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from "Conditions of Poetic Production and Reception"

Part 5. "Transitions of Capitalist Hyperspace (shake your booty)"

RT: In session-length contemporary electronic DJ music, an aesthetic premium is put on clear and readily perceived transitions of sound elements as they're being mixed in. Streaks of heterogeneous rhythms, "off-tone" tones, layered (vague) harmonic washes, faded or amplified or doubly echoed frizzling of "old skool beats" – all these elements and more, are fore-grounded, each element "back-grounds" every other, so that the total effect is (or it would seem) a leveling of all elements. The 19th century and 20th century music figure-on-ground drama is wholly bypassed (and I dare say, all of its historical-political "material" buttressing). What's created is an "atmosphere" that's meant to be sensed more spatially than temporally. It's a new harmonic ("non-hierarchy") hierarchy for the New Now. Each session might last as long as the longest symphonies (an hour or more). The "atmo" cuts through, or rather, floods over the 3-5 minute pop song format. This is not AM nor FM "commercial" urban-global lyric filler. This is Capitalism's current, latest dreamscape: bodies grooving in (as being of this) "atmo" transitioning into a neatly flattened communal formlessness of One. This is in contrast, to say, *Soul Train* 70's & 80's pair styling, where the body politic is played out on an axis of jointed and disjointedness of alienated body parts, thus requiring articulation, social-individual mediation, for those parts to "come into being." In the New Now, the groove-space of Deep House Techno itself, its actual infrastructural contours and spatial limits are dreamt of as being boundless. Its deep aesthetic allergy is to perceived limits, experienced barriers, anything that appears to stop, or even retard the flow of things, bodies, their outer sensations, their inner feelings. "We", by all means, can "participate" in this boundless freedom-space by blending in, by liquefying into the mass. "Styling" (like "voguing" – that great lost/appropriated/suppressed art of the late 80's & 90's), in solo, or in pairs, or threes, or fours – is – no. Also not cool are moments of prolonged musical silence that might suggest the historical-material *aporia* we have to live through, a silence that might remind us of pressurized social-psychic *inaction* (where many a revolutionary impulse brews) – those moments too, are duly "transitioned" in reverb, with tweetered fuzz bass to

swizzle your privates. This *fascia profundis* of Capitalist Aesthetic Hard Ass Joy — risks no puncturing. This all-transition all-the-time “atmo” *wall*...is to be scaled as easily as one would a waterfall of pink Kool-Aid.

So after thinking about (and most definitively (“perversely”) enjoying) session electronica for some time now (dancing to it too!), I’m proposing a 4-dimensional political-aesthetic framework in order to be able to navigate this emergent-to-dominant work-live / think-feel hyper Capitalist landscape. Implicit in this resistive framework is the gambit that many a “liberational” tingle might be too easily washed over unless we learn to access, navigate, and ultimately smash through this “transitional” sensorium. The following is also parameterization of a possible revolutionary poetics, a schema intended to *temporally stall* Capital’s relentless de-potentialization of space as a site for social transformation. This practice-oriented schema might be called (as physicists refer to their multi-dimensional “brane worlds” model) “The Bulk.”

contiguous-continuous “play” – material (re-imagining) re-ordering of social space

contiguous-discontinuous “play” – material (re-imagining) re-ordering of social space

non-contiguous-continuous “play” – material (re-imagining) re-ordering of social space

non-contiguous-discontinuous “play” – material (re-imagining) re-ordering of social space

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contiguous = visible cause & effect lines of social space transformation (i.e., “urban renewal”, “repurposing” of districts, “Special Economic Zones” (SEZ’s)

non-contiguous = Capitalist (mitochondrial) institutional, legal, but also lead-form <rightist> cultural movements that haven’t as yet gelled into describable super-forms

continuous = media pulse on high (“issue on every bodies tongue”)

discontinuous = media pulse on low (info hard to get, hard to string into sensible

form, hard to make it *stick*)

“play” = violence and counter-violence in realm of actual body-control – all the way “up to” poetics

“material” = the Capitalism’s metabolistic forces at work (including its “oppositional” effects)

“re-imagining” = forced to squawk out conflicted desires out of desperateness and/or unexpected and easily blurted out new needs, plus having those new needs be met by unexpected “solutions” (i.e. re-hoisting the sails of gender, sexuality, and race onto new ships)

“re-ordering” = incidental/accidental temporary transformation of space (right under the hegemony’s nose) and/or a concerted attack on the promontories of power, city-wide, country-wide, globally.

“social space” = a “social space” itself – up for grabs! malleable, unstable, and explosive! but most of the time, invisible.

