into distinct and mutually antagonistic spheres, ‘a Western one, defined by its freedoms; and a non-Western one, characterised by a deficit of freedom’. The second domain, closely related to the first, posited a ‘normative understanding of the popular musician as a rights-bearing expressive agent, and of the utility of pop music – especially the abrasive, explicitly political variety – in speaking ‘truth to power’. Each of these is redolent of an American Cold War ideology. On this point, the following lines from Stonor Saunders are helpful in guiding this discussion.

---

389 Including Johnny Marr, Pete Townsend, Martha Wainwright, Kate Nash, Corrine Bailey Rae and the Pet Shop Boys.
393 Ibid.
America’s spying establishment operated a sophisticated, substantially endowed cultural front in the West, for the West, in the name of freedom of expression. Defining the Cold War as a ‘battle for men’s minds’ it stockpiled a vast arsenal of cultural weapons: journals, books, conferences, seminars, art exhibitions, concerts, awards.

The individuals and institutions subsidised by the CIA were expected to perform as part of a broad campaign of persuasion, of a propaganda war in which ‘propaganda’ was defined as ‘any organised effort or movement to disseminate information or a particular doctrine by means of news, special arguments or appeals designed to influence the thoughts and actions of any given group’. The attribution of ‘freedom of expression’ to the women exemplified the insistence of commentators to situate the collective within a particular regime of ‘natural rights’ and artistic subjectivity. As Tochka says, however attractive the idea of the universality of individual rights to ‘artistic expression’ may be; the notion remains imbricated in the post-Cold War hegemony of a liberal democratic ideology. The universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the perceived final form of human government that infected the Cold War propaganda leading up to 1989 ascribed to Pussy Riot in 2012 the ‘grounding ideals, motivations and aspirations of liberal democratic thought’ and assumed the mantle of end-of-history triumphalism. The Cold War obligated the mutual and explicit construction of political and economic difference and this resurfaced in Western accounts of Pussy Riot. Hence, Tochka explains, the Cold War continues to shape ‘orders of value and truth, aesthetic regimes of meaning, beauty and agency’. The ‘freedom’ and political potentials of punk uncovered in the English-speaking reception of Pussy Riot were beholden to this pre-1989 legacy.

It is in the interests of popular musicology, Tochka explains, to observe that embedded within the Western reception to Pussy Riot was ‘punk’ rendered in Cold War era discourses, assumptions and truths. He asks how these universal knowledge claims about popular music and musicians affect Western popular musicological understandings about what popular music is and does, and ‘to what extent is the individual performer, a key unit of analysis in popular music studies, constructed as a rights bearing agent with a particular artistic subjectivity?’ Aesthetic and musical style provided the ‘key point articulating the women to an imagined post-national community characterised by its freedom’ and so punk in this context was presented as ‘exemplary of supranational forms of solidarity and the politics of

396 Tochka, “Pussy Riot, freedom of expression,” 308.
397 Ibid.
399 Ibid.
free expression’. Tochka’s conclusions are that the Cold War’s role in shaping popular music studies has yet to be analysed, but ‘might be understood as symptomatic of how significant [...] the notions of freedom, individual expression and political agency have been to popular musicology’s emergence and consolidation in the pre-1989 First World’. These ideas are beneficial to the kinds of enquiry informing, and that should inform, contemporary anti-capitalist musicology.

The assumption of liberal democratic rights to self-expression that posited a transnational solidarity around (what was perceived to be) shared identity politics and musical resistance, as Tochka writes, ‘located Pussy Riot’s statements within a political-economic regime the collective’s members themselves would not necessarily recognise’. Liberal democratic ideology functions as propaganda in international relations. In this context it assumes a form, as Stonor Saunders describes the cultural Cold War, in which the ‘most effective kind of propaganda’ is defined as ‘the kind where the subject moves in the direction you desire for reasons which he believes to be his own.’ From my perspective, the great moral principle of ‘freedom of speech’ has become a hegemonic position for political claim making in the West that the real freedom of speech would annihilate. ‘Freedom of speech’ can only have saliency when it expresses the freedom to articulate or perform ideas within the possibility that these ideas may have an impact. The endless invocation of ‘freedom of speech’ in response to Pussy Riot ignored and undermined the avant-garde dissidence that sought to enact counter-hegemonic power in performance, and not to describe it in free expression. The principle of ‘freedom of speech’ is, or should be, a right to challenge authority, and equate to more than the idea that all views are of equal worth.

In turn this, it could be argued, is why Pussy Riot experimented with the ethics of activist organisation by each wearing (and gaining some anonymity through) coloured balaclavas and bright block-coloured outfits for performance. Such a costume contains multiple messages: that it is not important if one member gets arrested, for example, because the overall purpose is the transmission of a unified idea that evokes a principle of universality, ‘we are all Pussy Riot’. Pussy Riot’s masks and costumes imply that identity is provisional and plastic. A study of Pussy Riot through this anti-identitarian lens complements in, against and beyond as a

---

400 Ibid, 309.
401 Ibid.
402 Ibid.
403 Stonor Saunders, The Cultural Cold War, 4.
model of provisional identity: not unified subjects, but a synthesised unity of individuals in which the ego is cancelled with masks - collective autonomy. Pussy Riot used aesthetics of collective autonomy to subvert the gender order with public spectacles of anger. This relates to the prefigurative politics of, in Downes’s phrase, the ‘expansion of punk rock’ and to the expansion of gender theory and one could trace these lines back directly through Butler, to Patti Smith and avant-gardism in terms of identity to suggest in ‘punk performativity’ how these figures counter-act the idea that power expresses itself through identity over political action.

**Conclusion**

Butler has a less individually oriented view of the theatrical orientations of gender than has perhaps been construed. Unorthodox gender performatives are explained by Butler as not merely an affront to patriarchy, but also as challenging the long-standing Western philosophical distinctions between appearance and reality. Butler and Patti Smith are from the same generations of the twentieth-century milieu of avant-garde and performance/performative art and the ‘play’ with language by critical theorists that, in the break with modernity, challenge these long standing distinctions. Avant-gardism eliminates the continuities of traditionally separate genres and (as seen through music) has complex performative feedback loops that do not have definite cultural limits. In riot grrrl, Pussy Riot, and Patti Smith there is a line to the avant-garde that reaches back over a century, and a primacy to process-oriented work for feminist artists that dissolves boundaries between: performing and not performing, activism and non-activism, insubordination and non-subordination.

There are countless research perspectives, however, from which to study Pussy Riot in anti-capitalist musicology. The performance-based-activism functions simultaneously on so many different registers that meaning is determined by one’s own priorities. One might, for instance, take Kassabian’s ‘distributed subjectivities’ and explain how the ‘Punk Prayer’ was indicative of a shift whereby political action can be transformed by the ubiquity of distributed communication in networked societies, and do so in order to ask more penetrating questions about affect and dynamic subjectivity. Such a project would centre around how the mass media is decaying and how, in the move away from these mass centralised networks (which resemble the political class), it is difficult to predict the effects of newly mediatising...
subjectivities In 2012 Pussy Riot exploited the rallying power of the media’s inability to handle the ideology of collectivity amidst this era of revolution in communication.

In this chapter, effectively centred around complex performative feedback loops, the concepts of punk performativity and feeling good have both allowed for a feminism seeking to broaden the field of representation that does not subordinate class to identity. They are also conceptual tools for post-capitalist oriented musicology to embrace pleasure and individualism in projects of consciousness transformation. Neoliberalism ‘speaks’ people because it is internalised by each and every individual and it is, therefore, not easy to combat or control. Political critiques are thus also a critique of ourselves, in that we constitute ourselves in a neoliberal environment and our subjectivity is transformed accordingly. To have our consciousness raised means that we are not ‘stuck’ in our feelings because they have been in some way related to structural causes or the outside word. To have consciousness raised is to move beyond everyday neoliberal conditioning.

Transcendence as the ‘beyond’ in music experience, as argued in the previous chapter, is a social function. In some pop music this can become an argument that processes of non-subordination should be understood from outside of the binary of ‘activism vs. non-activism’. Music opens up possibilities for everyday cultural activism, because self-valorising processes are enacted by music experience. Music is intersubjective and performative of power/desire. It is that makes the public a private revelation and these are the points to come through in the detailed account of Frith’s “Why do songs have words?” The argument being that the unconditional aesthetic freedom of music dances on the politically contested terrain of the future. Music therefore, on continuums of non-subordination to insubordination, performs an assertion of our subjective agencies as embodied political subjects, and through this music engenders collective autonomy. Punk, pop and feminism open up cultural spaces for the proliferation of women’s sub-cultural resistance because in music there is a prefigurative engagement of listeners that ties them into different narratives of desire. These affective levels open up language (linguistic, metaphorical, musical) to interpretation and temporary, performed and politicizing meaning.
CHAPTER FIVE

In and Against the State

The impact and legacy of N.W.A’s ‘Fuck Tha Police’ shifted domains of acceptability in discourse and dissent. Whereas previous chapters held a theme of consciousness deflation by neoliberalism, this chapter is more interested in consciousness inflation by reality-rap. The self-proclaimed reality-rap single ‘Fuck Tha Police’ was released in 1988. It is one of five best-selling singles taken from the debut album *Straight Outta Compton* of N.W.A (Niggaz Wi’ Attitude).

