SAVAGE

‘Listen, I beg of you,’ cried the SAVAGE... ‘Lend me your ears’

ISSUE FOUR FREE SPEECH

AUTUMN 2016

'Listen, I beg of you,' cried the SAVAGE... 'lend me your ears'.

The relevance of Free Speech in 2016 hardly needs to be stated. Since we began preparing this edition the necessity of free expression has come to seem even more pressing, threatened by changes in the political landscape; meanwhile the so-called 'Snoopers' Charter' has passed, almost silently, into British law. With this in mind, we open SAVAGE Issue Four with a piece by filmmaker Tarquin Ramsay, whose conversations with Julian Assange and ex-CIA analyst John Kiriakou feed into a dramatic exploration of the political and personal impacts of state surveillance.

Although Free Speech is our starting point, our writers have approached this theme in surprising, often resonant ways: Ryan McMeekin looks at the recent US presidential election through the lyrics it provoked, while Beatrice Bacci investigates literature's oral tradition from Ancient Greece to the present. A theme that reverberates throughout the edition is silence, which can be at times restrictive or liberating. Diandra Șovăilescu suggests that the absence of speech in film can facilitate unexpected conversations with its audiences, while Fleur Elkerton explores deeds over words in relation to female nudes. The nude is repurposed as a vehicle for female expression in Flora Thomas's photographs and the paintings of Eleanor Johnson.

Several of these works contemplate who is allowed to speak and who can be heard, wondering how we can listen and respond more effectively to marginalised voices. Rosanna Ellul provides an illuminating insight into the empowering role of art within British prisons. Regulations on speech can actually facilitate rather than suppress debate according to Charlie Macnamara, who considers the growth of online discursive communities. Other articles consider the implications of fusing conflicting voices: Caycee Peskett-Hill tackles the problem of importing cultural values across national borders, while Uri Inspector deliberates how best to present the works of Shakespeare on the modern stage.

A final (if unexpected) recurring theme is that of vegetables, which crop up in Georgia Herman's photographs of squashed aubergines and watermelons, in Rosemary Moss's 'Freeze Peach' lyrics and Nikita Singh's poem 'Inappropriate Vegetable'.

The attentive and generous work of our writers here is itself a cause for optimism. By turns playful and provocative, their works are a celebration of expression itself.

Until next time,

Alastair, Sophia, Charlie

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Under Surveillance

Tarquin Ramsay gives a personal account of the relevance of free speech.

What astounded me about being followed by the FBI was their total incompetence. I was a 17-year-old documentary filmmaker in touch with ex-CIA agent John Kiriakou, who was jailed for speaking out against the use of waterboarding in interrogating terrorism suspects in the USA. Looking back, I am not surprised that this put me on their hit-list. At the time it was disconcerting to return to my hotel room to find the TV on full volume, hard drives unexplainably lying on our beds and the computer locked because the password had been input wrongly multiple times. The room had changed: it bore the traces of other human beings moving, looking, touching. They might as well have graffitied 'Agent 9 was here' across my laptop.

John had agreed to be part of *Free Speech Fear Free*, the documentary I started working on aged 16, now five years ago. At that moment, the film took on a new layer: I became conscious of the deeply invasive, spooky sensation of being watched. Five years later I have seen Facebook messages dissolve in front of my eyes and noticed a man tail me from Gatwick to Petersfield Tesco. These tactics, used against a teenage filmmaker, felt farcically obvious and over-the-top; but then again so did the blacked-out car stationed day and night for several years on Kiriakou's suburban street. They also felt deeply unsettling. Even more unsettling, however, is the notion that these are not isolated, exceptional instances of state scrutiny targeting whistle-blowers, but an extension of the extreme level of surveillance everybody is under, especially in the UK.

It is easy to seem paranoid telling the truth on this subject: the language and terminology is usually the preserve of sci-fi films. But the fact is the UK is the most intensively surveilled country in the world. More worrying than BBC Newsnight's recent revelation that the Shetland Islands' local authority uses more CCTV than the San Francisco Police Department, is our subtle and evasive cyber intelligence centre GCHQ. Edward Snowden revealed that GCHQ—the most advanced surveillance organisation in the world—aims to collect *all* our online and telephone data. We have never before witnessed such an invasion of private conversations; in the UK, we no longer have a place to whisper.

When I started the documentary, a pushy 16-year-old trying to get an interview with Julian Assange, I thought the only people really affected by this mass censorship were those with something to hide. Assange went on to

demonstrate how freedom to communicate in fact 'underpins every structure of society, every idea, every law and every constitution'. Parliamentary privilege enshrines in law the freedom of law-makers to hold genuinely unhampered debate: to limit the conversations that can be held in parliament would be to limit the laws that can be written. Similarly, to degrade free communication is to clog and inhibit the free flow and progression of ideas.

The knowledge that you are being watched profoundly influences how you interact with the world. Think of being in a classroom talking to a friend: does your conversation continue in the same confessional, teasing mode when you feel the shadow of the teacher's presence behind you? Unhampered mass surveillance has been legitimized in law since I started writing this article. The so-called 'Snoopers Charter' has now passed into law almost unnoticed by the public, despite concerns from activists, the UN and a confederate of UK lawyers. For the first time in history it is now legal for the government to track anybody's telephone, computer, web history, smartphone location or even camera footage. Some surveillance is necessary, to catch psychopaths and murderers. But effective intelligence gathering is categorically not the same thing as unlimited mass surveillance. The breadth of this gaze scarily approaches a real-life version of what the seminal theorist of power Michael Foucault called 'panopticism'. Based on a prison design whereby all cells are visible to an observer in a central tower, panopticism details how when someone is 'subjected to a field of visibility' s/he 'inscribes in himself the power relation', becoming a more obedient and productive subject. Even if we don't know that we are being watched at that moment, we internalise the climate of surveillance and censor ourselves and each other.

To write a narrative of free speech that posits governments as villains and citizens as victims is an oversimplification: we all partake in this system and are complicit in strengthening it. We voluntarily give away our innermost information every day to social media and messaging channels. When we join Facebook or Google, we are under the impression that we are getting something for free; in fact, we, the consumer, have become the product. Sixty percent of the revenues of the world's six biggest tech companies come from selling this data to governments, advertisers and insurers. Last month Yahoo was outed for scanning outgoing messages on behalf of the FBI. Our private conversations are making these companies very rich. Your insurance will go up as a direct result of talking about a pregnancy or illness on Facebook (as *The New York Times* and many others have warned).

The last thing I want is to come across as melodramatic, because this conversation is rooted in reality. However, it's a reality that opposes the version of events that Adam Curtis this year has labelled the 'HyperNormal'—the 'often completely fake' reality disseminated by governments, financiers and tech companies—which is why it is ignored as delusional or even histrionic. In 2016 we are beginning to see through this façade and look behind the screen of modern life, to train a spotlight on its invasions and evasions. I wish I had had more space in *Free Speech Fear Free* to

celebrate the groups that I met along the way, resisting this chipping away at our ability to speak freely: I would like to dedicate the rest of this space to highlight those infinitely resourceful communities. Technologists are creating encryption softwares that anybody can download in 30 seconds: although they can never guarantee absolute privacy, apps like telegram and signal present infinitely simple steps towards private communication. News outlets such as *Democracy Now, The Intercept*, and *Novara Media* are trailblazing in their independent, peer-funded journalism, presenting stories underpinned with detailed context and research. Berlin, too, must be recognised for facilitating the largest community of hackers, investigative journalists and whistle-blowers in the world.

Julian Assange told 16-year-old me, totally out of my depth and conducting an interview in which I made every mistake in the book, that freedom of communication is 'the fundamental enabling right of all rights'. It even enables the act of pronouncing the word 'right', and permits that word to be understood by another person. No matter how unintelligible or haphazard the way we go about it, we have to continue having this conversation.

FREEZE PEACH

Charlie Macnamara explores the online discursive communities bringing a new meaning to free speech.

The parodic rallying cry 'FREEZE PEACH' satirised internet trolls who, in the name of free speech, had lashed out against a campaign demanding Facebook better moderate content that is explicitly violent towards women. The 2013 campaign, spearheaded by activists and online feminist groups, was one of the first emergences of online communities onto the offline stage. Since then, Facebook communities have become increasingly visible in everyday life, be they well-known feminist and race discussion groups like Race Matters and Cuntry Living, influential music groups like the New Music Group and ITT, or even clothing pages like Wavey Garms. Yet, from their beginnings, these spaces have come under attack from invasive media commentators and rabid free speechers for the regulations they impose on discussions and their willingness to remove members who don't abide by their rules.

Race Matters, launched in 2014 as the Oxford University group Skin Deep and with now over 8,000 members worldwide defines its role as promoting discussion: its stated aim is 'to give matters surrounding race a platform, a platform which has not previously existed'. As such, it regulates the types of speech that can take place in the group. Aside from obvious bans on hate speech, its regulations require members to inform themselves on basic concepts, such as systemic racism and white privilege, before joining the discussion. They also ask members not to talk over people

of colour, but instead to listen to their lived experiences of racial issues; this approach promotes practically focussed and insightful discussions, but also underlines another function of groups like this as support networks.

Far from stifling debate, these rules for communication facilitate it: they prioritise voices that too often and for too long have gone unheeded, providing vital alternate perspectives and new ways to address societal problems. The supportive role of these spaces is also to be celebrated; the often-dismissed concept of an internet safe space can be invaluable. In a society where over 50% of our young transgender population have attempted suicide, and mental health provision is ceaselessly cut, small queer and transgender online support groups have become deeply important.

