

XENOCHRONIC RHYTHMANALYSIS—PARADROMIC MUSICAL PRACTICES IN COLLOIDAL CAPITALISM **Couroux, 2014, presented at ACLA, New York, March 22, 2014**

Any speculation regarding the coming alien nature of capitalism already has a lot to work with. The manifold, all-encompassing manner in which inhuman, machinic systems subtended by algorithmic logics tethered to metastatic capitalism, conspire to affectively, cognitively, perceptually nudge our present everyday towards so many manufactured horizons, entangled in a maze whose boundaries remain imperceptible, already attests to a deeply alien present. Scanners, sensors, analyzers, biometric capture, data collection, all manner of *möbiusoidal* normalizations—the future is here, unevenly distributed. The homeostat is the apparatus par excellence of cybercapital control, a self-adjusting machine operating via pervasive feedback monitoring of inputs and outputs. The constant extraction of information from every domain of an individual's life—which occurs most often in the background of daily activities—operates to preempt future outside initiative by constantly predicting her next consumptive move, thereby embedding her ever deeper. Pervasive cyberaffordance eventually melts into system immanence, a pathological condition characterized by the inability to grasp the coordinates of the system one is in, through the isomorphic subjection of the infinitesimal quotidian to analysis, calculation and prediction. Music's key involvement in abetting the cybernetic functioning of capitalism—an instrument of control through modulation—also instantiates an expanded set of tactical vectors and functional affordances, suitable for undermining or at the very least foregrounding these stealthy operations long enough for their mètic contrivances to dissemble. Let's call it *instrumental music*. Music's amenability to cybernetics is underlined by Claude Shannon, who defined a "singing condition" as the inability of an automata to recognize its loopy entrapment. I'd like to constellate possible entry-points into employing music and its affective vitality with a particular attention to time and rhythmicity, aiming towards instantiating various forms of decoupling from the affordances of cybercapitalism.

Rhythmanalysis, in the barely adumbrated work of Dos Santos, Bachelard and Lefebvre, roughly corresponds to a study of the rhythmic structures populating a given environment (broadly speaking) and their compounded effects on subjects lodged within it, whose own intensive and extensive rhythms serve as (at least initial) measuring apparatus. It might be gainfully reinvented as a method to disarticulate and resynthesize the multi-scalar rhythmic entanglements and stratifications that characterize our sonically-modulated embeddedness in the operations of capital. We might rename it *rhythmèticanalysis*, to honor its overtly duplicitous, manipulative character and parasitic employment of a given situation's disposition to its own effective advantage.

Rhythmèticanalysis allows for actualization and transversal cooperation. I will briefly detail three levels, from the molecular, wave level of the audio-brand or sonic sigil (and hypersigil); to the median level of rhythmic and polyrhythmic pulsation, such as that constituting the armature of a given slogan; to a temporally extended formal level, in which patterns of recursion and identity can be differentially pressured. Though a broader accounting of the possible modes of manipulation available to a sonic-affective engineer exceed the capacities of the present paper, they might be preliminarily grouped according to their temporal facture and situational deployment. Outside-time, deferred processes of molecular design, such as those involving the construction of a sonic sigil are as essential as interventional, app-based modes which perform adjacent mappings according to real-time input, and can be deployed in live situations. Above all, one should not harbor fidelities to any one mode over any other; a dispersion and diversification of tactics is recommended, provided experimental results are thoroughly documented.

LEVEL ONE—MOLECULAR: SIGIL-PASSWORD-BRAND

Just-in-time capitalism, powered by instant feedback control and communication, replaces *just-in-case*, which allows for the potential future consumption of a stockpiled commodity. The preemption of the future requires a never-ending series of present-weighted, provisional *projects*—shades of Kafka's *indefinite postponement*, not to mention Muzak's Quantum Modulation, which operates by subtending an endless variety of surfaces with

rigidly unified but subliminal affective prescription. Greenberg's *Augenblick*: the totality of the artwork is accessible in the blink of an eye, before cognition takes things up. Strategically deployed formalisms with the capacity to preempt conscious apprehension can effectively delimit the range of available experience. Tony Conrad's *Bryant Park Moratorium Rally* (1969) goes one better: the mediated, televised coverage of the rally appears to *precede* the actual event taking place a few blocks away. L. Ron Hubbard defines a *clear* as one who thinks in instantaneous bursts, without the deleterious, deliberative ramblings of an inner voice, without time. Francis Bacon conjured paintings meant to explode *directly onto the nervous system*. Control requires time for its feedback operations, but needs to conceal this fact—by parcelizing it into manageable presents—lest the enslaved subject appropriate its modulatory effects to foster embodied continuities and self-eject from the communicative bind with capitalism. Minimalists wanted to let time back into art: as Christoph Cox has pointed out, Michael Fried's *Art and Objecthood* (1967) was more concerned with impugning Minimal art's indistinction from a general experiential immersion in the world (and the wayward temporalities that inevitably wend through it) than objecting to its "theatricality." (Most importantly, the essay inadvertently galvanized the Minimalist project, which appropriated Fried's language to carve itself a theoretical basis.)