The State has the monopoly on deciding what types of violence are normal and this necessarily excludes its own structural violence, such as poverty and war. The law decides what kind of violence is legitimated and so any violation of that ethical realm, the realm of the *status quo*, will always be interpreted as violence. The chapter will continue to develop anti-capitalist musicology from the perspective of the following question. How do we remember periods of social unrest? It will unpick cultural dissonances in early hip-hop (reality-rap) and in ‘riots’ (violent uprising) to identify and show how the contradictions, unaccountability and hypocrisy of the State grow. It will end with the thesis’s final discussion of ‘collective autonomy’, continuing to outline it as ideological horizon for politically committed, socially conscious musicology. It does so in a discussion that counter-poses Butler’s politics with Guattari’s in order to emphasise in the final result that anti- and post-capitalist politics must possess a quality of ‘liveness’. Looking first at the legacy of N.W.A’s ‘Fuck Tha Police’ in ‘The Subject’ the chapter continues to build on the notion that music prefigures political movement in, against and beyond identity. ‘The Subject’ connects censorship and moralising around music to the de-politicization of riots by the media and Establishment. In so doing it reiterates the two central arguments to the thesis. Firstly, that the boundaries between music and politics are illusory and, secondly, that the political possibilities of music’s transcendent qualities warrant the attention of radical left politics. ‘The Individual’ will then posit Tupac as holding a revolutionary in, against and beyond communistic identity. Tupac’s swagger, confidence and anger are deliberate strategies through which his music functions as politics. Tupac ‘the individual’ places individual freedom in collectivity through his music and this continues to have transformative effects against the *status quo*. To make this case the section will look at the subversion of strategies
and mechanisms by which human life processes are managed by regimes of authority over knowledge, power, and processes of subjectification. As the last chapter in the thesis, attention is paid to possibilities for future research, nominally, following Tupac, Kendrick Lamar.

* * *

The State has legitimated itself since the modern era with the concept of the individual. As capitalism was further embedded, this legitimation came through a construction of the individual consumer subject. In the twentieth century there was something fundamentally wrong with leftist conceptions of revolution in the idea that it is possible to bring about the kind of radical change that is necessary through the State. The reason it is wrong is because the State is an imposed form of organisation that is hierarchical and excludes people from processes of self-determination. From the early sixteenth century there was, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, an increasing distance between church and State. In the evolution of the nation-state, rulers became increasingly free from the centralising dominance of the Holy Roman Empire. The developing rights and awareness of its citizens at this point meant that the State was incited to secure itself by stabilising its subjects in relation to itself and not to the church. Since the eighteenth century, and the revolutions in Europe and America, the nation-state has used the authority of universal interests to expropriate power over individual lives with the promises made by nation-states of the ‘good life’ increasingly made in exchange for the penetration of private lives by market forces. Contemporary capitalist nation-states deliver economic insecurity hand-in-hand with individualised anxiety, racialized and gendered inequity, and ecological disaster. Part of the State’s condition is that of suspended violence, because the perpetual threat of violence is the last bastion of order. To see the State only in its violent securing function, however, is limiting. It should not be thought of as a generalised ‘thing’ but a specific that changes. Political theory can ask where the State comes from, how it has derived, and how it will evolve.

Since the nineteenth century, anarchists have interrogated the relationships between means and ends to ask what it means to employ violence politically (and to exist) in and against the State. Born from, or rising out of, the French Revolution, anarchist philosophers began to argue that any significant uprising will always be betrayed by the re-establishment of State power. Anarchists saw that a new class of politicians prioritising a ruling class interest will

---

In the Trotskyist idea of permanent revolution and the rejection of socialism in one country, for example.
always be established. This means that any impactful resistance will carry a heavy cost for ordinary populations in the form of violence and terror, with professional armies and secret police deployed to maintain control.\textsuperscript{405} The anarchist belief in the need to abolish the State does not view the State as something that can be destroyed by ‘a revolution’. The nation-state is a condition and mode of human behaviour. Social relations can only be abolished with different behaviour. As German anarchist and leading theorist at the turn of the twentieth century, Gustav Landauer declared, ‘The state is not something that can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.’\textsuperscript{406}

Following its transformations since the nineteenth century, the Anglo-America nation-state now includes some (imperfect) modes of representation for the populace. These include universal literacy, suffrage, and improvements on the civil and legal rights and institutional arrangements around gender, race and worker’s rights. Into the twentieth century, a new kind of capitalism came about; a social democratic capitalism. An era of social democracy was won partly by struggle, but it was also necessary to capitalism as a mode of exchange. At this point in the mid-twentieth century it was more possible to live outside of the State and market relations. Neoliberalism, and the thirty years of unprecedented growth that closed the twentieth century in the global North, means that social reproduction now necessitates the State. The colonisation of life by work (and the lack of work), means it is no longer possible to live outside of market relations. The seizure of State power as political ambition is, therefore, not sensible but an increasingly superfluous aim under the conditions of globalised capitalism.

Since the nineteenth century the naturalisation of capitalist social relations (the normalisation of profit driven process) is mediatised. For the entrenchment of capitalism, the media embeds a distinct temporality through which an inversion of the relation of rationality permits the denial of legitimate reasons for, and pushing back, of conflict. The essay ‘Media Bias and the News Form: A Historical Critique’ from the activist organisation and ‘new media for a different politics’ Novara Media (author, Matt Bolton, 2016,) is briefly dissected here. These paragraphs help to further explicate how history’s projected future is one which derives from (or relies on) the perception of a one-dimensional society in which conflict is resolved; one that is rational and can be understood with a certainty of thought. The financially driven

emphasis on brevity in the development of journalism increasingly reduced media language
down to presuppositions developed in relation to the ‘objectivity’ of the news form. The
‘news’, the form of ‘news’ as journalism, and information-as-news is not a natural but a
historical product. Further, it is an ordering of history and an ubiquity of form imposed on
virtually everything that not only shapes understandings of history, but acts concretely upon
it. In this essay Bolton shows that the presuppositions of the news-form are those of society
as a whole. Bolton explains that ‘the news’ ‘stamped the journalistic processing of the world
in politically tendentious ways’ long before questions of media ownership were raised or bias
identified. The hegemony is able to persist in part through the implicit and ideological
insistence of self-contained immediacy and a self-fulfilling inevitability to a forward drive
implied by the personalised explanation of ‘the news’. Hence, as this thesis also insists, there
needs to be significant means for people to ‘feel’ political education elsewhere.

The media has a distinct form of temporality which Bolton depicts with Benedict Anderson’s
descriptions of ‘calendrical coincidence’ and ‘empty homogenous time’.
Different content
gains the status of ‘story’ on the same date, identical in form to those of the days or hours
before, to embed a distinct temporality. Identical fragments with no necessary content
continue in relentless progression as ‘empty homogenous time’ and this is fundamental to the
edifice upon which journalistic news is based. The narrative form of an ‘event’ aids
understanding to some situations (such as the details of police violence) but the generalised
application of the form to the whole of society necessarily leads to a prioritisation of
‘changes’ which can be positively identified as such, ‘over patterns of social relations which
do not emerge as isolated incidents but have become naturalised, subsumed within the ‘empty
background’ of everyday life. A violent murder in a rich neighbourhood is a story. The daily
grind of oppressive poverty is not.’408 The fixation on events (and the decisions of what
constitutes an event) leads to a fractured, one dimensional understandings of history. ‘News’
is a form that throws a moment of change into relief against a one-dimensional background;
the ‘event’ is represented as the driver of its own movement, as self-evident.

‘News’ is an ‘objective’ style of journalism that emerged in the aftermath of the defeat of the
Chartist movement in the 1850s, because class struggle temporarily retreated. Raymond

Williams (2016) writes that the mid-nineteenth century consequently saw ‘the consolidation of sentiment from the middle class upwards ... most newspapers were able to drop their frantic pamphleteering, and to serve this public with news and a regulated diversity of opinion.’ As Bolton expresses it, whilst the new focus on a straighter reporting of ‘facts’ was an improvement (on the previous forms of ‘faction’):

this supposedly new and more objective journalism was ultimately predicated upon an assumption that political conflict was now settled: the inherent contradictions of class society were erased from view. Disagreement might continue to exist, but was now reduced to questions of technical management of a society in which everyone was heading in the same direction, and where the fundamental relations were fixed in place.

Journalistic objectivity and the news-form are historically specific products based on presumptions (and ruling elite agreement) of the shape of a rational ‘well-ordered’ society; they represent a naturalisation of capitalist social relations. The assumption that political conflict is now settled in the nineteenth century developed into the presupposition that political tensions are resolved in the twentieth century and that contradiction was permanently removed from society. Hence the ‘news’ appears to be ‘objectively’ drawn from the inherent explanation of a flat background. Change and disruption are reported as ‘stories’ with the complex historical processes through which they occur flattened. Explanations for events are presumed to be self-evident such that, as Bolton goes on,

When it comes to assigning motivation for action, the habitual practices of ‘objective’ journalism – founded upon the denial of any legitimate reasons for conflict and resistance – are reinforced by the use of a language in which meaning has frozen. This leaves few options available for a plausible inherent explanation, aside from ‘irrationality’, ‘madness’ or ‘evil’.

Consequently, scapegoating is a familiar trope in the ‘news’. It is also, paradoxically, the same dynamic that is at play when ‘the news’ is faced with the substantive changes the very existence of this empty homogenous time denies. ‘Riots’ are the most significant example for this thesis and illustration of how the news-form is able to recuperate the results of previous struggles: by pushing legitimate conflict into the past. The ‘it was different back then’ approach grants approval to histories of certain conflicts (as Bolton points out, namely, those whose effects have been too powerful to ignore), not by recognising the inherent

---

411 Ibid.
412 Bolton cites anti-racism and Hillsborough in his explanation.
contradiction but ‘by inverting the relation of rationality’. The effect, particularly acute during the occurrence of riots, is to drain past struggles of any contemporary relevance.