This concept has spread beyond ostensibly political spaces and also spilled over into the non-virtual world. Facebook music groups have widely embraced safe spaces, driving a radical transformation in the clubbing scene, which is slowly moving into the mainstream, reinforcing a culture of dance floors that are inclusive, fun, communal spaces to do and be what you want: the popular ITT music group, for instance, is currently launching a series of safe space club nights designed around local communities and performers, while festivals and club nights across the board are facing mounting pressure to address the huge gender disparity among DJs and performers.

Perhaps it is this migration of the values and regulations from these internet groups out into the wider community that has inspired such a backlash in 'defence' of free speech. Groups have faced huge public criticism as the subject of invasive undercover investigations by *The Tab* or splashed across major national papers. Members are characterised as 'aggressive': debates are said to be won by 'whoever shouts the loudest'. Paradoxically, a whole host of political publications have also lambasted these groups as the epitome of Millennial 'oversensitivity' and a generational refusal to engage in proper, robust argument. The rush to critique these policies and communities has become something of a 'moral panic', a warranted term considering the inflationary logic and narratives of crisis these critiques employ: trigger warnings are transformed from a recognized technique for dealing with PTSD to evidence of a generation-wide cultural sensitivity to any potential offence, so dangerous the phrase can only be written if presented in scare quotes, and identified as presaging the imminent demise of the universities and the collapse of Western culture and its historic freedoms.

Brendan O'Neill's 2014 piece in *The Spectator* criticised our generation of 'Stepford Students' for No Platform-ing the Radical Feminist Germaine Greer due to her irrationally hateful views on transgender people. According to O'Neill, the hurt, hyper-sensitive student cannot bear to hear things they don't agree with and doesn't have the guts to argue back in a rigorous intellectual forum. This figure of the overly-sensitive student is familiar; it takes part in a wider history smearing feminism as anti-intellectual because of its concern with individual suffering. O'Neill uses this figure to reframe Greer as a victim, insidiously validating her hate-speech as rational argument. Legitimizing

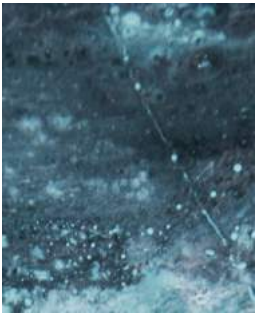
Greer, much like giving her a platform, pulls general debate back towards her viewpoint to the exclusion of other vital conversations. It's not that these students couldn't face debating Greer, it's that they do not prioritise giving time and space to a speaker who has repeatedly expressed violent prejudice towards the transgender community. The popular reaction against Greer's speaking coalesced into a wide coalition of feminist activists, and communities, largely organised online, who stood in solidarity with transgender allies, using their communal power through clear formal processes. Ironically, the expansive genre of articles vilifying generation 'special snowflake' have mostly been written by figures already in possession of their own very influential platforms, claiming that they are being silenced.

These online communities have created platforms for discussion and organisation that have never existed before. The cliché goes that the internet has changed our world for the better, uniting distant peoples and defying the powers of government censorship; much more mundanely than this, it has created avenues for communication and participation in diverse communities locally and internationally. There is a vital communitarian movement developing online, fighting to maintain the rights to govern itself and for important values in our wider culture. These groups have become incredibly important spaces for discussion, education, support and political organisation. They represent an exciting and potent new mode for free speech, ordered by community-led values and new conventions of engagement, which translates powerfully into the offline world.

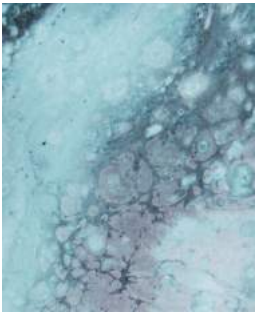
Artwork by Eleanor Johnson

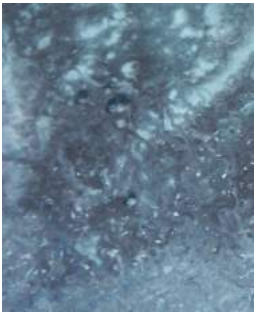
WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

Caycee Peskett-Hill on exporting Western values to President Duterte's Philippines.

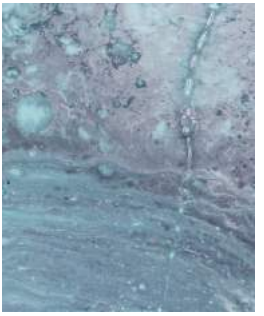


On the 30th June 2016, Filipinos watched intensely as Rodrigo Duterte was announced as the President of the Philippines. He stood up, thanked the people around him, sent his condolences to his rivals and addressed the nation. The crowds roared, people celebrated, and both his supporters and his opponents alike cried, albeit for their different reasons.





During his political career, President Duterte has become known for his brutal policies and dubbed names such as 'the punisher' 'the Donald Trump of the East'. This reputation would appear to be warranted: as part of his flagship anti-drugs policy, President Duterte promised immediately following the election to dump the bodies of slain drug dealers 'into Manila Bay, and fatten all the fish there'. With an estimated 3,000 drug dealers and users

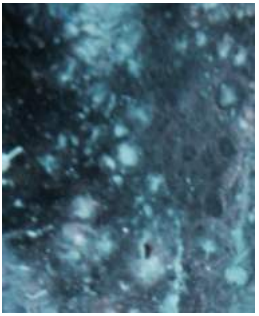


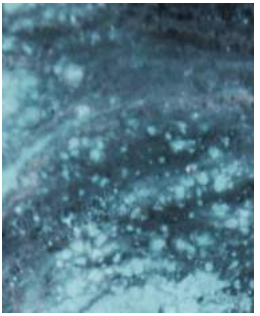
killed since his ascension to power, he seems to have acted accordingly. In September this year, he likened himself to one of the most hated men in history: 'Hitler massacred three million Jews ... there's three million drug addicts. There are. I'd be happy to slaughter them'. For us in the West, being drip-fed his every move feels like watching a dystopic film. And yet, something incomprehensible to us is simply a solution to a longstanding problem for many in his country. When 86% of Filipinos have trust in their president, perhaps we should step back and try to understand how something we see as inexcusable can have such popular support. He is certainly not the only world leader following through policies that contravene western standards of morality, and, like other leaders we would deem reprehensible, he has a strong majority. Vladimir Putin's fervently anti-gay policies in Russia, for instance, have historically been backed by a substantial percentage of the population as well as by the moral institutions of the country.

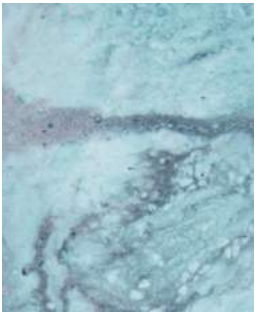
Growing up with a mother from the Philippines has given me the opportunity to look at Duterte's popularity as an insider. My mother's inappropriate humour, loud nature, and tendency to talk before she thinks, are all accepted as part of her Filipino culture. The day after the election, she sat for hours watching news channels and listening to President Duterte's press conference. She vigorously defended him: in her mind it was clear, 'he is doing what is needed for the country'; for my mother, his actions and comments have simply been 'lost in translation'.

President Duterte calling Barack Obama 'putang ina' gave rise to a literal mistranslation when the ensuing media storm interpreted the statement as meaning 'son of a whore'. According to my mother, 'people were overthinking what he's saying'. And maybe she was right: 'son of a whore' is a literal translation of this phrase, but cultural differences assign it other significances. For many Filipino people the phrase was taken as more of a meaningless jibe. Although some regard it as one of the worse phrases in the Tagalog language, it is a common expletive and—like the Americanised 'son of a bitch'—the implicit misogyny is not registered as problematic.

Exploring the context behind this phrase reveals an even more intractable underlying cultural disconnect. Duterte was answering a question from a Western reporter, asking how he would explain