NK: Your proposed graph, “The Bulk,” or four-by-four-quadrant system (that, from a profile view, are actually not quadrants but more like dimensional rectangular tunnels – spaces themselves) is totally fascinating – requiring a revaluing of space/time, a reformulation of terms. Like dozens before and now, these existing concepts are worn out – laden – and have to be reimagined. Vocabular reformulations, new ways of putting it, such as yours, can shuffle these concepts to get a glimpse of their concealed motion and their raw material. So, you’ve offered a really compelling alternative theoretical-poetic blueprint...now what?

The contemplative “now what” question can be transformed into action if we know the *stakes* of this new blueprint. Like you say, right now we live in an era in which “space” is privileged over “time,” time being considered a modernist, narrativizing, hierarchical trap. Now we talk about the Event and its revolutionary rupture, we talk about the annihilation of time in postmodernity. I think maybe part of the resistance to “time” (on the level of theory, on the level of

how things are made, and for what ends) actually reflects major confusion about history, what constitutes it, what it *is*. If history is interpreted as periodicization, as various ways of describing the passage of time (diverse forms and patterns, linear vs circular vs repetitive, etc) then history can be something we have, as one Frenchman said, “dropped out” of – it can be incorrectly interpreted as a mode of *historicity*. But if history actually has *something real as its object*, like modes of production, then it can't possibly be over if its object of focus does indeed still persist. And our 21st century global-flow mode of production certainly persists! To my mind, the privilege of either term, space or time, is actually a tell-tale sign, a symptom, of the quality and type of that era's mode of production, and that era's conception of history, too. And this is, I really think, really important – utterly urgent, actually! Here's why:

The euphoric celebration of space makes the imagining of a future, and a past, *appear* inconceivable; Fredric Jameson's “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” elaborates on this thoroughly. And what is Deep House if not a privileged experiential “now” – consumption-scape/pleasuredome, with an “aesthetic allergy” to the contextualization of space by time? This is panorama-gazing vs taxonomy-constructing. Don't fret – just view. So...what does it mean that the celebration of space corresponds to, as Jameson says, “the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communication network?” What does it mean that Capitalism's dreamscape, perhaps partially, musically, represented in Deep House, “effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project, thereby abandoning the thinking of future chance to fantasies of sheer catastrophe and inexplicable cataclysm, from visions of 'terrorism' on the social level to those of cancer on the personal?” □

Well, for one thing, I'm immediately suspicious of any suggestion that we “can't” map something, that we lack the capacity to conceive of something, that we *are unable to think change*. The change hasn't been thought – and if “now” isn't the “moment” for change's rupture from/in this dominant system, the thing to do is lay tracks for making that rupture...erupt. And that *is* thinking something. So proposing an alternative spatial-temporal navigational tool – and poetic construction device no less – is to pull up one's sleeves and to assemble what might lead to and what is already *thinking change*. There's whole poetic projects that could emerge out of the theorizing of space you've just laid out...

And, excitingly here, these projects *are* already here, and exist according to other poet-theorists' reformulations of terms. Key example: Laura Elrick's video-poem *Stalk*; a 4-dimensional political-resistance-scape all its own [<http://blip.tv/file/2192353/>]. If a hooded figure dressed like a Guantanamo detainee (Elrick herself) passing eerily through Times Square on a workday amongst unsuspecting 9-5ers (not surprisingly many of whom divert their gaze, trying "not to look") set to highly structured audio-splicing of literature, government documents, and Elrick's own poetry, isn't a spatial intervention on *its* own terms, I don't know what is! To me, *Stalk* is incredibly timely, or should I say, historical – that's the very matter that's *embodied* in that orange-garbed figure. Times Square, the perfect godhead for the deregulated conglomerated global Capital-scape, is *interrupted* by a figure that refers to – no *is* – history's troubled and troubling subject, that unspeaking and unrepresented trace of the *real* (ie material) legacies underlying the conquests of North American (ultimately Global) Capitalism. With a performance piece like *Stalk* (and thus for *any* poetic-political piece inspired by new conceptual systems like "The Bulk") the aesthetic question is never "will it work" or "will it have affect;" the question is "how does that particular intervention into contemporary time-space both engage this alternative conceptual apparatus, and reveal further tweaks to be made?" "How does that time-space intervention *allude* to aspects of the real that can be worked on materially, outside art?" *Stalk* is both art and tool, if by tool we mean a drill into the core of what constitutes our contemporary political-material *flow*. This is not a dutiful resurrection of that 19th and 20th century "figure-on-the-ground drama" once so easily chuffed off by panorama-ists, but a definitive, politicized aesthetics of its own order. It's *armed* with definition, both emerging out of and reforming the very "bulk" of its spatial-poetic praxis.