Popular musicologist Josh Kun (2005) coins the neologism ‘audiotopia’ describing it in a cross-disciplinary study of racial and national construction - *Audiotopia: Music, Race and America* (2005). Kun explores the ways in which music provides the means for minority citizens in the United States not only to express, but to live and transcend, the contradictory experiences of life in the country. He found music and personal experience of music to be a transformative force; an audiotopia. Audiotopia as a musicological construct is meant to offer insight beyond the text-based paradigms common to previous ethnomusicological studies, by suggesting that music can be understood as a kind of processual geography that is continually created anew, as and when individuals come to inhabit and experience sonic spaces. Kun provides musicologists, who are interested in affective ties across subjectivity, with a word to convey music’s transcendent universality and potency as transformative force on subjective consciousness. ‘Audiotopia’ indicates how music experience aids the conviction that circumstances are not immutable, and it can be linked to ideas of affect ‘in’ and ‘beyond’ the individual (as detailed in ‘The Musicological Framework’). The next section shows how the release of ‘Fuck Tha Police’ provided audiences with ‘audiotopias’, administering them with a sense of autonomy from State unaccountability. The song is shown to be composed from lived experience in terms of both reason and emotion. Through the following analyses it will become clear that moralising around popular music, and in similar senses to ‘riots’, helps the media to lay the groundwork for a reactionary State.

**The Subject: ‘Fuck Tha Police’**

A birth place of hip-hop, the South Bronx area was a target for the euphemistically named ‘urban renewal projects’; a disguise in language for neighbourhoods that were subject to processes of State interference to ensure compliance and quell resistance to unemployment and mass incarceration. On the evolution of hip-hop in the United States in *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (2007) Jeff Chang states:

> Here was the new math: the South Bronx had lost 600 000 manufacturing jobs; 40 percent of the sector disappeared. By the mid-seventies the average per capita income had dropped to $2430, just half of the

New York City average and 40 percent of the nationwide average. The official youth unemployment rate hit 60 percent. Youth advocates said that in some neighbourhoods the true number was close to 80 percent.414

An unrestrained exercise to raise the rate of profit, this neoliberal re-structuring uprooted productive industries which had formerly employed black labour in the US to the Global South and thus set in motion not only a re-composition of the US but of the global working class as neoliberalism became global trajectory. Unwanted, surplus labour in the US saw its prison population become the largest in the world in both absolute and per-capita terms. It is largely made up of people of colour, convicted for victimless, non-violent crimes. These are politics that exhausted the 1960s hope and idealism. The assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 marks the demise of the Civil Rights Movement, and it was followed by the de-industrialisation of the 1970s. There was a rapid fire evolution of hip-hop in the 1980s that re-politicized these subjectivities.

It is in this context that there is an affective power to the song ‘Fuck Tha Police’ in which one language illuminates the other in terms of both reason and emotion. N.W.A expressed fearless individualism against the police in the collective autonomy of their music. It was a radical record at the time of release with immediate and enduring relevance. It was ‘reality-rap’. The West Coast rappers shot to fame with the album *Straight Outta Compton* in 1988. It is a genre-breaking album in the early evolution of hip-hop in which the lyrical themes call into question the entire US social system. In the promotion of a 2015 biopic of N.W.A for *Rolling Stone* magazine, member Ice Cube reflects how

> We were trying to make records that can go on the radio, and when we started doing mixtapes – which we knew wasn’t going on the radio – that’s when we really started to talk about the neighbourhood ... Talking about what really led into the style that we ended up doing, which is now called hardcore gangster rap. Back then we was calling it ‘reality rap’; ‘gangster rap’ is the name that the media coined.415

By the early 1990s reality-rap had exploded onto the scene. With artists alongside N.W.A that include Scholly D, KRS-ONE and Ice T, hip-hop became saturated with threats to destroy the enemy. Scholly D’s eponymous album is described by Fisher as typical of the oncoming trend, ‘a swaggering survivalist ego, locked in a kill or be killed struggle for

---

recognition’ and, he argues, it is illustrative of how rap’s celebration of the ‘crime lord’ became ‘an unintentional parody of neoliberal rapacity’.416

‘Fuck Tha Police’ had a huge impact in this context with the lyrics as born from the lived experiences of young black men. The song adopts the formalities of the judicial system, but turns them on their head. Dr Dre leads the proceedings in a mock trial to testify before the court, and the MC’s – Eazy-E, Ice Cube, DJ Yella and MC Ren – subvert the way prosecuting attorneys use witnesses to prove their sides of the story. Ice Cube takes the first verse to state the cases before the court; that the police are focused on young black men assuming that they are all drug dealers, murderers and thieves.

FUCK THE POLICE COMIN STRAIGHT FROM THE UNDERGROUND A YOUNG NIGGA GOT IT BAD CAUSE I'M BROWN/ AND NOT THE OTHER COLOUR SO POLICE THINK THEY HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO KILL A MINORITY

Ice Cube goes on to promise ‘a bloodbath of cops dying in L.A.’ amidst a succession of marijuana cloaked profane tirades against the police. The complaints made in the song are about racial profiling and unprovoked police brutality. These would have been very familiar to many who heard it.

It is the most overtly political song on the album and especially shocking at the time because of its militancy. The release of ‘Fuck Tha Police’ provoked an array of official responses in which the artists and promoters were threatened with a combination of legal, political, economic and criminal sanctions. These included corporate divestiture, corporate boycotts, FBI investigations and congressional hearings.417 In August 1989 N.W.A’s label Priority Records received a letter from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that read as follows:

Advocating violence and assault is wrong, and we in the law enforcement community take exception to such action. Violent crime, a major problem in our country, reached an unprecedented high in 1988. Seventy-eight law enforcement officers were feloniously slain in the line of duty during 1988, four more than in 1987. Law enforcement officers dedicate their lives to the protection of our citizens, and recordings such as the one from N.W.A are both discouraging and degrading to these brave, dedicated officers. Music plays a significant role in our society, and I wanted you to be aware of the FBI’s position relative to this song and its message. I believe my views reflect the opinion of the entire law enforcement community.

Milt Ahlerich, Office of Public Affairs418

418 Chang, Can’t Stop Won’t Stop, 235.
Whilst his views reflect the opinion of ‘the entire law enforcement community’ (that is, the State) Milt Ahlerich later admitted to never having heard the song. The key lyric (and question) in ‘Fuck Tha Police’ is what gives the police ‘the authority to kill a minority’? The response bears explication in immediate contrast to this letter. In a theoretically disciplined essay “The Militarisation of the Police” Martinot (2003) provides the answer. What gives the police the authority are the routine procedures available to them. These include ‘profiling’, which Martinot describes as ‘the generalised visual procedure of noticing someone’ alongside the legal concept that rationalizes profiling, ‘probable cause’.

Should a man run away upon seeing the police, it provides probable cause for the police to think he is guilty of something, and therefore can be chased, shot or stopped by other means, searched, beaten and arrested. Rodney King’s sin, for which he was tortured on a roadway in Los Angeles, was fleeing a traffic stop because he was afraid of what the police might do to him.

These are procedures that can make the police the active agent in the criminalization of a person. Explaining how the police are therefore arrogated the right to decide who will live and who will die, Martinot distinguishes between ‘obedience’ and ‘obeisance’.

Obeisance differs from obedience in the same way profiling differs from law enforcement. In obedience, one stands as a person in relation to that which one obeys; in obeisance, one abandon’s one’s standing as a person to the transcendent meaning of an icon or concept to which one must abject oneself. In disobedience, one only criminalizes oneself; non-obeisance becomes a criminalized status imposed gratuitously by the institution that demands obeisance.

Martinot thus articulates how this is a system in which the killing itself has become unpunishable as the act stands both above the law and the legal prohibition against murder. The other routine procedures the police have available to them include ‘stop and question’ and ‘stop and search’ (as well as those procedures that remain unofficial, such as guilt by association) also manifest themselves in the person of the police as racialized (and arbitrary) procedure. Once an individual is detained, all of the authority of the law can be brought to bear on him (or her) since, once detained, the police have powers to use ‘reasonable force’. The result is that any police directive must be obeyed and the detainee is thus subjected to two systems of law: the legislated law and the law the police can make arbitrarily in the form of directives. This gives the police the ability to transform a person under suspicion into a de


422 Ibid, 222.
facto criminal at will. An officer only has to hit upon a directive that the individual will resist, out of self-respect, dignity or a feeling that it is unwarranted, and such a stance can be construed as disobedience. In being constrained to obedience and obeisance in these procedures, an individual is captive to a legal system and can be further criminalized for their sense of injustice or dignity.

When N.W.A went on tour following the release of *Straight Outta Compton* they were banned in some cities on account of their gigs turning into small ‘riots’ and a circus of anti-police spirit. Tour promoters tried to secure a promise from the group that they would not perform ‘Fuck Tha Police’ and the 200,000 strong Fraternal Order of Police officially voted to boycott any group that advocated violence against law enforcement officers. At a concert in Detroit the local police turned up in large numbers. The crowd finally persuaded N.W.A to play ‘Fuck Tha Police’ by chanting the refrain and as soon as Ice Cube uttered the first phrase the police officers rushed the stage and the group fled. Music critic Dave Marsh and N.W.A publicist Phyllis Pollack broke the story of the FBI letter in an article for *The Village Voice*, as well as organising the American Civil Liberties Union and music industry leaders to formally protest against police censorship. It turned out to provide the group with great advertising and, shortly after, ‘gangsta culture’ became a topic across, and for, major magazines. These included fashion magazines with spreads on ‘gangsta style’.423 In *Dr. Dre: A Biography* (2007) the ascent of reality-rap into the mainstream is discussed.

MTV, which had previously shunned the group, devoted the entirety of their hour long show MTV YO! Raps to N.W.A, on which the group brandished assault rifles and aimed them at the camera to play up their “gangsta” image. Because all the publicity came for free, without investment from the record company, N.W.A turned huge profits – Heller reported that if Priority sold 200,000 records, the company made a quarter of a million dollars.424

In these contexts, N.W.A proclaimed themselves the ‘world’s most dangerous group’ and their rise to fame marks a turning point in which marketing executives realised that hip-hop was not a fad and that even hard hitting and counter-hegemonic ‘reality rap’ had significant profit potential. Despite a lack of radio airplay or promotion from their label and following the FBI letter, *Straight Outta Compton* went ‘gold’ in six weeks.