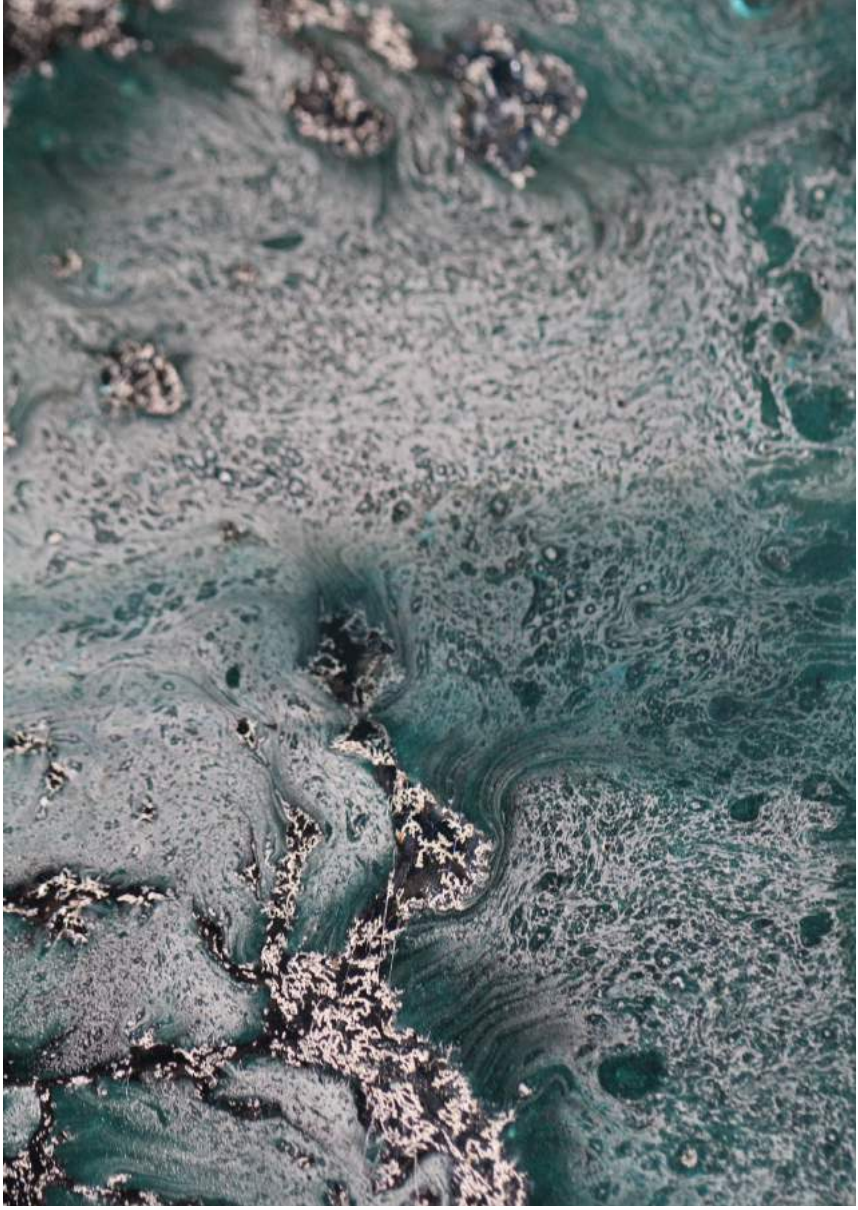




the mass killings to President Obama. He responded 'I do not have any master except the Filipino people, nobody but nobody. You must be respectful. Do not just throw questions. *Putang ina*'. He seems to have taken issue with the call to justify himself to a foreign leader, of whom, were it the other way around, such a justification would never be asked. Whatever we think of Duterte's actions, it is problematic that they are judged against a solely Western standard—that Obama's morality is assumed to have universal value.

We must find a way to condemn Duterte's policies, while avoiding the sort of judgement that enshrines the West as the origin of all moral value. The US has voted in Trump and still struggles with its own drug crisis—where black people have five times the chance of incarceration as white people, forced to work in privatised prisons which have been compared to modern slavery. We should be wary of an insidious spread of the whole package of American values, including exploitative industry, rampant consumerism and institutionalised racism.

The way in which Duterte is portrayed to the West is decontextualized and emotive. For many in the Philippines, he is simply facilitating his country's much-needed growth: as a country suffering from extreme poverty, homelessness, and high crime rates, many Filipinos feel they need someone radical to enact change. While it is easy to condemn this from the West, this approach is unproductive. Instead, we need to open a dialogue between these different standpoints. This does not necessitate a relativistic approach that encourages inaction by just accepting Duarte's policies as 'different'. It is, rather, a precondition for any meaningful resistance.



Artwork by Zura Ibrahim Wafir

'I'm from the Maldives but I've lived abroad almost my whole life so a lot of my art is reflective of home and its physical landscape. I don't know if you've heard, but our current political situation is fraught with issues. Extreme political instability has followed a constitutional crisis in 2012; last year the opposition leader was jailed for supposed terrorism, which provoked an even more severe government crackdown. Freedom of speech appears a distant dream in the current landscape.'

100 Korean Finger Print

Nayoung Jeong

Nayoung Jeong's performances centre around her experiences of cultural displacement as a Korean student living in London. A PHD student at the Slade, she is exploring her thesis ،CLAY BODIES AS A SPACE FOR HABITUATION: CAN BUILDING HABITUATION STRUCTURES RELIEVE DISPLACEMENT?' Jeong uses local English clay in her performative piece *100 Korean Finger Print* as a symbolic material to ground themes of adjustment and navigation in a new cultural environment. Clay and wood are used to create her 'habitual structure' an architectural construction resembling that of an *Um-jip*, a traditional Korean pit-dwelling hut.

In the performance, the artist sits inside her structure surrounded by silicon casts of Korean students' fingers suspended on the framework by red string. The artist pulls down the finger casts to make visible fingerprints on the clay-surfaced floor of the structure. According to Jeong, this collaboration of Korean identities with local English earth allows her to 'fuse the desire for cultural integration with a sense of the culturally familiar'. Jeong's performative space allows for cultural expression as well as integration within unfamiliar territories.

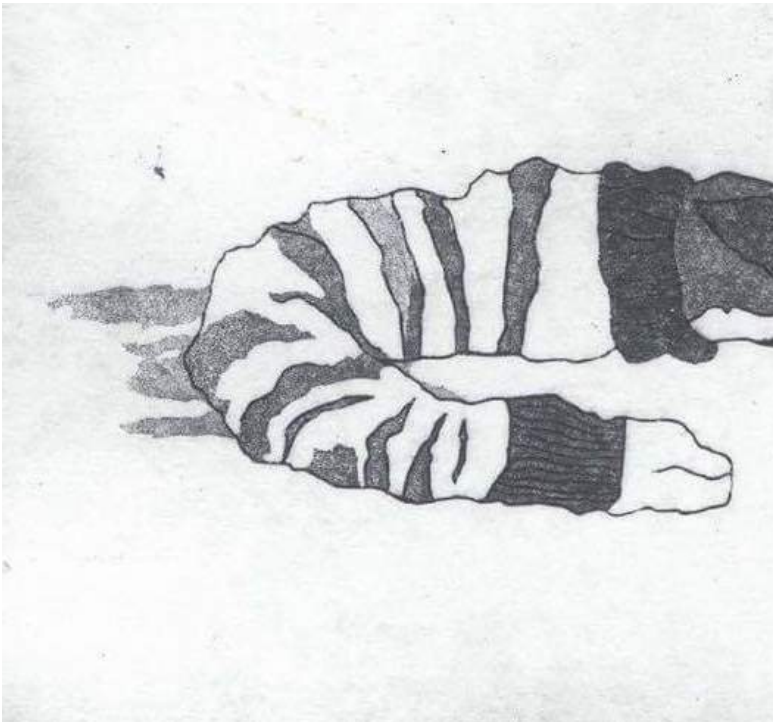
Showcase

My Urban Voice

My URBAN VOICE
draws loose slang
over my tongue
and tells the elite
that I
am not them.
I can keep my words tight,
fight the breeze ease
of Tottenham roads
and deep colourful markets. I can make it so
no one knows who I am —
where I am from.
I can tweak my laugh to fit
the states and minds of distinct districts:
Silence the Seven Sisters and reign in their free crescendo.
Adopt the curbed song of Mayfair.
They call me an international lady
Exotic. Dark hair. Smart voice.
They tell me I am better than expected.
Better than the girls who
tread trains with twangs in their tongues-
revealing in their one word
that they belong to their first postcode.
Stay there. Stay.
We all smile the same way.
I'll move through people
using my words and my mind how I want.
Skimpy tongued in hallowed halls.

Selected words in selected boroughs.

Hatice Cin

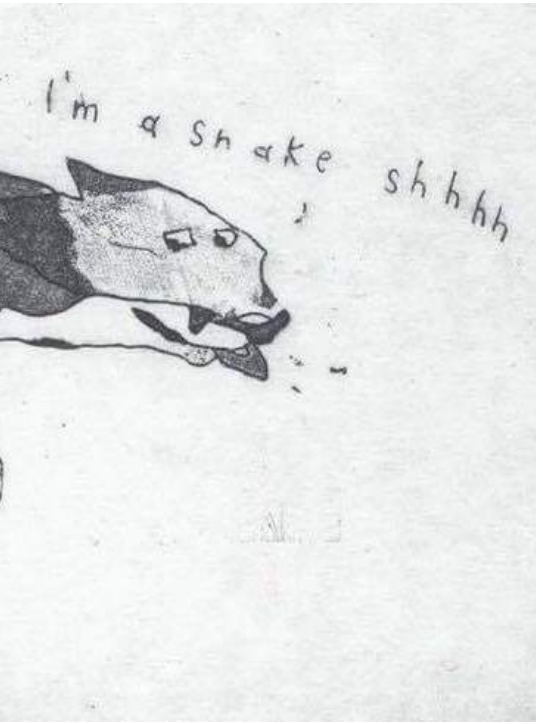


FRIEZE'S LONDON

Louise Camu looks at the ways in which Frieze is shaping the art market.

Every October, the elite of the art world descend on London. Billionaire collectors and international art dealers gather in Regent's Park, to celebrate over countless glasses of Moët the pretentious jumble that is Frieze Art Fair. Launched as a contemporary art magazine in 1991 by Amanda Sharpe and Matthew Slotover, Frieze has since grown into an international phenomenon that hosts annual fairs in both London and New York. Frieze Masters, a twenty-minute walk from the main tent, was introduced in 2012 with the aim of creating a dialogue with its contemporary counterpart, whereby visitors are invited to reflect upon the way in which older and more canonical art plays into a modern contemporary context.