While the jingle-slogan could easily abduct the unsuspecting transient individual within a relatively uncluttered mediascape—the popular multi-decade TV show *Name That Tune* played its ideological part in testing a subject's degree of embeddedness within popular culture—something more punctual was required to snatch the contemporary subject's increasingly fragmented attention. Given the messy contingencies and vampire effects inevitably engendered by the passage of time, it's no surprise that chronically chronophobic cybercapitalism would want to arrest its deleterious progress. Not to mention numerous studies correlating significant atrophy of the hippocampus—the brain centre responsible for musical processes and the consolidation of information from short- to long-term memory—with long-term stressful exposures to colloiddally overstimulating environments. Melody and rhythm require time to unfold, whereas a vertical, timbral structure can detonate instantly, according to the principles of sonic niching, by which highly effective intra-species communication operates in the animal world, as documented in Bernie Krause's work. Bare traces requiring no more than a few milliseconds to be actualized can intercalate themselves rhythmically between other signals without any undue effort—affectively-tuned passwords promptly accessing worlds of association through chronoportation. In the absence of suitable crannies for tactical incursion, a judiciously constituted timbral cocktail riding unoccupied frequency bands can superimpose itself on a complex acoustic scene with no loss of communicational integrity. The quest for an ever-reduced abductive threshold is therefore a matter of intense speculation and experimentation. While earlier methods simply splinterize extant references into immediately legible, timbrally specific incarnations, autonomically activating prior phonographic incorporations (capitalism functions most effectively when the subject does its work), recent branding tendencies privilege the development of radically contained, psychoacoustically-tweaked fragments without history (which more effectively resist the subject's attempts to expunge them).

This is a short excerpt of John Oswald's *Plexure* from 1993, a prime example of holographic splinterization, of 1980s pop songs, in this case; as such, chronoportational capacities are calibrated to generational affordances. Prescient at the time of its release for anticipating the routinized psychedelic overstimulation of contemporary media, it has since lost some of its confrontational potential—my students even found it relaxing—which indicates the game has moved on.

Sonic branding operates by associating these bare sonic traces with previously embedded positive memories. These brand sigils operate as sonic transmutations of English occultist Austin Osman Spare's method of compressing slogans expressing desired actualizations into graphemes—passwords—which can be launched during a split-second glitch in consciousness) acting as transitional fulcrums between the anchored memory or *sigil anchor* (the deeper the better) and the range of synaesthetic, semiotic associations populating a particular brand constellation (which together collaborate in a form of operant conditioning). Successful chronoportation hinges on the specificity of the bare trace, which has the capacity to immediately abduct you to a pleasant

moment in your past. The moment you become unstuck in time (typically arriving unannounced, in the rhythms of Skinner's *variable ratio schedule*, their irregular instantiations tethering you more intimately to a given system—the unpredictable, overlapping arrivals of tweets, RSS feeds, news alerts, emails conspire to permanently bind us to our devices, wherever and whenever we are) a corporate predator can slip in.

We're listening to *In a Sedimental Mood*—alien furniture music (Erik Satie's 1920 precognition of background music)—which functions as a *hypersigil*, a sigil extended through the time dimension, continuously permuting a set of concatenated variables distilled from existing, genre-tethered musical tropes (Bacharach chordal declamations, one-note guitar solos, Baroquely stylized harpsichord figurations, among others), playing out the phase-space composed of their overlay. It was conceived in order to test the boundaries within which these tropes retain their integrity, as a response to corporate design of increasingly flexibilized, mutable brand sigils, recognizable despite being subjected to perpetual transformation and recontextualization.