424 Ibid, 40.
The album was one of the first records to receive a Parental Advisory sticker from the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC), a committee formed in 1985 after its co-founder Mary ‘Tipper’ Gore (wife of then Senator and later Vice President Al Gore) heard references to masturbation in Prince’s ‘Darling Nikki’ as her daughter listened to it. In the 1980s the PMRC was focused mostly on heavy metal, a predominantly white genre and very popular as it evolved in the 1980s. There was a distinct shift to also include stickers for rap and hip-hop in the early 1990s, however, as the genres appeal began crossing over into white markets. The two genres faced Congress in the mid-1990s which also marks the point that heavy metal and hip-hop began to fuse into ‘nu-metal’. Then Senator, Carol Moseley-Braun organised a panel for a Congressional hearing against rap and metal. A subcommittee on juvenile justice held a hearing on the impact of music on children; ‘Shaping Our Responses to Violent and Demeaning Imagery in Popular Music’. Although the panel did not seek (or reach) informed musicological conclusions, speaking to the press after the hearing, Moseley-Braun stated that some ‘gangster rap’ had a ‘causal relationship’ to ‘street crime and violence’.425

Discussing the PMRC and the introduction of ‘Parental Advisory’ stickers, Street (2012) argues that censorship is involved in placing stickers on CDs even though the music remains available and not, in a formal sense, banned. The PMRC explicitly renounced the idea that they were advocating or involved with censorship. Following Street, however, it is possible to argue that the information provided by the stickers instigates a process that leads to ‘censorship’ by legitimating and providing pretext for the targeting of certain artists, ‘and for local authorities to initiate bans, for State authorities to regulate sales and for the record companies to intervene in new ways in the content of the music’. 426 By broadening the definition of censorship in order to perceive it as a suppression of popular voice, the arguments against censorship go beyond ‘banning’ to reveal the complexes of processes that constitute it. Hence, the objectives of PMRC can be explained by reference to political interests and circumstances.

Similarly, as corporate influence on hip-hop grew, the quality of the conversation contracted further, reducing complex realities to banal juxtaposition and binary. The tacit assumption that there is a causal relationship between rap music and violence and deviance endures in the media. In 2012 Google hosted an international debate that put ‘Hip-Hop on Trial’. The

description of the debate framed hip-hop within the facile binary that, despite the complexities inherent to any genre with a history of well over thirty years, hip-hop was either ‘the authentic voice of the oppressed that turns anger into poetry and political action’ or ‘a glorification of all that holds back oppressed minorities and hinders them from mainstream assimilation.’ Possibly, the liberal media feels that it supports hip-hop in these interrogations in that it gives it press time. Actually, it imposes false structures of responsibility on the genre that enable it to perpetuate white ignorance of State impunity, thus bolstering the lack of accountability.

In the attempted, though failed, censorship of N.W.A that took place with regards to the FBI letter, the PMRC sticker, and how this fed into the mid-1990s congressional hearings against rap and metal music, there are complex and coalescing interests. Images and words might be those which are portrayed as the source of offence in music. In reality, however, it is the political interests behind the scenes that articulate, respond to, and thus define, the offence. As well as judging the long term effects of music in the absence of empirical support, the heavy-handed condemnation of black music by a white corporate State obscures further-reaching moral questions from being approached by the same outlets. As a strategy of censorship it therefore works by rendering invisible the culpability of wider socio-political context (that of State violence) for themes of violence and aggression in music. The mechanical performances of official outrage are the same as those routinely expressed in the media’s response to riots.

* * *

Race is strongly operative culturally. ‘People of colour’ is a politically correct term as it stands, though it essentially means those that are not white, and is thus indicative of how the shifting ground of liberal politics can barely support its socially constructed racial categories. In *The Rule of Racialization: Class, Identity and Governance* (2003) Martinot outlines a model of racialization that describes the institutionalisation of racial hierarchy since the seventeenth century. The planter class racialized whiteness in order to initiate a state of colour allegiance. This in turn enabled the matter of race to be not simply an upper class tactic to divide workers irrespective of their colour, but in order that the planter class might avoid that class conflict amongst whites which would have serious repercussions for the planters themselves. In his examination of racial psychology Martinot advocates affirmative

---

action within the established frameworks as a necessary tool of reform, whilst he also argues that the destruction of this racial structure can only come through alternative politics that operate outside of the white corporate state. Reality-rap was both.

Racial hierarchy functions in the US by working in opposition to affirmative action, and preventing the majority of white people from becoming conscious of the deep historical roots of class and race privilege. The Black Panther Party (BPP) took a militant stance from outside of the white corporate State. The BPP are especially famous for their ‘survival programmes’ which were designed to provide food and education outside of the relations of capitalism. ‘The Breakfast for Children’ programme was instituted in several cities. Historically it appears as though it was this breakfast which posed more of a threat to the government than the guns that some of the BPP openly carried. The first Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (the FBI), J. Edgar Hoover, denounced the breakfast programmes. He wrote in a directive to the FBI that it represented ‘potentially the greatest threat to efforts by the authorities […] to neutralise the BPP and destroy what it stands for’. The directive was issued in 1967 just four months after Martin Luther King called the US government the ‘greatest purveyor of violence in the world today’. Presumably, Hoover recognised that the compassion of providing ‘survival’ programmes could result in favourable publicity for the BPP and feared that it would bolster support for their insurrectionary aims. Accordingly, he instructed his own militia, the FBI, to ‘Prevent black militant nationalist groups and leaders from gaining respectability, by discrediting them […] to the white community’. Discussing his 2015 documentary ‘The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution 1966-1973’, the era in which the Civil Rights Movement moved in full effect against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, Stanley Nelson remarks that,

> We would never have hip-hop without the Black Panthers. That’s why so much hip-hop is fascinated with the Panthers. It’s the whole attitude you couldn’t have had without the Panthers, that’s essential.

The BPP, hip-hop music, as well as those involved in the ‘riots’ that routinely follow the murder of young black men by the police, are subject to comparable and intersecting

---


429 Ibid.

discursive and physical violence that are designed to mask their strategic political positions and re-assert State authority. The following comments from Frith (1996) are helpful in guiding the musicological import of Nelson’s observation. Frith states that to grasp the ‘rhythm’ of music which is, as he says, to listen to it, ‘means participating actively in its unfolding and trusting that this unfolding has been (or is being) shaped – that it will lead somewhere. It is at once a physical and mental process; it involves aesthetic and ethical judgements.’

Something similar to this is revealed in jazz musician Max Roach’s remarks on the militancy of early rap and hip-hop when he states that ‘the politics was in the drums’ and goes on to say that:

The rhythm was very militant to me because it was like marching, the sound of an army on the move. We lost Malcom, we lost King and they thought they had blotted out everybody. But all of a sudden this new art form arises and the militancy is there in the music.

In both Roach and Frith’s comments, music gives vent to feelings and thus connects aesthetics to ethics. Music is not regarded as a question of disembodied taste or mere preference. Rhythm, melody and lyrics (as Plato, Aristotle and Rousseau also believed) shape social relations. ‘Fuck Tha Police’ was not peripheral to society on release. Rather, it was a revolutionary call-to-arms in which the music is politics. Recognising it as such grasps how moralising around music can be the rationale for both its promotion and its censorship.

‘Fuck Tha Police’ was still a very popular single when the Rodney King verdict was announced and Los Angeles erupted into riots. Rodney King, an African-American man, was tortured on a roadside in 1991 after fleeing a traffic light. The violence was caught on camera but the trial acquitted the police officers of assault or use of excessive force. Riots, beginning in Los Angeles but spreading nationwide, immediately followed the verdict on April 29th 1992. For the five preceding years ‘Fuck Tha Police’ had engendered an affective solidarity across the country with an anti-police statement. It helped to develop radical subjective agency that was ready to explode in 1992. The ready-made anthem saw the refrain ‘fuck the police’ shouted at the police in stand-offs for the first time en-masse. Online working class solidarity magazine _Flying Picket_ succinctly contextualises the Rodney King riots in US history.

Watts in 1965 was portentous of civil unrest that ravaged the major urban areas of the United States throughout the latter half of the 1960s; the L.A. Rebellion in 1992 is portentous of the future of a

---

431 Frith, _Performing Rites_, 159.
432 Max Roach, in Street, _Music and Politics_, 173.
Despite these recent histories, media reports on the ‘events’ of riots are wholly inadequate. For example, following the uprising caused by the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in the US on the 9 August 2014, the major international newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique* exemplified the wilful myopia characteristic of the mainstream media in its pronouncement that, ‘the United States could see more Ferguson type events in the near future […] race riots could become far more of a norm than we might expect.’ The media, as articulated by Stuart Hall in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (1978) works in support capacity for the police and in the State. By helping to construct the social matrix of views that are necessary to provide popular support for police campaigns and criminalization in general, the media (think also of the news form) is complicit in shaping history with the kinds of rhetoric that shape and perpetuate the structures of racial hierarchy.

Interviewed in 2011 by the *Manchester Mule* magazine, shortly after the nationwide riots that year in the UK, Professor Gus John was asked to reflect on coverage by the *Manchester Evening News* of the Moss Side riots in Manchester in 1981. The *Manchester Evening News* described these riots as ‘an orgy of violence’ and ‘a spontaneous eruption of hatred’. Questioned as to whether he felt these reports were an attempt to depoliticize the uprising, Gus John responded:

> Yes. And it is for these reasons that I do not refer to those disturbances as riots […] The tabloids have a lot to answer for. They were echoing what senior police officers were saying. They were always eager to claim that it was pure criminality that came from nowhere. As if these criminals suddenly drank something and decided to go out and create mayhem …you have to ask searching questions about what predisposes people to do this, but that’s too sophisticated for these hacks.