During the five-day feeding frenzy that is 'Frieze Week', Regent's Park becomes an



Artwork by Tom Parkhouse

absurd exhibition of luxury. With entry priced at a steep £56, Frieze is an event catering to a specific clientele. Galleries themselves are charged £500 per square metre of exhibition space, and some will pay up to £60,000 for a larger space. As such, Frieze is complicit in an ongoing elitism within the art world that makes wealth a deciding factor for who and what is exhibited: galleries dictate content and how artists' work will be exhibited based on how it will sell. This system has the potential to exclude artists who haven't the requisite connections and cultural, or indeed physical, capital, to launch their careers and get enough hype to be taken up by a gallery, hugely affecting the type of work that artists make.

Art fairs like Frieze have become promoters of commercially viable, photogenic, 'instagrammable' art. A stand at Frieze cannot act as both marketplace and exhibition space without the work on display being influenced by commercial concerns. The main Frieze tent is as much an amusement park as a cultural event: I enjoyed buying sweets from performers in the gender neutral bathrooms, experiencing virtual reality in an offensively yellow booth and almost falling asleep in an acoustic foam bed. The problem with works like these, valued for their initial shock-factor rather than depth, is that they begin to blend into a monotonous cry for attention, punctuated by an occasional Brexit thinkpiece or a celebrity sighting. It is rare to find work that demands and rewards serious attention.

Despite their premise of promoting creativity, at Frieze freedom of artistic expression does not flow as freely as the champagne.

Selldorf Architects (the 'culprits' behind the monochrome setting of Frieze Masters) made it mandatory for galleries to choose from a strict palette of grey paints, with limited options of either carpet or wood for flooring. The intended effect was clearly a sophisticated and warm overtone, perhaps hoping to escape the main Frieze fair's clinical, airport-like atmosphere. Sadly, the result was a lack of personality within the exhibition spaces.

However, not everyone draws within the lines. For two consecutive years, the Helly Nahmad Gallery has presented experimental and visually outstanding booths. In 2014, Nahmad invited art historian and curatorial guru Sir Norman Rosenthal to recreate the interior of a fictional art collector's late 1960s Parisian apartment. Priceless works adorned its walls and visitors were presented with an A3-sized text describing the life of the fictional collector who inhabited the space. The attention to detail was exceptional, and the works were offered in a context that was both commercial and collectible, yet also intimate and personal. In 2015, Nahmad again commissioned another site-specific curated space: Robin Brown recreated the interior of a mental asylum based on those that Jean Dubuffet (artist and founder of the Art Brut movement) had visited in search of inspiration. Both spaces broke with the monochromatic stylistic obligations and the results were amusing and refreshingly original. Unfortunately, 2016 saw the Nahmad Gallery revert to monochrome.

This said, it is almost too easy to be critical of Frieze and the values it promotes. Being knowingly rude about Frieze has become almost a sub-genre itself, a sign of 'good taste': the offensively yellow virtual reality booth projected you into a grid space mapped onto your immediate surroundings, where you were thronged by flouncing, overweight figures bustling past one another in clear parody of the entire fair itself and its visitors.

Inevitably, in hand with globalization we have witnessed the expansion of an art market and a proliferation of arts fairs that have popularized and generated demand for materialistic and profit-orientated art. But, by turning London into a cultural epicentre of this art world, Frieze has also hugely benefited the city: auction houses and other established institutions set up sales and shows of outstanding quality, in part designed to join in the buzz that accompanies Frieze week—although this of course is further proof of the colossal power Frieze exerts upon other cultural institutions. Lest one forgets, Frieze Masters offers those attending a rare and valuable opportunity to see a vast quantity of visually stunning and historically important artwork usually locked up in private collections. It would be counterintuitive and perhaps reactionary to try and stop the monolithic Frieze now; instead Frieze could be turned to help smaller and less well-funded artistic projects to harness the buzz and focus it brings to the art calendar and extend its sphere of influence outside its tent walls.

ART FROM THE INSIDE

Rosanna Ellul prioritises the discussion of art from UK prisons.

On a podium in London's Southbank Centre are sat a poet, an artist, a theatre director and a journalist. They are discussing what art means, and what its value is. In the context of London neither this location, subject matter, or the occupations of those debating it seem surprising. What is unexpected, however, is that they have all shared the label 'prisoner', a label which gives a new perspective to the debate. In this context, the discussion about the virtue of art also becomes a dialogue about who has the rights to expression and who doesn't.

The Koestler Trust funds 'Arts by Offenders', enabling people in prisons, immigration detention centres and long-term hospitals to pursue a diverse range of artistic activities. Every year, the charity puts together an exhibition of submissions from these institutions, curated by ex-offender artists. This year, poet Benjamin Zephaniah, jailed for petty crimes as a young boy, curated the aptly titled *We Are All Human*, which aimed to restore humanity to the imprisoned through artistic expression.

For the speakers, and for most of the artists whose work was chosen, art is more than a creative pursuit, it is a rehabilitative process. The aphorism 'art is therapy' takes on an urgent significance. Julio, a painter and former prisoner sitting on the panel, champions painting as the best avenue for escape for someone faced with seemingly perennial greyness. He remembers group painting as a way of puncturing the tightly held façade of masculinity in men's prisons, which feeds all-too-permanent fixtures of violence and emotional paralysis. For Julio, emotional journeys are forged through artistic outlets. Insights such as his, along with the art and poetry on display, act as a well needed antidote to a mostly negative and misinformed public perception of prisoners and their rights as artists.

What is clear from the exhibition, therefore, is that our prison culture advertises a grossly simplified version of itself, imprisoning 'bad' criminals so 'good' citizens aren't harmed. Once these people are out of sight we don't have to worry about human rights anymore, let alone creative ones. Prisons and detention centres sever ties and limit expression through their ideology, practice and even architecture. Cuts to the prison estate often target prisons' educational and artistic hubs (Chris Grayling's infamous 2014 'book ban' is an example of this), despite the fact that, as the panel points out, art can be a lifeline for prisoners and is an established method in reducing recidivism.

Jean Dubuffet defined 'Outsider Art', or art brut, as 'works produced by persons unscathed by artistic culture … from their own depths, not from the conventions of classical or fashionable art'. Although the role of this genre, or even the legitimacy of the term, has

Artwork by Nell Nicholas

been fervently debated in certain artistic circles, it is surprising that even in the bracket of 'outsider art', prisoners are so easily forgotten as a marginalised group that can participate in our art and cultural scene. It's hard to think of an environment more scathing of artistic output or distanced from the conventions of the fashionable art scene. What made the Koestler exhibition so remarkable, then, was its subversion of the public's and prison estate's assumptions about art from the inside, by providing a space for imprisoned voices and their art. Prison art was displayed in a central London cultural hub; the Koestler Trust took art associated with a hidden 'inside' and proudly presented it in the open. In doing so its audience are forced to contemplate the difficult question of who is allowed to create art: we all supposedly have a right to expression, but the ability to create is a privilege largely kept from prisoners.

In their espousal of prisoner art, The Koestler Trust are not merely advocating its place in the world of 'outsider art', or even trying to use it as an anti-prison tool to highlight injustices within its system. Instead, the exhibition is an inventive, colourful and liberating acknowledgement of these artists as artists, not just prisoners. In his curation of this 'Insider Art', Zephaniah said he used colour and light as central themes and structures, illuminating the art as a riposte to assumptions of violence, disorder and darkness that restricts these artists on both sides of the prison gate. A half-eaten pear drawn on the back of a crisp packet is, for him, comparable to a Cezanne, and should be celebrated equally, regardless of the past or present titles of the artist. Inevitably, this celebration faces transparent problems, as does any celebration of art from a marginalised, forgotten or oppressed group. How do prisoners gain momentum and recognition of their art whilst secluded from society? How do they show their artistic subjectivity when their autonomy is limited? And perhaps most importantly, how do they integrate their art into a society that they themselves are still finding near impossible to join? The Koestler Trust might not be able to offer definitive answers to these questions, but they are one of the few bodies willing to ask them.