LEVEL TWO—MEDIAN (RHYTHMIC): ARMATURE-SLOGAN-JINGLE

Psychedelic adjacencies are generated via the strategic imbrication of overtly incongruent but subliminally (genetically) congenial signals. Such formations are inevitably spawned within a colloidal dispersion in which perpetually recombinant surfaces enter into temporary electrical relationships with one another by virtue of haphazard temporal and spatial proximities. The colloidal model characterizes the contemporary distribution of auditory fragments within a given environment in which adjacencies are convulsively spawned. Deleuze's *baker's dough* analogy is fitting: two extreme points on a slab become adjacent after a mathematically-determinable number of folds. Terms need only hang together in the same general space-time for factual coalescence to occur. The waning of attention and concentration characteristic of colloidal capitalism (a lachrymose pining for an empty category considering William James' reminder of how focus and distraction are perpetually complicating each other) opens the door to an uncontrolled festering of the viral powers of psychedelic adjacency. Indeed, a state of permanent distraction—the primary perceptual modality of the 21st century—unlocks unprecedented rhythmèticanalytic capacities to induce synchronicities, making effective previously unsuspected correlations. These adjacencies, through the rhythmic interplay induced by the binding of one signal to another, liberate and intensify mutant affect, effectively revalencing each individual fragment in the process, alternatively primed for any future encounter. It has been demonstrated that laugh tracks mapped onto affectively ambiguous material induce the synchronization of endorphine release and the consequent facilitation of social bonding. In the present example, one song is heard through another—Gordon Lightfoot through Paul McCartney—with the aim of inducing double earworms, ingraining one thing through another, semi-permanently.

A metastatic spread of convulsively correlated entities may constitute an indigestible challenge to the stealthy incorporation of hungry earworms, primed to abduct the unwitting transient listener. Predictably, William S. Burroughs' insistence on the functionalizing of art to unshackle its capacities to effectuate changes in reality was deliberately downplayed. Genesis P-Orridge recounts a story of the author casting a spell on an eatery whose proprietors had maligned him by walking back and forth in front of it playing a barely audible tape on which "trouble noises" were *cut into* characteristic field recordings captured in that location. Shortly after the action had begun, the joint closed without explanation. With the volatility and *accessibility* of schizophonic practices thus exposed—their capacities to fold time and space—it was deemed preferable to defuse Burroughs within the equivocating realm of postmodern stylistic experimentation, rather than let him further expedite the mass propagation of techno-actualization principles. The combination of increasingly Cloud-centralized databases of massively addressable material and appropriate computational speed allow for highly adaptive methods of on-the-fly affect production. One can easily imagine a parasitic cooptation of the Shazam app which instead of simply punctually identifying an unknown tune caught in a transient environment, automatically calls up a related tune per algorithmic specification, synchronizing its playback to the environmental tune with the goal of leveraging particular polyrhythmic correlations and decorrelations.

LEVEL THREE—MACRO: FORM-REPETITION-EXTENDED TIME

In a *fractal listening* experience, an affective intuition of non-repetition is perpetually undercut by a cognitive ratification of identity. It can be thought as an overheated form of *structural listening*, a modality privileged by Adorno—increasingly difficult to materialize in the wake of pervasive schizophonia—which organizes listening according to a constant push and pull between parts of a given structure and the latter's gradual, temporally-irreversible consolidation. Such a framework, mobilized by constant dialectical interchange within linear evolution, reflected a more general conception of life as an ongoing narrative, in which one's self-situation depends on the ability to form continuities, establish polarities. Such auto-fashioning requires for its continuing potency a foundational stability hard to come by within post-Fordist precarity, which dissolves permanent horizons into expedient, expendable presents, anxious instants insufficiently energetic to foment productive bonding. By contrast, the fractal experience shuttles the listener between local specifics (deviations with various capacities to be registered *as* deviations) and an accumulating shadowy shape-shifting totality, constantly updated by information from this transient matter, forever deferring its termination into a graspable gestalt. The incapacity to categorically identify ongoing recursion within the convulsions of febrile unresolution almost inevitably engenders temporal anomalies, folds, a general buckling of teleological integrity, and an acceleration of uncontrollable interpenetrations of past, present, and future; all the while, a virtual field of potential stealthily expands, unceasingly leveraging the perception of change. Any isolated iteration is thus summarily demoted to transient status, lacking the resilience to firmly establish itself. This modality takes into account the inevitable process by which repetition pressures incongruity to reverse into new forms of congruity (through a gradual ablation of idiosyncrasy); it therefore must remain constantly on the move. (This perceptual confusion is further abetted by recent studies demonstrating the ephemeral, unstable nature of acoustic memory, in comparison with haptic or visual memory.)