In the light of Gus John’s words and the analyses of ‘media bias and the ‘news-form’, comments from UK Establishment historian David Starkey as the 2011 UK riots took place are relevant. The themes of race, crime and youth, identified by Hall, come to the fore as ideological conductor for the crises in his outrageous remarks. During prime time hours on the BBC, Starkey was able to state that, the problem is

---

433 http://flyingpicket.org/node/3 is the original website I accessed. The entire website, however, has been taken down since then.


The whites have become black. A particular sort of violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture has become the fashion … Black and white, boy and girl operate in this language together. This language, which is wholly false, which is the Jamaican patois that has intruded in England.436

In blaming the violence on his perception of black street culture as a US and Jamaican import, Starkey was not alone in 2011. He was joined by the tabloid and right-wing press as well as politicians that included the UK Prime Minister David Cameron. In the aftermath of the riots, Cameron declared a ‘war on gang culture’. The language used by these people is performative violence that perpetuates race as a performative mover of history and means of class oppression. In “The Avant Garde of White Supremacy” Martinot and Jared Sexton lend support to this observation. In their explanation of racism and racialization they state that:

Derogatory terms do not mean: they assault. Their intention is not to communicate but to harm. Thus they are not discursive signs or linguistic statements but modes of aggression. They express a structure of power and domination, a hierarchy that contextualises them gives them their force.437

Similarly, in The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colour-Blindness (2010), Michelle Alexander’s argument is that what has altered since the official collapse of the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation in the American South is not the basic structure of society, but the language that is used to justify its affairs.438 This, she makes clear (and as Hoover also recognised) is accomplished to a large degree by appealing to the prejudices and vulnerability of lower class whites.439 The derogatory language used (for example by Starkey) reflects the user’s status as member of the dominant, and dominating, group. The significance of such language is as a means by which this group (the State) derives impunity. State unaccountability is thus explained in terms of how the racial hierarchies of previous eras are maintained by embedding white privilege and non-white disadvantage into politics, institutions and cultural representations.

Just as the blues was declared the ‘devils’ music at the beginning of the twentieth century, jazz musicians were depicted as exotic savages in the segregated music halls of the 1920s. In the twenty-first century, then, it is hip-hop that is the black music associated with moral depravity – as though these genres are believed to be invading and rotting a respectable

civilisation from the inside. Moralising against music is another means by which the capitalist State can, as it necessarily must, absorb dissidence into its continuous logics of empty homogenous time. Just as the media de-politicizes ‘riots’, controversial popular music can be appropriated by the media to lay the groundwork for a reactionary State.

The section has thus celebrated the legacy of ‘Fuck Tha Police’ in the contexts of State unaccountability by looking both at the conditions of the songs emergence as well as the affective processes it unleashes through and beyond them. These processes (like the 1960s counter-cultures) threatened a growing confidence that social reality is provisional, plastic and subject to transformation by collective desire. Reality-rap performs counter-narratives through which audiences channel anger and re-imagine their relationships to power, as well as make sense of the kinds of ‘discontinuity’ that ‘riots’ represent. By connecting hip-hop loosely to the Black Panther Party and to riots as they routinely follow the murder of young black men by the police, it is clear that the connections between aesthetic and moral value in music are more complex than mere ideology. Capitalism subjects these actors to comparative and intersecting discursive violence that masks their strategic political positions and re-asserts State authority. Rising above this, music’s power transcends structural realities and interrupts the infinite continuity of these discourses. Music provides ‘audiotopias’ in which aesthetic autonomy (as with police impunity and the law) ratifies itself in a domain it establishes beyond itself. It is in these contexts of ‘time’, imagination and transcendence that ‘Fuck Tha Police’ is celebrated here as resistance in, against and beyond capitalism.

The Individual: ‘Holla If Ya Hear Me’

The basic implication in the centuries old ideology of the nation-state is that the world is a dangerous place that we cannot hope to secure ourselves from. Political philosophers who hold a Foucauldian expectation of how power operates question the conditions that enable and disable life. They ask how ‘life’ comes to be thought and lived. Foucault showed that power produces life by selective means. His arguments centred on the judicial, rational structures of language that are active in the production of the subjects that they subsequently come to represent. There can be no subjectivity that lies fully outside of the binaries upon which these structures are dependent and Foucault develops critical genealogies of these legitimizing practices. For Foucault and the scholarship that his work has inspired, ‘life’ is not an ontological category because it does not come to exist as a naturalised state of affairs. Drawing on Foucault’s 1978 lecture series on ‘bio-politics’, Reid (2010) explains the political
rationalities that underscore the evolution of liberalism and State sovereignty. In the eighteenth century, ‘vulnerability’ was the connection to, and human dependency on, nature. Reid says that:

‘Such claims to the radical vulnerability of the subject to nature were, as Foucault reveals, central to the force with which liberalism was able to transform the model of European state sovereignty. This was the basis on which the liberal prohibition on governmental intervention within the economy arose and found its legitimacy.’

Indeed, these claims helped the nation-state develop and pose as a carrier of universal interests. It gave the nation-state immense powers and simultaneously produced an image of the State as the ideal place to resolve conflict. Whilst ‘vulnerability’ is a primary foundation on which the liberal State has sought to legitimate itself since more or less the beginning of the modern era it is, as Reid explains, the vulnerability of the subject (and not the State) that provides the legitimising discourses, and instantiates ‘the very demand for protection on which liberal governance depends for its legitimation in relation to the subject.’

Given that subjective vulnerability is not a naturalised state of affairs Reid argues that the vulnerability of the State, and not that of its subjects, ought to take precedence in determinations of left politics and formulations of subjectivity.

It is a paradox in the function of the imagination in liberalism that it demands its subjects live unmasked and truthful lives whilst maintaining its own power through the construction of an image of itself as invulnerable. In light of this Reid suggests that the same things that Foucault said of the State can be applied to ‘the self’, ‘The fact that the self does not exist, that it is an imaginary construct, makes all the more important the weight of emphasis which it has been given within the Western tradition, from the classical era onwards.’ As seen in ‘The Political Framework’, under neoliberalism there has been a mania for self-knowledge that individualises collective problems. Reid describes this as a culture of discourses that need to develop in the self a ‘currency on which the very economy of selfhood depends’. In turn, this means that only in the forms of the self that are available can humanity make its ‘way around the labyrinthine space’ into which it has entered and, Reid argues, create ‘the

---

440 Julian Reid, “The Vulnerable Subject of Liberal War,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110 (2010), 774.
441 Ibid, 773.
442 Ibid, 773.
444 Ibid.
conditions of knowledge in which the poetic subject has to find its poetry’. Reid’s attitude is toward resisting discourses of resilience and it can be related to Tupac as the individual artist performer.

While resilience provides scope for the function of imagination in enabling human beings to survive, it is nevertheless, as a discourse, also based upon a highly circumscribed imaginary, the limits of which are defined by survivability as such. Imagination can either contribute to the survival strategies with which human beings attempt to care for themselves in the face of ordeals and traumas, or it can, more ambitiously, seek to create an image of the self existing free from the possibility and necessity of a life of endless trauma and struggle. They claim that I’m violent, but still I keep/ representin’, never give up, on a good thing/ Wouldn’t stop if we could it’s a hood thing/ And now I’m like a major threat/ Cause I remind you of all the things you were made to forget.

‘Holla If You Hear Me’

Tupac, Reid and Foucault create new forms for the critique of power that draw on the imagination. The imagination can create images of the self that resist (or swagger against) struggle, oppression, trauma. The suggestion in this section of the chapter is that Tupac is an artist through whom to contend that political authority is gained in music by using the imagination as self-determination. Thus, that Tupac’s music helps to make what was previously deemed impossible seem attainable by placing his ‘self’ in the collective autonomy of music. Hence, future research could look at Kendrick Lamar as Tupac’s legacy in this light. After outlining more about Tupac the thesis’s final conversation about what exactly ‘collective autonomy’ is will take place.

Much love to my brothers in tha pen/ See ya when I free ya/ If not, when they shut me in

‘Holla If Ya Hear Me’

Rapper and actor Tupac Shakur was born in New York, the son of two prominent Black Panther Party members, into an atmosphere of radical anti-capitalist, anti-State politics and an era of neoliberalisation. His life was defined by the overwhelming popularity of his music, selling up to 75 million albums, along with success as an actor in films. Me Against the World was released in 1995 when Tupac was in prison and debuted at number one in the charts. The latter part of Tupac’s short recording career was determined by East-West coast rivalry in hip-hop as he became embroiled in an escalating feud with other rappers and producers, most notably the Notorious B.I.G. In September 1996 Tupac Shakur was murdered in a Las Vegas drive-by shooting.

444 Ibid.
445 Ibid, 260
Tupac began his solo music career in 1991 (using the name 2Pac) and released his debut album *2Pacalypse Now* that includes the righteous, angry political protest song ‘Holla If Ya Hear Me’. Tupac told stories in his music of black discrimination and made pleas for community unity. His songs provide autobiographical material about his political mind, as does his narration of the posthumously released film about his life *The Resurrection*. These are the primary sources through which to conceive of his identity and think about him in anti- and post-capitalist terms around providing audiences with platforms for counter-hegemonic listening (and thus developing their self-determination: counter power). In *The Resurrection*, Tupac says the following:

> All my roots to the struggle are real deep [...] when the Panthers hit, the government panicked, and they thought it was detrimental to American society. Remember this country did have a man named J. Edgar Hoover, whose job it was to destroy the credibility of any black man coming up, and that’s what they did to the Panthers. Power to the people. The government raided every Panthers house, especially the ones who could do the most damage as an orator. So they just burst in and put a gun to my mother’s head and said move, they said you’re under arrest. Y’know they treated her like less than human. 

446 Tupac used music to express individuality for the purposes of collective autonomy. His music was hyper-political performative strategy.