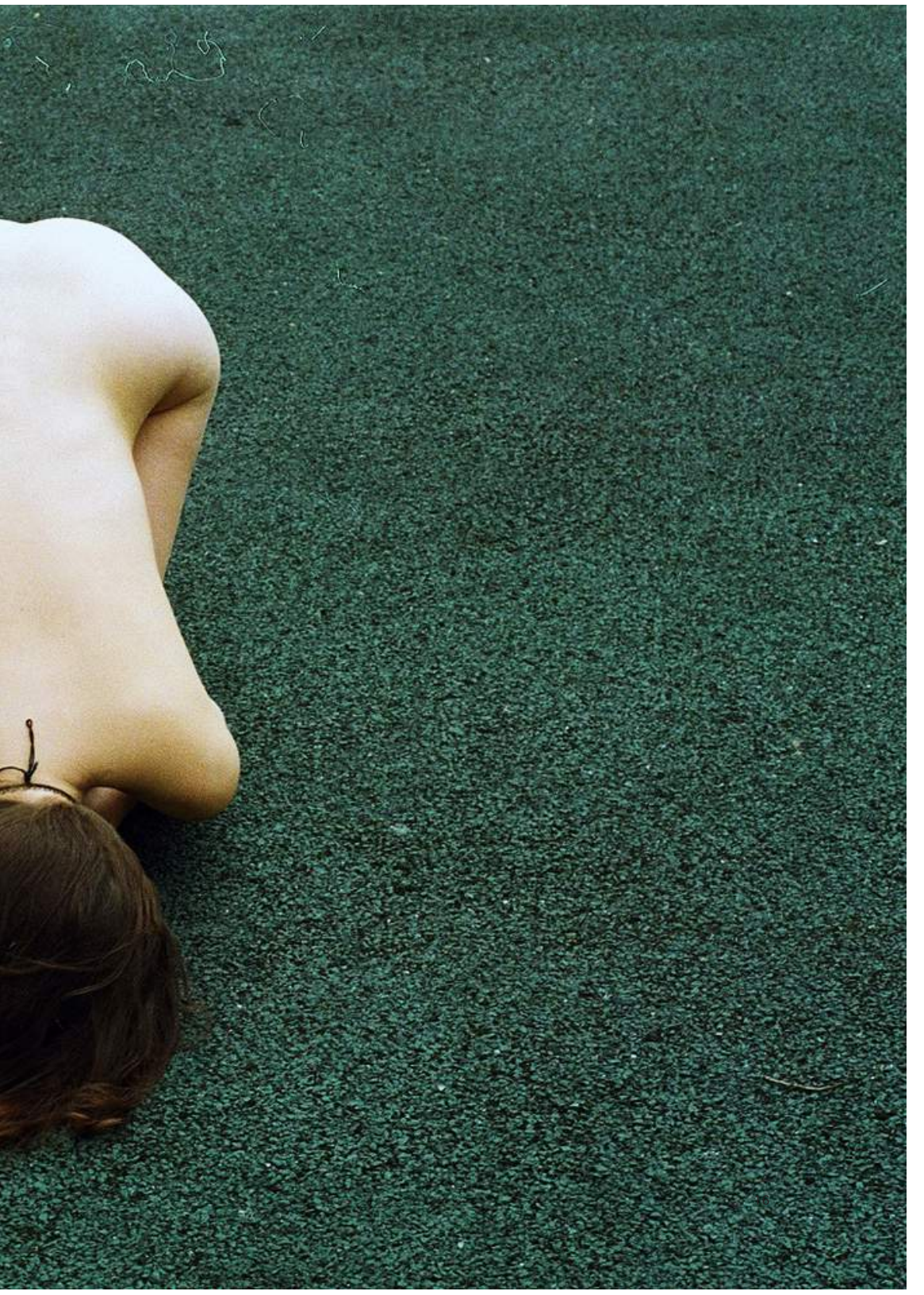
Venus's Violent Story

Fleur Elkerton on Slasher Mary and a history of incisive feminist criticism.

On the 10th of March 1914, a young woman climbed the steps of the National Gallery, intent on making a political statement. When Mary Richardson reached the room where Velàzquez's *The Toilet of Venus* (nicknamed 'The Rokeby Venus'; 1647-51) was hanging, she calmly took a meat cleaver from her sleeve and proceeded to slash the canvas seven times.

Despite their silence, paintings nonetheless have the capacity to prompt strong reactions; art satisfies what words cannot, and produces emotions that push the boundaries of the normal. In destroying this silently expressive object, Richardson perfectly illustrated the suffragette motto 'Deeds not Words'. This concept was the central tenet of the militant WSPU who characteristically used acts of vandalism to campaign for women's suffrage by any means possible. The slashed painting perfectly communicated Richardson's political frustration through the potency of its wordless message. Richardson, previously a student of art history, committed a crime that was incredibly self-aware in its perceived sacrilege.

The attack damaged the painting along the nude Venus's spine. Nonetheless it was restored rapidly whilst Richardson was on trial in an attempt to erase these new marks in the painting's history. To the modern eye seeing pictures of these fissures, the act looks viciously brutal. In a nickname that linked her to Jack the Ripper, Richardson was dubbed 'Slasher Mary' and sentenced to six months in jail. The press reacted to Richardson's destruction as if she had committed murder. Intriguingly, newspaper headlines described the damage to the painting as 'ragged bruises' and 'cruel wounds'. The predominantly male readership of the horrified papers was the very demographic Richardson was aiming to shock: she targeted Venus specifically because she had noticed how male visitors to the National Gallery 'gaped at it all day long'. The male gaze on this static sexualized female body represented the wider suppression of female freedom of expression in the name of male gratification. In a statement justifying the vandalism, Richardson explained she would not allow this model of 'the beautiful woman' to be gaped at by a public who condoned their Government's 'destruction' of 'beautiful living women', such as Emilline Pankhurst. Richardson's act suggests that she believed she lived in a society where words simply



were not working; instead, physical action was needed. Richardson's statement continued, 'justice is an element of beauty as much as colour and outline on canvas'.

The Rokeby Venus shows a female nude with her back to the viewer, a classically erotic pose, and her face in the mirror is deliberately unclear. We are left to observe her naked body, whilst she completes her 'toilet'. She is being objectified just as she is preparing to be an object of gazes admiring her beauty. Richardson's background in art history shows she clearly understood the art historical significance of Venus. The goddess of love is the archetypal sexualised female figure, embodying the erotic object of the dominating male gaze. Venus is eternally portrayed as an unachievable nude, without body hair; even today 'Venus' is a leading female razor company.

Richardson's action was perhaps the ultimate expression of art criticism, marking the art object with her visceral reading. Many decades later the Guerilla Girl movement sought to reshape our perception of the artistic cannon and museum spaces, highlighting the ever-present male gaze and gender inequality in the contemporary art world. They showed that of 169 female nudes on display at MoMA in New York, only three were by female artists. In their latest London exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, the door reads: 'THE GUERRILLA GIRLS ASKED 383 MUSEUMS ABOUT DIVERSITY. ONLY 1/4 RESPONDED. COME INSIDE AND SEE WHY.' The debate about silence in the art world is still raging, branching out from female representation to matters of class and race. Barbara Kruger conveys an incommunicable anger at the ongoing suppression of female voices. Her collages include phrases such as: 'Who does she think she is? It's time for women to stop being politely angry' boldly emblazoned upon them. All these women manipulate the vocal power of art as a form of resonant expression.

The V&A's recent exhibition *Botticelli Reimagined*, an exploration of the kitsch and commercial modern afterlife of Botticelli's nudes, reconfirms that the female nude is rarely able to escape objectification or idealization. However, it also indicates the ways in which modern artists are approaching such archetypal emblems as Venus from different angles, and in the process rewriting our approach to art history. Being self-aware about the way we view symbols and histories of femininity is not only relevant to the rarified world of art galleries: perceptions, depictions and objectification are daily realities for women. Out of art's silence can come a powerful and responsive form of communication.

The Rokeby Venus is permanently on display in Room 30 of the National Gallery.

Artwork by Flora Thomas

Thomas Rebour started making films when he was 12. Originally inspired by Remi Gaillard, a French prank videomaker, he started looking into visual effects and slowly moved into short films. His first production was about 'a guy who gets stuck in fruit ninja in an iPhone', giving himself the significant technical challenge of recreating fruit ninja's graphics in real life.

Taking Comedy Seriously

Thomas Rebour speaks about his short film *Red*.

At UCL he has worked on horror/thiller *Paranoia*, a drama about a filmmaker going blind called *70mm* and comedy web series *Couchtime Stories*. This generic eclecticism derives from his tendency to take a concept first and then build the genre around it. Like most emerging filmmakers, Rebour initially 'thought I'd make sci-fi or action films', seeing comedy as a less prestigious genre: 'I guess student filmmakers want to make something serious in order for people to take them seriously'. While comedy's subjectivity may make it difficult to get right, it also allows the filmmaker to inject their own voice into the project. Well suited to new and unique premises, it can provide an intriguing way to approach a subject with depth.

Rebour's recent film *Red*—about two art critics having a heated discussion over different shades of the colour red—provided an opportunity to make something surreal and surprising within the bounds of comedy. Inspired by Edgar Wright, who 'manages to make even the most mundane actions interesting and comical, using all of his filmmaking knowledge to make the dialogue and the visuals blend together seamlessly', *Red*'s comedy is a mélange of different sources: parodies of art criticism, references to works like Munch's *The Scream* an ambiguity about whether they are discussing paint or blood. Flashes of the colour cover their faces, foreshadowing the critics' descent into violence. *Red* presents comedy's surreal aspect and makes a case for student filmmakers not to neglect this infinitely intriguing and impactful medium.

Still from *Reds*

Filming Hyper Reality

Leah Aaron asks how film can deal with the complexities of the modern world.

Facts are supposedly objective, but our understanding of them is not. Whether we accept something as true depends on context, and how much we trust the source. As technology has transformed the speed and scope of our access to information, our understanding of everyday reality has become more and more complex. We have more ways of consuming media than ever before, but paradoxically feel less sure of anything. We engage with this media in a new way, creating public personas in a virtual sphere that blur the lines between public and private. National broadcasting forums are becoming more globally focused, marketing more to a viewpoint than a country. In the social media echo chamber we see articles shared by friends, with whom we often already agree.

These anxieties around the way technology has transformed our relationship with what is 'real' are increasingly being explored in film. This creates a challenge for filmmakers: how can our film and television reflect the society we live in, when several versions of the same thing are happening at once?

Airing on Channel 4 earlier this year, *Deutschland '83* is a German-made East meets West spy series that follows Martin Rauch, an East German border guard, who is forced to go undercover as a military aide-de-camp in the West. Although Rauch is forced to make horrific choices, the clarity of his ideology remains alluring. Rauch, being a spy, has an alter ego (Martin Stamm); so like East and West Germany, his personality is split along capitalist/socialist lines. This neat split between ideologically polarized, geographically disconnected hemispheres is nostalgic. *Deutschland '83* is compelling, stylish escapism, which at its best reveals the poverty of such stark duality. Soviet era entertainment contained blatantly embellished versions of the truth; for much of the population, trust in either the government or the media was a moot point. *Deutschland '83* demonstrates that such a singular cultural narrative can result in severe cognitive dissonance when what's going on in front of you no longer lines up with what you think should be happening.