So I couldn't disagree more with the suggestion (and it's a been suggested over and over) that we're incapable, right now, of thinking the collective project and imagining a future. Like the aesthetic questions appropriate to Elrick's piece, the anxiety – and "success" – of art-making isn't primarily about the result, but the "hows" of intervention, of interrupting Deep House with orange History, here and "now."

RT: I have a “layered” (itself “transitioned”) memory of witnessing two separate performances of *Stalk* (Vancouver, New York), one “event” upon the other. As the political climate shifted after its initial moment of composition (composed in May-July, 2008), the political struggle over “Gitmo” itself, its national legal status, its eventual resolution or non-resolution in the domain of Government, *Stalk* changed radically in character. And yet, “the piece” (as would be described by High Modernist valuation, which is still a dominant mode of artistic interpretation), might be described as remaining “integral.” But *Stalk’s* appearance to the spectatorship *as through* (here, now) *and out of* (then, later) the Bulk – its transformation by way of its journeying through the texture and density of these shifting planes of ideological movement (including one of its main elements, Elrick herself, not as after-image, but fully-bodied interlocutor), is *warped*, to say the least, “non-integral.” And yet! “it,” “the piece,” or “event,” or – something – “remains.” Through *non-contiguous-continuous* “play” – *material (re-imagining) re-ordering of social space* – the very notion of political-aesthetic content has been re-formulated. Perhaps the word *polarity* is fitting. The Capitalist “transitional sensorium” itself – has been historically *re-polarized*. The institutionally-lived planes can’t be “destroyed by art,” but the set of charges corresponding to those planes can be experimented with – and very rigorously. As you pointed out, *Stalk* isn’t about (immediate programmatic) “results,” but a performative anagram as to the *how’s* of intervention. Experiencing it again would no doubt make me ultra aware of historical movement (as to actual space I’m watching it in too), and shift me in a direction, one that I can’t describe in any way now.

So the problem of History, as you point out, with “*something real as its object*, like modes of production” – that seems like an inevitable gate to pass through, in terms of interpretation of artistic works under Capitalism. But let’s talk about Capitalism for just a bit. Capitalism has brought the world to the very brink of not only its environmental capacity, but also human-potential capacity. Truth is nearly half the world is made up of what has been called the “living dead,” people in slums almost hopelessly bound to conditions nearly (nearly) out of their control: no potable water, no steady food supply, scant education. Here, in the U.S., there’s a gaping economic class divide that’s not only increasing day by day, but it’s cultural effect – well, is barely talked about as a crisis in *wealth production* – social cultural-wealth production – *as deficit* (idea-to-action ways of being are declining in proportion to the growth of “creatives” – everyone has a

“creative” dimension waiting to be tapped (some charge a hefty fee for this witchery to come about). In these immediate climes, these “post-avant” poetic climes, it’s *barely* sensed at all, the crises. So what we’re talking about here (I think, I hope) *implicitly* – through all this theoretical hiccupping, cultural burping, poetic cramping, “psychic-personal” fitful sleep – is *revolution*. It seems to me that *not* talking about revolution, avoiding that potentially very embarrassing dance floor, produces *less* ideas, *less* “forms” to “experiment” with. This sounds like something so hopelessly passé to some, but I think “revolution” – yes, as a thought-form even, is something that’s pressing for our times. The radical re-scrambling of the ways that human beings relate to each other. What could be more “creative” (& destructive & frightening & inspiring) than that!? Just now thinking of the aesthetic-political examples of Sally Silvers’ choreography (here, now) as *out of* (then, later) Isadora Duncan, how they constantly re-articulate inter-relations between entities in motion (on a scale of the recognizably “human” to speculative post-“human”). In these current poetic climes, how did the body (as in body-body, not “textual”) become such a minor guest at the banquet of poetic thinking? Obviously, this is something the CPT sets out to explore, and of course, Elrick’s *Stalk* sets out on a different path altogether.

Also, I have a “layered” “transitioned” memory of riding in a car with Barrett Watten in Detroit many years ago, him astutely pointing out the urban-global political locations of “aesthetic” (meant as non-ironic) climes as we *smashed* into new neighborhoods, techno music blaring, socio-political implications rocking. I don’t want to “panorama-gaze” *this* memory, nor “taxonomize” to death my every move around it. You know what I mean? But that’s kind of how I live and think these days. Hungry for things up ahead that “I can’t describe in any way now.” And I think the thought-form of Revolution at least opens that space up. As Elrick says at the very end of *Stalk*, “a hole punctured through it.”