* * *

The thesis’s final exploration of collective autonomy juxtaposes Butler’s theory of performativity to Guattari’s ‘Three Ecologies’ and it does so for a number of reasons. Nominally, because to depict all identity as performance risks cultivating politics as slow and non-revolutionary. Hence, theory should not follow Butler in such a way to claim all politics is about identity because this erases the historical specifics of struggles and movements. Similarly, class consciousness cannot be straightforwardly aligned with identity because to do so abstracts class from the historical conditions and struggles of its production. Rather, radical politics must maintain, as the 1960s liberationists did, a dialectical approach in which identity labels would be cast aside after liberation. Hence, embrace identity (such as using Butler’s gender performativity) but do so in order to abolish it. In the 1960s the identity social movements worked under a rubric of liberation and solidarity activism that employed Marxist ideas about class struggle. These movements were militant and revolutionary. They weaponised identity in the hope that it might culminate with the abolition of class and to a world beyond identitarian categorisation.

---

In one of Guattari’s final publications before his death, first published in 1989, *The Three Ecologies* he advocates ‘ecosophy’ as a new field of enquiry. In *The Three Ecologies* Guattari establishes that the state of the environment is self-evident: amidst and continually on the brink of further ecological disaster, and demonstrates that ecological crises are a direct result of the precise ways that capitalism changes and is expanding. The three ecologies are human subjectivity, the environment and social relations and it is because they are intimately connected that Marxist politics, he argues, need to embed arguments and ideas within ecological frameworks that understand the complex interconnections between humans and nature in the present day. Guattari emphasises that to focus on how the three ecologies are interconnected, is not to promote or to suggest that only holistic approaches to effecting social change are necessary, but that theory and practice need to synthesise (not unify) around them. On human subjectivity, Guattari insists that left politics must accept

... that as a general rule, and however little one works on them, individual and collective subjective assemblages are capable, potentially, of developing and proliferating well beyond their ordinary equilibrium. By their very essence analytic cartographies extend beyond the existential Territories to which they are assigned. As in painting or literature, the concrete performance of these cartographies requires that they evolve and innovate, that they open up new futures, without their authors [auteurs] having prior recourse to assured theoretical principles or to the authority of a group, school, or an academy … Work in progress! An end to psychoanalytic, behaviourist or systematist catechisms.447

Guattari does not suggest that when subjective assemblages do proliferate ‘beyond their ordinary equilibrium’ it will necessarily consummate left political ambitions. Writing on the ecology of human subjectivity, ‘mental ecology’, Guattari explains that vectors of subjectivity pass through the individual such that individual interiority appears as a ‘quality produced at the meeting point of multiple components that are relatively mutually autonomous – in certain cases, openly discordant.’448 Hence, capitalist vectors of subjectivity can pass through the individual and evade ‘singularity’ and resistance. On dissident vectors of subjectivity, in reference to the implosion of the Italian autonomist movement (to which he was connected) in the 1980s, Guattari makes the following comment on dissident praxis, ‘As experiments in the suspension of meaning, they are certainly risky; there is the risk of an overly violent deterritorialization, of the destruction of existing assemblages of subjectification.’449 Confronting the ravages of capitalism is about the promotion of innovative practices and the relationships between people, and what Guattari advocates

448 Ibid, 131.
ultimately is, ‘The proliferation of alternative experiments which both respect singularity, and work permanently at the production of subjectivity that is simultaneously autonomous, yet articulated itself in relation to the rest of society.’\textsuperscript{450} Given the centrality of ‘performativity’ driving the conviction that anti-capitalist politics must go ‘beyond gender’ and be ‘in and against the State’ the working definition Guattari provides above of collective autonomy is drawn out further by tracing some points of comparison through Butlerian theory.

Butler describes her interest in subjective construction and intelligibility, the ‘operations of exclusion, erasure, foreclosure and abjection in the discursive construction of the subject’\textsuperscript{451} and articulates her commitment to radical forms of democracy

\ldots that seek to understand the processes of representation by which political articulation proceeds, the problem of identification - and its necessary failures - by which political mobilization takes place, the question of the future as it emerges for theoretical frameworks that insist upon the productive force of the negative.\textsuperscript{452}

Butler’s initial conceptualizations of performativity centred on the symbolic relationships of sexual desire and the institution of sexual difference as self-supporting signifying economies that wield power in the marking off of what can and cannot be thought within the terms of cultural intelligibility. ‘Intelligibility’ is found across Butler’s work and indicates questions around who does and does not, and who can and cannot appear as a subject, as a human life, within hegemonic social relations. In her scholarship there are varying degrees of agency attributed to the subject. In 1990 she suggests that construction is not opposed to agency, because it is the necessary scene of agency. By 1997 in \textit{The Psychic Life of Power} Butler’s increasing concern is with psychoanalysis and this leads her to find the potential for agency ‘in the operations of a psyche that exceeds rather than escapes the law,’ and as Salih explains, the emphasis is now on the psychoanalytic and the power of psychic life, ‘the psyche’s potential to turn power against itself’.\textsuperscript{453} It is in this light that Butler has focused more and more on ‘precarity’ (and parallel to the increasing precariousness of contemporary existence) to suggest that our precarity, as something shared, is a source of agency. Precarity, she argues, is denied its affective value by individualism because individualism entails exaggerated notions of individual will through which individualist ideology permits the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{450}{Ibid, 142.}
\footnotetext{451}{Salih, \textit{Judith Butler (Routledge Critical Thinkers)} (London: Routledge, 2002), 8.}
\footnotetext{452}{Butler, Laclau, and Žižek, \textit{Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left}, 4.}
\footnotetext{453}{Butler, in Salih, \textit{Judith Butler (Routledge Critical Thinkers)}, 119.}
\end{footnotes}
The destruction of other less liveable lives. Therefore, and as Sara Rushing summarises in 2010, throughout her work Butler provides a ‘distinctly vulnerable subject that, because of this vulnerability to the Other, can develop a point of identification with suffering itself.’

The idea that radical politics might, or should, presume a ‘universal vulnerability’ to subjectivity is refuted by this thesis. Butler reifies vulnerability and posits a false ontology of vulnerability as a universal condition to subjectivity that is not helpful for ‘live’ (active) in, against and beyond politics.

A core belief of Butler’s is that the constituted and constructed nature of the subject is a source of agency. The following quotation explains what Butler means by ‘singularity’ in this light.

The uniqueness of the other is exposed to me, but mine is also exposed to her. This does not mean we are the same, but only that we are bound to one another by what differentiates us, namely, our singularity. The notion of singularity is very often bound up with existential romanticism and with a claim of authenticity, but I gather that, precisely because it is without content, my singularity has some properties in common with yours and so is, to some extent, a substitutable term.

Distinctions between the two authors, Guattari and Butler can therefore be construed as one of theoretical stability. Whereas Butler discusses ‘singularity’ in such a way as to suggest equilibrium to shared uniqueness, Guattari emphasises evolving singularity as difference, and as a part of ‘work in progress!’ In so doing, he places emphases on experimentation and risk.

Guattari’s respect for singularity is a disavowal of maintaining equilibrium in ‘Ecosophy’ through which he advocates a monistic and pluralist approach to the study of mental ecology, and a promotion of alternative experiments for the production of subjectivity that can expose change ‘as’ reality. Indeed, Guattari writes explicitly that, ‘process, which I oppose here to system or structure, strives to capture existence in the very act of its constitution, definition and deterritorialization.’ In seeking to capture existence in the very act of its constitution, Guattari better allows for an acceptance that the continually renegotiated compositions of class define and determine relations between capitalism and human activity. Butler focuses on the discursive limits of intelligibility whereas Guattari works from within the open-endedness of processual change. Articulating the discursive limits of ‘intelligibility’ does

prompt further questions which is good (Butler is no positivist) but Guattari reifies the open-endedness of theory in conjunction with practice. It is as though Guattari has an attitude that is more active, or ‘live’ in seeking to cultivate agency. This is suggested by the following quotation, where he explains process as political praxis. He says that grasping both theoretically and practically constituting acts is to take part in, and

… bring into being worlds other than those of pure abstract information; to engender universes of reference and existential territories in which singularity and finitude are embraced by the multivalent logic of mental ecologies and the social-ecological group Eros principle; to face up to a dizzying confrontation with the cosmos in order to make it in some way liveable; these are, in short, the intertwining paths of the triple ecological vision to which we should now turn all our attention.  

Music is a medium that, like ‘being’, is in, against and beyond. Music experience is an emotional and affective positioning of the self in relation to thought and apprehension of the world. In music the strength of the subject (in practice) breaks through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity (in theoretical terms). Thus music engenders self-determination. Music and music experience open up analyses of process as political praxis in anti-capitalist musicology that conceives of music as politics. Butler, however, does not provide perspectives on human subjectivity through which radical left politics can approach the study of post-capitalist desire as an engendering of self-understanding that exceeds the self. Without wishing to sound polemical, Butlerian theory appears to lack the poetic imagination to be able to conceive contexts of radical collective autonomy in music experience. Tupac’s ‘Holla if Ya Hear Me’, however, has a radical agenda and a militancy that is expressed in lyrics that tie Tupac’s self-perception to State violence. The thesis argues throughout that maximising the autonomy of the individual enlarges the possibilities for collective success. In this ‘Holla’ can be heard as a song about collective autonomy. ‘Cause I remind you of the things you were made to forget’ suggests a conscious performance of a specific identity role for political purposes and within an anti-identitarian ideology that portrays identity as plastic and subject to change.