Adam Curtis also knows the visual value of Cold War nostalgia, but rather than exploring it through fiction, he does it through 'reality'. He wants to reveal 'the truth about our post-truth world', and he does this by showing us archive footage of news and television, spliced together into a 160-minute long collage of a documentary. The film's title, *Hypernormalisation* refers to a Perestroika-era Soviet writer's description of the head-in-the-sand mentality endemic to the last days of the USSR–a time when 'You were so much a part of the system that it was impossible to see beyond it'. *Deutschland '83* allows us to make our own comparisons to life behind the Iron Curtain, but Curtis makes these connections explicit, exposing links between the late Soviet Union and our 'post-truth' world. He is obsessed with systems and their collapse, depicting almost every civil war of the past 40 years—and implying that the factors behind them are almost all the same. In connecting these disparate realities, *Hypernormalisation* suggests that the world is actually much simpler than it first appears.

Black Mirror dramatizes our obsessive, addictive relationship with the virtual universe. It explores, like Curtis, the power of the network and what happens when the lines between the online and 'real' worlds start to blur, but in a way that is much less explicit. Rather than attempting to explain, the anthology of episodes use fictional settings to explore the space between our real and virtual selves. Writer Charlie Brooker is preoccupied with the state of surveillance that the internet can create, suggestively tipping his hat to the 'close aim' sci-fi coming out of the USSR in the '30s that was constricted by heavy censorship to dramatizing a recognizable 'tomorrow'. It's a reality where our relationship with what's happening in front of us no longer matters, it's about the narrative we are creating, and that others create for us.

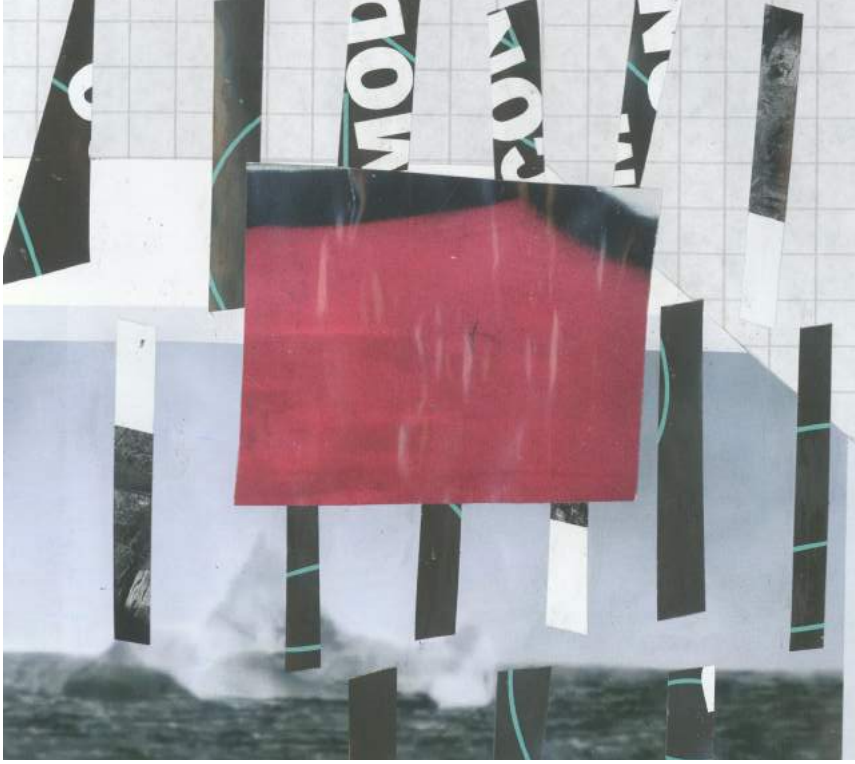
The hyper-connectedness of our newly globalized world is real, and the problems it poses need exploring. In trying to reflect this information overload, Curtis' pretensions to narrative coherence reveal the faults of his own argument. We tend to think of our 'post-factual' age only in negative terms, forgetting that such fractured streams of narrative facilitate public and widespread debates around class, gender and race in a way that was previously the preserve of academics. Simplistically failing to acknowledge such positives, *Hypernormalisation* dismisses our preoccupation with identity politics as a symptom of the fractures in the system, perhaps missing the full power of this new age. What *Black Mirror & Deutschland '83* understand, however, is that before we can repair anything, we need to find out what identity in this new reality is. As our trust in the authority of the news erodes, and truth becomes ever more confusing, sometimes the best way to do this is by escaping to fictional worlds.

SEX ON SCREEN

Marek Maj uncovers 'real sex' in cinema.

You may remember last year how London arthouse cinemas dialled up the hype for the release of Gaspar Noé's latest film *Love*. The hope was that audiences, enticed by the promise of real-life sex in 3D, would pay good money to see the maverick Frenchman's latest offering. Most people agreed that the film was decent yet paled in comparison to his prior work, *Enter the Void* (2009). But there was one aspect of the film's critical reception that I found almost as significant as the film itself: no one seemed to be particularly upset by it. This was not hugely surprising, as anyone interested in contemporary cinema will have seen non-simulated sex on the big screen at some point by now.

My first experience of watching real, organic sex on screen came at the age of fifteen in Bruno Dumont's wonderful debut *La Vie de Jésus* (1997). Dumont and Noé were both in fact part of the 'New French Extremity', a term coined in an effort to smear a spate of (often sexually) transgressive French films that came out at the turn of the century, films such as Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi's *Baise-moi* (2000), Patrice Chéreau's *Intimacy* (2001), and Catherine Breillat's Romance (1999). Away from France there was Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* (1998), Michael Winterbottom's *9 Songs* (2004), and *Shortbus* (2006) by John Cameron Mitchell. Needless to say, this development in arthouse cinema has seeped into the mainstream; just look at recent American television shows. Combine this with the proliferation of internet pornography and it's hardly surprising that no one was outraged by *Love*, a film that shows, lest we forget, the protagonist's ejaculating penis from the point-of-view of his lover's vagina.



Try to think of some genuinely unforgettable erotic images in recent cinematic history. There are some, of course: the food-throwing in *Young Adam* (2002), the hilarious threesome in *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), and the final interview in *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (1989). The general trend, though, perhaps in reaction to audiences becoming more and more desensitised, has been to depict sex in terms of alienation, ennui and moral vacancy. Why has this approach come about in a society supposedly more sexually liberated than ever?

Simply put, despite relaxations in censorship over the last two decades, controversial, erotic masterpieces of the Pasolini, Buñuel or Borowczyk ilk have been conspicuously rare. If you look back to those decades following the War there are dozens of famous moments of erotic chutzpah. From British cinema alone, I could point to the naked wrestling by the fire in Ken Russell's version of *Women in* Love (1969), or the tavern meal in Tony Richardson's version of *Tom Jones* (1963), where the characters' carnal appetites are barely concealed by their voracious eating. In Jiří Menzel's Czech 'New Wave' film *Closely Observed Trains* (1966), a station clerk cheerfully rubberstamps his lover's thighs and bottom. Similarly, in the Japanese thriller *Woman in the Dunes* (1964), the two lovers tentatively begin exploring each other's bodies by slowly scraping the sand off each other. The most enchanting of all may be in Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour* (1950), where billowing cigarette smoke is lovingly passed from one prisoner to another through a chink in the wall. These works chart the hedonistic release many countries experienced in the post-war years and speak to

our desires in a way that is memorably surreal, vivid, and inorganic. The abundance of experimental post-war material has led to a problem that pervades much of modern filmmaking: how do you make it interesting when everyone's seen it all already?

I started by talking about Noé's rather unsubtle provocation, so I think I should end by contrasting it with a scene from Ingmar Bergman's 1966 work *Persona*. In this scene the two leads do not even touch other and yet for me it serves as one of the most astonishing, highly-charged moments of eroticism in all of cinema. Liv Ullmann's mute actress listens on while her nurse, played by Bibi Andersson, recalls the time she and her friend had spontaneous group sex on a sunny beach during the summer holidays. Many filmmakers would cut to a flashback at this point, but Bergman doesn't. The monologue delivered by Andersson thus becomes something far more profound than mere titillation for the viewer. Here, desires and emotions poignantly intermingle with each other in a way that is as complex and harmonious as a great piece of music: we're free to imagine the story for ourselves and we see the growing intimacy between the two women, the wistful tone in which the story is being told counterpoints the bliss of the past event. Imagination, it seems, remains the most powerful erotic tool of all.

Artwork by Richard Magee

Riding on the wave of technological advancement surging towards the end of the nineteenth century followed a period that was to change the world forever: the era of film. Novel, unique, and unlimited in opportunity, the silent film played a crucial role in how people perceived, and were influenced by, secondary forms of reality. But how these films, in the rapidly developing world of the 1890s, managed to speak to the public without the fundamental tools of sound and language is quite astounding.

SILENT FILM – A VOCAL LEGACY

Diandra Şovăilescu explores the history and influence of silent films.