NK: Rupture – punctures – as vital glimpses of some “unseeable” yet already potentialized force in our lived spatial-temporal surroundings are so vital to a Revolutionary practice. Punctures examine and reveal what the limits *appear to be* given the parameters; half the battle is noticing where and what the battlegrounds actually are, in other words. What is politically salient right now, I think, is taking seriously revolution as process and motion through continuously

evolving structures of domination and resistance, rather than a “front” flattened into a “united” perspective as soon as it's associated with an historical era (historicity coming back to bite). And so, like your experiences of “Stalk” at different junctures, poetic-political interventions into space-time also *necessarily* change the body-unit (the self, the individual). I mean that not only do interventions that build off a flexible system like the Bulk help to reveal something new about the dimensions we live in/through, they *also* reveal something about the body-unit that *moves through* this space-time. If the space of Manhattan is interrupted by the Guantanamo figure who is also a signification – more than that – a literal *rupture* of historical data, then... what actually *is* that figure? Another way to ask is, what *is* Elrick, in that performance piece? Not just organic matter, right? I guess I'm really wondering how the significant historical characteristics of our space-time might permeate – and make up! – our own lived bodies.

Cyborgs – a totally exuberant way to encapsulate the limits of our historical space-time as well as shoot full and focused imaginings towards a future. This future, actually, is already here, since we're already semblances of the organic-technic. I think this is actually another Bulk-like method to shift the terms and imagine potential revolutionary subjects, those “illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism,” in Donna Haraway's words. In this Bulk, we are products and productions of the technic colliding, engulfing our “selves” as products and productions of the organic. Real and hyperreal: Elrick's faceless (is “she” even organic?) figure of history, the nameless citizens of Times Square caught unaware, and the camera catching it all, too. This hyperreal, ultimately both the privileged postmodern space *and* the poetic-political resistant apparatus, can only be made in a world characterized by the division between physical and mental labor. A Capitalist world, that you describe in stark detail. That division of labor is the rise of the machine, our real ultimate Other. That hooded Guantanamo figure (historical data and poet-activist) is no alien, a colonial and postcolonial figure – but a product and production of an ever-increasingly complex system of domination – maybe, a cyborg.

In Cyborg-Bulk, the samesame of capitalist culture industry, though one of their childhood swingsets, doesn't infiltrate and infect the ability for these entities to think creatively and anarchically. They can *do the work*. Here's a way to think a psyche of a revolutionary subject. What's harder though, I really think, is the

material level of some future cyborg reality. If the vast majority of us living today can't get through a day without making numerous exchanges of real things as if they are actually equivalent, how can we *implement* new-world (revolutionary) parameters based on rupture and heterogeneity if we're participating *all the time* in a process that *lies* about homogeneous identities and real material values? Jameson suggests an imperative to tether to the *material* as much as possible when he reminds us that "producing uniform goods is a more complex functional activity than the production of uniform thoughts." More complex = harder to create a spatial-temporal interventionary practice in opposition; but not...impossible! Consciousness-building work, as integral to Revolution, fatally threatened at every turn by the existing economic and social forces - okay - I'm saying, like cyborgs, we *do the work* of continuous refiguration towards a real that you or I "can't describe in any way now."

Continuous cyborg refiguration, in the form of blue, pointy-eared Avatars recently *erupted* during the weekly protests against occupation in Bil'in, not far outside the West Bank. This political (and poetic) demonstration in a site of real bodily threat really *is* a rupture (if only a momentarily self-reflexive one). The blue intruders (Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists) recast the terms of struggle - they changed the texture of the *space* by adding "foreign" components (not so unlike Elrick's *Stalk*). It's almost like the Avatar activists had their own, and necessarily so, accurate understanding of the *political* Bulk in Bil'in, and tactically tweaked the terms of engagement; even if this is "media stunt," this is hyperreal rupture alluding to Revolution-level bursts. That's our role (*for now*) - identifying the perplexing challenges in resistance, not least the insidious chains of equivalences between radically non-equivalent objects perpetuated in a market economy, and pouncing on those moments of recast, however short or long-lived they might be.

Parts 1 & 2 of Conditions of Poetic Production and Reception, "Squat Theatre and Crisis" and "Body Capacitance and Edging in Poetics Theater" appear in Jacket Magazine #40 [www.jacketmagazine.com].

Part 3 "Ritualized sacrifice, gauging the material-social" is in print in West Coast Line 62, and in Barzakh [<http://barzakh.net/site/current-issue/148>].

Part 4 "New Resistant Subjects (Bot to Bot)" appears in The Poetic Front Vol 3 No 1 [<http://journals.sfu.ca/poeticfront/index.php/pf>].