And the punk police can’t fade me, and maybe/ We can have peace someday G/ But right now I got my mind set up/ Lookin’ down the barrel of my nine, get up

Hip-hop is an extensive genre and the subject of large and expanding areas of scholarship and there are many different versions of N.W.A. and Tupac’s stories. Different versions of hip-hop’s narratives are not equivalent, but compete with and complete one another. Further

---

Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 146-147.
contextualisation of the song might bring out in more depth the systems of symbolic equivalence identified by this chapter in order to more deeply observe interactions between the social institutions that Tupac threatens and the first generations of reality-rap. The emphasis here has been that anthems of insubordination such as ‘Holla’ moves matters of political representation to questions of engagement. Tupac wrote his own anti-police song, ‘Fuck Da Police’. In this he transposes the lyrics from ‘Holla’ to different music. ‘Fuck Da Police’ ends with a monologue in which Tupac states that ‘I could be the best actor anybody seen given the chance and the experience’ and he goes on to make the following observations about the police and individuality.

Like I hear people saying ‘You know, all your troubles with the law, how could you play a cop? Just from a stereotypical point of view, who could play a cop better? I’ve seen them and they are evil. When they think nobody’s looking, I’ve seen the passion. I’ve seen the anger. I’ve seen the jealousy. I’ve seen the fear. I’ve seen the respect, and I’ve seen the hate. From cops more than anybody, you know what I mean, I’ve been there, I’ve just got to imagine ...

These comments cohere with Reid’s analyses with both Reid and Tupac making an argument that images, imagination and the self are in certain senses not ‘real’, but that this does not mean they are inferior. Rather, they are the means to change the nature of social and political circumstances. The self is an imaginary construct and, as Tupac’s views on the nature of acting testify, only the forms of the self that are available can create the conditions of knowledge in which ‘the poetic subject finds its poetry’. We hear by imagination in our experiences of music, and we hear and imagine beyond the level of individual-subject because of music’s metaphysical relationships to time. In this it makes sense that Tupac’s lyrics describe but also negate his individualism. Tupac recognised that to ‘feel’ something is to liven the imagination in a productive way that exceeds the self. In terms of music as music Tupac’s genuine individuality (as a radical in, against and beyond communist, perhaps) emerges as a consequence of the collective contexts that the lyrics seek to inspire and agitate. Tupac rejected a life of endless survival and he means to his generations of audiences some approximation of what Kendrick Lamar will mean to his. Kendrick Lamar became globally famous around 2010 and, at the time of writing, is at the ‘top of the game’, with immeasurable skill, beats and popularity. Kendrick Lamar is, like Tupac, overtly political and ripe for future-oriented anti-capitalist research. There is in Kendrick Lamar’s current positioning and global power a significant homage to Tupac that is indicative of the layering performative complexity to Tupac’s life and politics. Kendrick Lamar samples an interview with Tupac from MTV throughout his album To Pimp a Butterfly. The last track concludes
with words of encouragement from his mother and a statement of intent drawn through Tupac’s famous line, “I'm not saying I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world.” Tupac’s prophecy that he would change the world is a topic for future research that would draw on ideas contained within this thesis around prefiguration and complex performative feedback loops. Such a project would explore the performativity of his music by looking at how the actions take place in one domain, that of artistic production, and the effects take place in another, that of emotional response. Perhaps a working title would be ‘How did Tupac prefigure Kendrick Lamar?’

**Conclusion**

The complex of relationships that characterise attitudes toward slavery and race developed over centuries in colonial modernity. For all that there was a growing opposition to slavery from the later eighteenth century onwards, with slavery officially abolished in Britain in 1834, the following two centuries saw continued racialisation. During this period explicit and racist beliefs in the relationships between race, and art and music, evolved. In the attempted censorships of reality-rap the frameworks of previous eras structure the critics of rap who argue variously that ‘rap culture’ causes violence, reflects dysfunctional ghetto culture, hurts black people, destroys American values and demonises women. This chapter has demonstrated through the study of popular music that (and how) the racial hierarchies of previous eras are maintained by embedding white privilege and non-white disadvantage into politics, institutions and cultural representations. It explained that this is how liberalism and thus neoliberal capitalism function. The hyperbolic invulnerability performed by reality-rap translates these politics into emotional registers. The legacy of ‘Fuck Tha Police’, and ‘Fuck Da Police’, is in the exposing of the hypocrisy, impunity and unaccountability that defines State power. ‘In and against the State’ this song (and its legacy) translates politics into emotional registers not of vulnerability, but of autonomous and transcendent individuals in collective contexts. It provides audiotopias through which senses of ‘we’ and affective ties augment and prefigure self-authorised power.
CONCLUSION

‘Popular Music and Politics: In, Against and Beyond Identity’ is a doctoral thesis and it is my identity. It is a uniquely situated approach to the general themes of prefiguration, rebellion and dynamic subjectivity that expands political concepts in relation to musical issues. It is resolutely beyond the confines of any single disciplinary horizon in either music or politics. As Burckhardt Qureshi puts it in Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics (Critical and Cultural Musicology) (2015) ‘Marxist interpretation is far from being a single coherent discursive and political practice, and boundaries between Marxist and non-Marxist theoretical positions are not easy or even meaningful to draw’. It has, perhaps, therefore included some contradictory positions as it sought to persuade the reader (and indeed the author) that there is hope among the wreckage of neoliberalism. For this it has followed Fisher's lines of thought, including fashioned degrees of optimism, to explore the cultural impasse of capitalist realism and the loss of imagination for a post-capitalist world that accompanied the triumph of neoliberalism at the turn of the century. Fisher’s Acid Communism does not look nostalgically back to the cultural revolutions of the mid-twentieth century but strives towards the re-activations of the popular modernist imaginations that were embodied within them. With Acid Communism in, against and beyond has been used as a schema throughout for popular music experience and politics to consider senses of ‘we’ for radical left politics that reach beyond the binary of individual vs collective. It has proved to be a meaningful way in to develop politically committed musicology able to question, for example, the material conditions that can be put in place so that subcultures can become powerful counter-cultures and then truly popular modernist cultures. That is, in, against and beyond is a productive in-road to look at the popularisation of left politics and how we make it about ‘all of us’ in, against and beyond capitalism and identity, on affective and increasing scales.

The social and political functions in music experience as described by this thesis are ones in which anarchism-as-ethics is constitutive of experiences of collective autonomy. An underlying current to the thesis has been that identity develops through history and beyond the individual. In turn, that (and how) anti-capitalist politics and post-capitalist desire counter hegemony, and therefore develop counter-power, when they break social cohesion. A post-capitalist world will be one beyond identitarian categorisation and waged labour and the

argument throughout has been that, in this, music has utopian functions in its disruptive cultural effects. There has been a meta theme of problematizing disciplinary pasts in both musicology and Marx-inspired politics. This has helped the thesis to explain that developing counter power against hegemony only happens from within the existing remits of possibility. The popular musicians discussed are exemplary of political meaning becoming active through popular music. The most controversial example of this was in ‘Beyond Gender’ in which arguments from ‘The Musicological Framework’ came through to suggest that music’s relative autonomy is active in engendering insubordination through non-subordination. Yet rejecting the activist/not-activist binary has enabled the thesis to speculate that in music experience people gain the confidence to participate in a politics-to-come, and in the shared anticipation of these new futures. These processes take place in consciousness-raising, and this was developed in the first chapter using Fisher’s ‘psychedelic consciousness’.

All of the chapters have focused on the processes of prefiguration that moved capital from an era of revolutionary idealism in which music cultures had significant political resonances as forms of consciousness-raising transformation to ‘capitalist realism’ and the onslaught of what would become neoliberal modernity. There are reasons for the production of the appearance of continuity in these politics (where in fact there was both physical and ontological violence) and music can disperse political knowledge against these hegemonic codes on mass scales across distributed/dynamic subjectivity. The mid-twentieth century signified discontinuity for the public perception that the fundamental social relations are fixed, and neoconservatives (Thatcher, Reagan et al) were appalled by the new, libidinal visibility of these collective autonomies. Neoliberal ideologues conceived strategies to counter the perceived threats posed to individual freedom by this ebbing of classic liberalism and in the rising collectivity of the mid-twentieth century. Popular music, as seen most clearly in this thesis in N.W.A’s ‘Fuck Tha Police’ and Pussy Riot’s ‘Punk Prayer’, can act as a weapon against neoliberalism. In these two cases, hip-hop and punk, music irrupts against the ineluctable continuities of history engendered by the ruling elites and exposes the status quo as provisional. For both examples, it is music’s unconditional aesthetic freedom moving across and beyond time that helps to counter the erasure of history as projected future. Hence the thesis is fundamentally about the mutability of subjectivity and temporality.

The central tenets of the political theory explored by the thesis for these purposes are prefiguration, social cohesion and rebellion. These frameworks appeared throughout
discussions of listening, identity and subversion. Holistically, the thesis argues that music is politics and aligns music accordingly, as politics, in ‘performance’. Liberties are taken in interpreting music and music experience and they relate to the practice of insubordination as the breaking, or transcendence of, social cohesion. It is a cross-disciplinary and critical intersubjective enquiry that produces arguments about how listening opens up political possibility. By the third chapter, it is possible to argue that there is anarchy to listening, and that the anarchy of listening is in the interacting conceptual levels of music, as politics, with human subjectivity. Collectively, the ideas question what it means to ‘counter-hegemony’ and to develop counter power in, against and beyond identity. That is, not in individual or group terms (because active politics are never a singular coherence but temporary), but across fields of dynamic subjectivity over various time scales.

To ask what it means to ‘live in’ popular music, the thesis articulates discourses of aesthetic value parallel to discourses of deconstruction from the social sciences. In so doing, music’s affective powers are tied more to what it does rather than what it represents. The performative has been the main category of theory used to open up the emotional and ideological consequences of aesthetic over ordinary realities. Music, this thesis persuades, is politics because it has performative dimensions. It is not a footnote in political processes, because moral and political attachments are motivated through music. Music’s relative and bodily affect (embodied and unconditional aesthetic freedom) finds articulation in flows of behaviour and social action.