Georges Méliès was one of the very first to move from still photographs to moving pictures, setting the tone for how films were created and the way people perceived them thereafter. He was the first to introduce special effects, which included disappearances and transformations of objects and people, as well as manipulation of time and space. His audiences welcomed this new and unexpected approach with an excitement that turned Méliès into the undeniable 'father of cinematography' of the 20th century, whose mastery of invention and imagination has been referenced as a crucial influence by Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrik and many others.

Méliès' viewership was astounded by obscure and visionary works of art that managed to portray a whole range of sensations and experiences. From his illusionist shows (*The Vanishing Lady* and *The Four Troublesome Heads*), which awed the public with elements of the improbable, to his most famous works satirising Jules Verne's sci-fi novels about travelling to

the unexplored (notably *A Trip to the Moon*), Méliès opened up completely new and fantastic worlds. He spoke to his audiences in a unique way about the power of dreams, and the depths of our own consciousness. He was the first to explore the uncharted field of erotic cinematography, his *After the Ball* (1897) was the very first film to contain nudity. For many, he carried an almost superhuman ability to unravel the entire spectrum of the human mind and its complexities. The endless opportunities offered by new discoveries in film production and editing unleashed the seemingly unlimited nature of his creativity.

Over time, audiences grew wider, and the film industry started to branch out from its earlier purpose as a pastime for the working classes. The middle class was coming to dictate cultural development after over a century of increasing political ascendancy, and they were demanding films that portrayed the intrigues of high society. Films had to be tailored to the necessities of the new public, and this led to an influx of bourgeois novel adaptations. Now comedy, drama and romance filled theatres, recreating situations audiences would recognise from real-life. Bored with the fantastical and the unknown, the preposterous and the excessive, viewers sought to look deeper into aspects of the perceptible world.

The silent feature of film was of essence here too. The speechlessness of the stories of chivalry, courtship and bravery always left open so many avenues of interpretation, which obliged audiences to come up with their own emotional responses. This led to a very successful era of romantic films: from 1921's *The Sheik* to Charlie Chaplin's 1931 rom-com *City Lights*, a generation of silent films brought back to life the themes and characters found in romantic literature, and exposed them in novel and imaginative ways.

However, as film technologies advanced further, the popularity of silent movies waned to be replaced by the new 'talkies'–audial films that were soon to replace the silent era forever. They offered narratives propelled forwards by dialogue, silent symbolism and mystery seemed to become increasingly obsolete, and the requirement for audiences themselves to make up the script to a whole conversation seemed unnecessarily arduous.

When the French silent film, *The Artist* came out in 2011, it reimagined what has been a largely ignored era of film. Its subject tackled the transition from the silent period to the popular sound era, the very shift that killed off the film's own genre. Beyond this, though, the film raised important questions challenging our modern understanding of films, as well as the importance of perception and imagination in the full experience of a movie: is speech truly necessary in a film? Can dialogue sometimes be redundant and often mediocre?

We are now used to watching films that use dialogue as the primary form of expression. Yet the inherent magic of silent films presents an incredible potential for modern times, where silence becomes an artistic choice rather than a necessity. The opportunity to combine the enigmatic symbolism that lies at the core of silent film era with the technical and thematic advancements of modern cinematography would be creatively explosive. Perhaps *The Artist* demonstrates that the modern film viewer is ready for a more active role, primed for the compelling and personal imaginative input that silent films demand.

Inappropriate Vegetable

You
are unfit for purchase.

Raw hands toss, rough and unfeeling;
smooth spheres, perfect pear droplets,
tear duct heads and curved lines
caress you from all sides.

I grew with you
I will die with you

No.
Fingers will find you
among the beauties.

You, in crying crate.
You
in your sorry state.

Finger the patches
your own seed blessed you with
the spots that made you special
will make you rot

now stuffed inside your
deserving cot.

I like my red face
my yellow dots.

to be unique
is to be weak
on these shelves.
No space to be
ourselves.
Shock of nails scratch the

leathery skin,
the pits where there are zits;
roots
where there
should have been shoots
and freckles,
where there should have been speckles.

The Untouched are
petal pink flesh
portrait ready
poised leaf.
They will go far
they will glow in the bowl,
stand behind curtain
still life models.
They are souls sold
before they are devoured.

You find new boxes
new friends
nobbled brows
swollen skulls
the bruised lose.
Among the throng
of the born wrong.

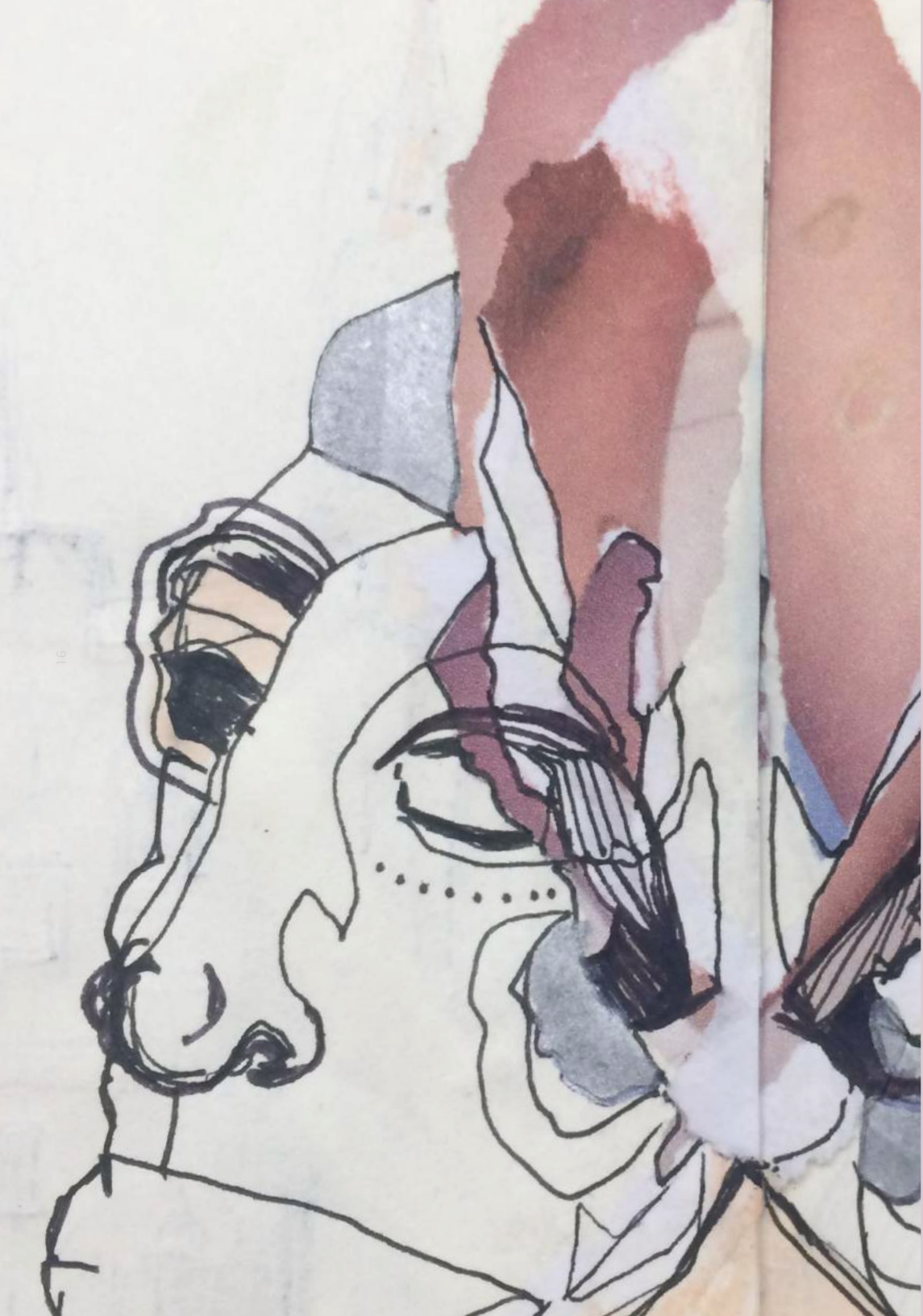
A sticker to a
forehead bent
in shame.

I am the same.
Under unruly limbs
and odd-ball
genital things
believe me, believe me.

Unfit for purchase

reduced to clear.

Nikita Singh



Artwork by Georgia Herman and Luke Farley

Explaining the process of a Foley Artist.
Describing the sounds though image and text.
Using still lives to bring sound into
the realm of the visible.

Fo•ley (ˈfoʊ li) n.

1. A technical process by which sounds are created or altered for use in a film, video, or other electronically produced work
2. A person who creates or alters sounds using this process.

Artwork by Fleur Elkerton

THE SOUNDTRACK TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Ryan McMeekin listens to the political music that put Trump in the White House.

'Donald, Dooonald. You'll never have dinner with the President' coos MC Daveed Diggs over a background of warped snares and cowbells. This is clipping.'s latest release, 'Fat Fingers', a crafty yet already out-dated tirade against the man who is now President-elect of the United States. The track, littered with clever rhymes and sharp puns, exposes Trump piece-by-piece: 'Fat fingers fumble with silver spoons earned for nothing / Too much twitter talk to be trusted with the button'. The track was at once intimately involved in and curiously detached from the debates surrounding the 2016 presidential election. Though neatly making reference to significant events in the campaign, from 'cash tax free', a comment on Trump's history of tax evasion and fraud, to 'grabbing vaginas', clipping.'s lyricism also made the track too oddly 'poetic' to be associated with the deplorable state of the 2016 election.

clipping.'s piece was in fact part of a much wider project: '30 Days, 30 Songs'—now upsized to '30 Days, 50 Songs'—was an independent website that released one song per day, between the 10th of October and Election Day, hoping to motivate individuals to vote against Trump. The project saw contributions from a huge variety of artists, with pieces ranging from the ironic and amusing to the serious and fearful—a testament to the diversity of anti-Trump feeling that nonetheless failed to prevent his meteoric and, for many, unbelievable rise to power.