Anadumbration is the process that effects the perpetual postponement of any unifying perceptual paradigm through the febrile shuffling of parameters. Adumbration is a term developed by philosopher-phenomenologist Edmund Husserl denoting the continuous accumulation of various perspectives of an object into a multi-dimensional mental consolidation. Appropriating Husserl's theory by *détourning* it (for highly practical purposes), English artist Norman Wilkinson originated at the tail end of World War I one of the most notorious applications of anadumbration via *dazzle camouflage*, a technique involving the painting of stripes of contradictory size and directionality on a vessel, such that the opponent's ability to gather a coherent grasp of its coordinates (size, speed, heading, etc.) is accordingly impeded. Any attempt to defeat a listener's propensity to terminate perception when confident that an experience has been identified, categorized, captured is invariably enhanced by the use of anadumbrative manoeuvres. Indeed, the *un-gestalt*ing deviations of anadumbration forestall any preemptive extraction from a system by preventing conscious seizure of its modalities; ungraspable from an extrinsic vantage point, their mysterious implications cannot be comfortably integrated qua dismissed. System immanence is guaranteed by a rapid containment of discrepant surfaces powered by the efficient operations of the Freudian *secondary process*, by which a subject backtracks into a rational second-order justification from an incoherent first impression, summarily deleted. Anadumbration is a *chronocrypsic* operation, tasked with time camouflage, asymmetrically imbricating incongruent temporalities while donating integumentary impressions of a wholly illusory kind. Dazzle camouflage breaks up surface continuities via differential blending—collapsing portions of the figure into the (back)ground—a technique that also works effectively in the time domain, by abutting inconsistent, incomplete iterations of a given material which increasingly destabilize the constitution of an accumulated ground in memory. In the case of *Adumbrate_57 (infra_legible training music for the late capitalist subject)*, engendering wormholes through rewind, fast-forward, stutter and drop out procedures. Like Cildo Meireles' *Insertions into Ideological Circuits*, this work operates in the same space reserved for background music, meant to be mistaken for it. This particular effort wouldn't have been possible without the use of *technoablation*, a manoeuvre which exploits the listener's propensity to take for granted the mode of operation of a given technology as relatively immutable, by simulating and mutating it, thereby opening the gates to a set of elegant bait-and-switches. Each time forward

playback resumes, it does so with another version of itself, functioning *as if* the same, which occasions subliminal alterations of the listener's capacity to form a coherent gestalt. As such, it functions very much within a viral cryptographic perspective, replicating difference as it propagates.

Adumbrate_57 involves the generation of 57 subtle variations to dislodge the centrality of an offending earworm. To place the original into a larger context, thereby demoting it. Technoablation works in tandem with an affordance model calibrated to the putative operational boundaries of a given technology in order to exceed the latter (what the system affords) by the stealthy application of shell-game-type modalities which paradoxically (impossibly) simulate (audibilize) various functions. The excess engendered by such an exploit—that which is skimmed off what is apprehensible—is held in subconscious abeyance until it can be put to future use. However, a too-blatant enactment of this procedure may trigger a reflexive backfire, the excess effectively inducing in the perceiving subject a sense of paradox intermittently flashing into consciousness the coordinates of the occult system in question (its *phase space*). Accordingly (like many of the modalities outlined here), technoablation is at once a method intrinsically suited to corporate control (subliminally spiriting a hidden message into the folds of the presumably identical, but infra-legibly different) and a catalyst accelerating the latter's undoing, depending on which occluded grey areas of technological operation are to be momentarily foregrounded to gain tactical advantage.

BECOMING-PARADROMIC

An effectively transgressive practice must operate on the same terrain as the invasive neuro-military-entertainment avant-garde—the only avant-garde with any material traction nowadays—*hyperstitionally* rather than predictively, hijacking and mutating uncommitted affective excess, multiplied by computational circulation, that escapes the reach of capitalist territorialization. Artists must become *paradromes*—to run alongside the algorithms capitalism deploys to track and control the contemporary dividual subject, and those that power financial capitalism and leverage the potency of the future—by insinuating processes which foreground affective undercurrents, accelerating, converting and transforming them in the process, redrawing predatory boundaries.

The capture containers that are the industrially standardized formalisms of our time, with their means of distributing bundles of affect within tight boundaries, provide so many platforms from which to experiment with differential audibilizations of affective mutations. While Lefebvre's method remains anthropocentric, a rhythmètic analysis operating at the horizon of affect *de facto* occasions an engagement with impersonal, transpersonal, inhuman valences, which already impels another kind of collectivity. Privatized emotion dissipates into pre-individual affect. May the solipsistic, economically open consumer of endless repetition be converted and absorbed into an occult, technologically-savvy, collective *phonoegregoric* entity operating under the radar.