Whilst there is a straightforward attitude, outlined from the outset in the thesis, that this is a project directing politics at musicology, rather than the other way around, there is no doubt room for more analyses of music’s capacity (as music) to materially signify. A limitation of the work is that there are some respects in which it is simply ‘my identity’. The disparate artists discussed are illustrative of an aesthetic advocacy. They are ‘my’ music. Yet, all opinions and ideas form from within the conditions that determine the perspective, and so all ontologies of music lead back to the self. As Bohlman writes,

The processes that lead to the imagination and construction of a musical ontology assemble it from various metaphysical conditions, but they strive toward an ontology that expresses and resides in some understanding of self-identity. Far from negating other musics and other ontologies, this self-identity depends on them.460

460 Bohlman, ‘Ontologies of Music,’ 34.
Multiple ontologies of music come from individual, local and global levels. It is in recognising the expanding plurality of ontologies of music that musicologists map both individual experience and the landscapes of global music cultures. This is the case in this thesis, in which my identity is used to study histories in popular music in order to encourage speculation on the political possibilities of the present and future. As Bohlman says of his essay “Ontologies of Music”, it is:

Not to establish a theoretical framework that would allow the reader to step into and analyse ontologies of music other than his or her own. Instead, I urge the reader to seize upon the plural and apply it to him – or herself; that is, to perceive in this essay metaphysical routes that connect self to others, but that ultimately lead back to self. ⁴⁶¹

Bohlman’s assessment of his essay applies to this thesis, and particularly in its theoretical accounts of dynamic subjectivity. Each individual encounters many and various types of music with complex metaphysical meanings and the ontologies of music that develop possess a quality of enactment through experience. There are also, no doubt, instances of the positivism and unconscious universalisations from a white, female, UK perspective that I sought to avoid. Regardless, the thesis is written in good faith, advocating experience-rich performative micro-theories that are interpretative and can evolve with the changing political landscape.

Anti-capitalist musicology cannot be ideologically neutral because it allows for a diversity of positions and does not pander to liberal illusions about a rational centre. Thus, anti-capitalist musicology anticipates that people will disagree and speaks plainly about the irrevocable antagonisms between ideologies that lead to political conflict outside of the limiting constructs of ‘civilised debate’. As Inventing the Future makes it clear ‘In a world of complexity, no one has a privileged view of the totality’. ⁴⁶² Anti-capitalist politics and post-capitalist imaginaries must therefore reify movement and resist coherent totalities (negative autonomism). It is an attitude that, whilst it cannot seek recourse to assured theoretical principles, can hope to build solidarity, to popularise left politics, and, to not do capital’s work for it by condemning people.

In order to suppress counter-histories, the ruling class projects continuities backwards to create senses of evolution over revolution. A consequence of the historical experience of the

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 18.
⁴⁶² Williams and Smiceck, Inventing the Future, 165.
The twentieth century is that there are changes to how radical left politics understand ‘revolution’. These developments can, as this thesis has, trace changes in the grammars of political claim-making and constructions of political will. Theorists from Foucault to Fisher explain that political change does not happen as linear progression. To escape, replace or transcend oppressive structures and realities, anti- and post-capitalist politics need to engender consciousness of the cultural, political and existential machineries that produce subjugation, as well as those that normalise the dominant groups, and create a sense of inferiority in the subjugated. In Fisher’s output, he consistently states that this means not simply raising group consciousness, but also raising the consciousness of the potency (the confidence) of the subjugated group. This is because the power of this ‘we’ depends on the state of raised consciousness. As Fisher explains the point:

To have one’s consciousness raised is not merely to become aware of facts to which one was previously ignorant: it is instead to have one’s whole relationship to the world shifted. The consciousness in question is not a consciousness of an already-existing-state of affairs. Rather, consciousness-raising is productive. It creates new subjects – a we that is both the agent of struggle and what is struggled for.⁴⁶³

The thesis studies popular music from the perspective of the transformative power of consciousness and the possibilities for senses of ‘we’ that moments of discontinuity throw up. It argues that music is ‘beyond’ in prefigurative and Marx-inspired senses that can assist popular musicological understandings of the attribution of agency; because music creates new subjectivities. Anti-capitalist musicology thus examines what creates the different environments in which subjectivities evolve and political movement emerges at critical junctures in popular music history. For this anti-capitalist musicology always-already puts the ‘absolute movement of becoming’ first and emphasises that the conflict between individualism and the collective instincts of left politics are not fatal because the binary need not exist.

Prefiguration is a political concept with its roots in anarchism which since the nineteenth century has interrogated the relationships between means and ends, developing complex political philosophies on ethics and violence. Prefiguration is a conceptual avenue that opens up countless ways through which to focus musicology on the future by making connections across eras that do not identify with how things are, but hope for something better. The thesis joins new trends in structures of explanation for prefigurative politics and the possibilities of

⁴⁶³ Fisher, “No Romance Without Finance.”
post-capitalism. Rather than look at capitalism as concentrations of power it follows these trends in resisting the allure of theoretical systems that organise the world in ways that appear to promise guidelines for transformative action. A central argument of the thesis is therefore that practices of critique need to adjust to the conditions of the era. Anti-capitalist politics must correspond to the actual and contemporaneous forms of capitalism and the rising subjectivities that contest and/or accompany it. Post-capitalist politics emphasise the value of imagination and the unpredictable. By emphasising contingency and experimentation, the approaches taken in this thesis to anti- and post-capitalist politics can adapt to political activities in the present tense that require clear strategic views of the terrain to be occupied. The nascent politics of Fisher’s Acid Communism join scholarship here on the performative dimensions of music. Acid Communism is a line of thought to aid the creation of cognitive maps for scholar-activists seeking to augment wide spread realisations of post-capitalist desire. This involves looking at what pushes back political imaginations (consciousness deflation for instance) and thinking in turn about how to shift these habits of judgement and feeling. It is through theories of affective ties that prefiguration and the cultivation of continuums for understanding rebellion are politically useful. In, for example, projects that identify and cultivate platforms for counter-hegemonic listening as developing counter power in collective autonomy (Novara Media, for example).

The entire thesis could be further filtered in the light of post-anarchist philosophies such as in terms of process, post-structural thinking and philosophies of becoming. Had time and space constraints allowed some of the content would benefit from further exploration of these ideas across the chapters. It is nevertheless in a post-anarchistic sense that the arguments have been made for prefiguration as primary theoretical tool for diagnostic (and strategic) frameworks able to perceive the bigger picture, and ‘post-anarchism’ ought therefore be a springboard for future research in this light. The amorphous concept of prefiguration enables the thesis to assert a post-structural reading of ‘rebellion’ over revolution. In so doing the thesis has argued, along with Fisher, that it was a mistake for the late-twentieth-century left to discount pleasure and individualism in political struggle. We cannot simply reject tenets of capitalism, because we are all (in, against and beyond) capitalism.

Genres of house, grime, hip-hop, reggae and dub are ripe for anti-capitalist musicological approaches that are interested in analysing not so much the sounds as the situations. These analyses would take cues, as has this thesis, from wider implications to debates around
representation, freedom of speech, violence and incarceration (and so on). In turn, these are also theoretical microcosms through which to think about how scholarship might reflect community concerns and positively effect change. Or to put it another way, the thesis argues in, against and beyond capitalism for politically committed theoretical work that proffers frameworks for co-production and inter-professional research with a wide variety of stakeholders.

In summary, the thesis contributes frameworks for anti-capitalist musicological approaches to studying ‘popular music and politics’. It employs Acid Communism as an extension of Fisher’s reading of capitalist realism alongside an understanding of neoliberalism as a consciousness deflating project of hegemony. It has analysed politics of desire though the transcendent and performative dimensions of music experience. It has thus sought to answer questions about how music affords liberatory experience by exploring how ideas of music’s autonomy are constantly reformed through the medium of ongoing intervention in the shifting grounds of politics. Looking at Western musicology’s historical acceptance of music as autonomous, the thesis explains that theories of music’s affect are not themselves autonomous for the circumstances determining them. Arnold Whittall articulates a related point

A deconstructed musicology ceases to be musicology at all if it resists direct engagement with the composer and composition, and side-steps the possibility that works of art may be defences against the world as much as products of the world […] In linking work to the world, it is still the work that dominates, because it represents a triumph over the world: it is a product of the world that transcends its context.464

It is precisely this that the thesis has argued. A belief in the autonomy of music, as a product of the world that transcends its context, need not be a betrayal of prejudice in favour of the discredited concept of the aesthetically autonomous musical work as defined the Western European classical tradition and Western self-modelling as sovereign entity. Using this as a grounding sentiment for anti-capitalist musicology (that music may be as much defence against, as product of, the world) means that whilst this thesis uses ‘identity’ it is also thought that the schema can guide further scholarship in ‘popular music and politics’ in different subject areas. For example, ‘In, Against and Beyond: Liberal Democracy’, or, ‘Donald Trump’, ‘SoundCloud/YouTube’ and ‘Postmodernity’. It might also be a prefix for individual

artists, such as ‘In, Against and Beyond: Akala’ or genres, ‘In, Against and Beyond: Drum and Bass’. Music has transcendental functions that need not be tied explicitly to political beliefs but, rather, the political potentialities of human embodied existence performed in the imagination. Anti-capitalist approaches to musicology can emphasise in, against and beyond identity that freedom is something that can only be achieved collectively. That is, it can work for collective autonomy in rebellion.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Journal Articles


Free Association, the *Moments of Excess: Movements, Protest and Everyday Life*. Oakland, California: PM Press, 2011


**Online**


Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns any copyright in it (the “Copyright”) and she has given The University of Huddersfield the right to use such Copyright for any administrative, promotional, educational and/or teaching purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts, may be made only in accordance with the regulations of the University Library. Details of these regulations may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of any patents, designs, trade marks and any and all other intellectual property rights except for the Copyright (the “Intellectual Property Rights”) and any reproductions of copyright works, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property Rights and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property Rights and/or Reproductions.