JPEGMAFIA's contribution, 'I Might Vote 4 Donald Trump', for example, worked as a comically frightening critique of Trump's supporters. Featuring lyrics such as 'I just might vote for Donald Trump just cause it's legal', JPEGMAFIA stars in a video that sees himself and Freaky (a collaborator on the track) drive around the largely white and middle-class neighbourhood of Bel Air, Maryland, whilst shouting lines including 'At Uni-Mart yelling, "Fuck Bernie"'. Meanwhile, Death Cab for Cutie's contribution, 'Million Dollar Loan', was a far mellower discussion of the role of money in politics. Lyrics such as 'From a great height he's looking down on his city at night / From gilded room of gold, marble and soft perfume', contained a genuine sense of disillusionment and a throbbing disappointment at the commercialisation of the presidential campaign.

Music has been influential in presidential elections since the eighteenth-century; George Washington's various political successes and presidential campaigns saw the penning of songs such as 'Follow Washington' (1776) and 'God Save Great Washington' (1786). The latter was particularly politically-charged as it was set to the tune of 'God Save the King', a jibe at the British Empire from whom America had recently gained its independence. Likewise, in the twentieth-century, Frank Sinatra agreed to rewrite his 1959 single 'High Hopes' for John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign, replacing his lyrics with lines such as 'Jack's the nation's favourite guy, / Everyone wants to back Jack'.

These antiquated campaigns highlight the particular characteristics of music in the 2016 election. Whereas earlier songs were used to promote a particular candidate, the most popular pre-election tracks of 2016 were used largely for negative campaigns: though pro-Trump songs were produced and circulated in certain communities, very few, if any, gained the same sensational popularity as those produced to slight the Republican candidate. Pro-Clinton songs on the other hand were practically non-existent. This seems symptomatic of the way in which Trump's campaign successfully traded on fear and hatred, and Clinton's utterly failed to provide a positive alternative.

Music was predominantly used in this election as part of the wider political mudslinging that characterised the race. Most anti-Trump songs seemed mainly concerned with provoking a reaction, or providing comic value; parody was often favoured over concrete political messages. One of the most popular songs of the campaign was YG and Nipsey Hussle's 'FDT (Fuck Donald Trump)', which, though engaged with issues of race and police brutality, is overlaid with a chorus of 'Fuck Donald Trump / Fuck Donald Trump / Yeah, nigga, fuck Donald Trump', perhaps detracting from the otherwise sharp and intelligent treatment of politics on the track. The music seems indicative of a wider disenfranchisement and disenchantment with politics, part of what has led to Trump's success. Whereas popular artists in the past, Gil Scott-Heron for instance, were seriously and committedly engaged in issues of social change, it seems that current middle-ground musicians are only able to express themselves through satire and apathetic ridicule.

'30 Days, 30 Songs' claimed to be a project campaigning against Trump's 'rhetorical contortions' and his incitement of hatred, yet the lyrics on songs such as clipping.'s 'Fat Fingers' demonstrate a hatred of their own that is difficult to process, as a quality that the project supposedly eschews—saying, for example, 'who the fuck let this man talk?'. The understandable anger of artists like clipping. seemingly failed to translate into a wider movement that could move beyond anger into the sort of powerful, considered response that can change society. Now America is facing a Trump presidency for at least the next four years, it is more important than ever that political music does more than just propagate anger.

THE IRREPRESSIBLE NINA SIMONE

Sophie Nevrkla charts the development of Nina Simone's powerful self-expression.

'I'll tell you what freedom is to me: no fear.' These words have been immortalised by the irrepressible Nina Simone, the woman known as the 'high priestess of soul', and arguably America's finest female jazz musician. She was a figure who lived as freely as she performed: her stagecraft was aided by her fiery disposition, though this volatility resulted in dissolved friendships, a dissolved marriage, and a dissolved relationship with her daughter. Where Simone's unbridled passion resulted in intoxicating stage performances, it was often highly destructive in her personal life.

Simone's career was characterised by compromise and sacrifices of her creative freedom. Growing up in Tryon, North Carolina, she planned to become a classical pianist, having grown up playing from the age of three. Simone's place at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia was expected, inevitable even–but it was denied, a decision that Simone always maintained was due to her skin colour. This rejection curtailed her ability to play and perform as she desired. Simone worked a number of odd jobs around Philadelphia in order to fund continuing her piano lessons. One of these jobs involved performing at the Midtown Bar & Grill in Atlantic City, where the owner insisted that she sing as well as play. This in itself was a compromise, Simone had never seen herself as a vocalist. Eunice Kathleen Waymon became Nina Simone; the aspiring classical pianist became the jazz singer, singing blues in bars to pay the bills. Though Simone saw this move as a forced surrender of her artistic preferences, the initial compromise of playing jazz would eventually earn her vast popularity, as well as a platform on which to

protest issues that she cared deeply about. Simone knew that in order to be artistically free and follow through her ideals, she needed to be successful and practical first.

However, for Simone artistic integrity and politics were inseparable: 'you can't help it. An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times,' she avowed in one interview. In 1964 she wrote and released 'Mississippi Goddam', a song as controversial for its denouncements of racial inequality as it was for the expletive in the title, both of which were quickly and firmly censored. This song was Simone's response to the murder of Medgar Evers and the bombing of a Baptist Church in Alabama, which killed several young black women. From this point on, she became part of the movement: she was close to Malcom X and other Black Nationalist figures, denouncing Martin Luther King's peaceful approach in favour of violent revolution. Simone used her platform to write several songs in this vein, songs such as 'Four Women' and 'To Be Young, Gifted and Black'. At the same time, Simone upheld her characteristic romantic themes: the classic 1964 album *I Put A Spell On You* was released the same year as 'Mississippi Goddam'. And the passion she brought to her love songs, she brought to her protest songs too, intertwining the political and the personal. She had finally found her calling, acting on what she saw as a duty to speak on behalf of the disenfranchised African-American population.

However what was in the realm of music an exhilerating, hypnotic lack of restraint, lyrically and musically, garnered her a nasty reputation off the stage. Simone became infamous for her frequent outbursts: she fired a gun at a record executive whom she believed was stealing royalties; she injured a neighbour's son with an air gun after his playing disturbed her concentration; close friend Janis Ian remembers Simone once holding a sales assistant at gunpoint. Simone struggled with alcohol and drug abuse and suffered from intense mood swings, made worse by the presence of a psychologically and physically abusive husband. But as well as violent clashes between husband and wife, her daughter recalls frequent beatings and moments of horrific mental abuse at the hands of Simone. On and off stage, Simone was unable to repress what she was feeling: her daughter, Lisa Simone Kelly describes this as an inability to 'stop being Nina'.

Simone perhaps became a victim of her own visceral need for self-expression. She once said 'I had spent many years pursuing excellence, because that is what classical music is about… Now it was dedicated to freedom, and that was much more important'. Simone applied the same drive, determination and focus that she applied to her practicing to her politics and general outlook. Musically, this resulted in magic, and songs which were not just important as music, but vital to the Civil Rights Movement. But Simone was left seeing enemies in everyone and everything, including her own child. Her volatile urges to express exactly what she felt when she felt it, could not free Simone from herself, instead ending in a painful self-destructiveness.

Artwork by Ned Botwood

Queen Christine

Nick Mastrini celebrates the inclusive community surrounding French pop star Christine and the Queens.

Censorship does not only apply to the voice: it can involve restrictions of movement and communication through body language. Music combines these two forms of expression. It is the reason why songs can capture an artist's personality, or a powerful political message, in just minutes. In a live performance, the artist and their art are inextricable, with the commingling of vocals, choreography and the audience's energy communicating this personality and reinforcing it.

Héloïse Letissier, better known as Christine and the Queens, often proclaims that 'Tonight is a free zone!' when greeting her audiences. Her fans are diverse in age, gender and ethnicity, but always brought together by a shared admiration for the French artist's sheer enthusiasm, awe-struck by a new, unique character on stage. Through choreographed routines and beautifully written songs, Christine encapsulates a gender fluid, all-inclusive zeitgeist that defines music today. Beyond what the audience may expect—a breath-taking performance—what Christine offers with her ethos and personality is a shared experience. A chance to become the person you want to be, for the night and beyond. By establishing an environment of acceptance in which any individual can feel comfortable, the dancing and singing that follows becomes infinitely more infectious.

Afropunk Festival is predicated on a similar sense of freedom. It describes itself as 'safe place, a blank space to freak out in, to construct a new reality'. Its main stage is framed by huge black-and-white banners declaring a set of commandments for the present day, beginning with 'NO SEXISM / NO RACISM / NO ABLEISM' and concluding: 'NO HATEFULNESS'. Festivalgoers are offered a place removed from everyday reality, where they can dress the way they wish and find a community that eschews prejudice. Afropunk consequently encourages society as a whole to promote acceptance in

the same way. As in the case of Christine, a sense of communal values—and an ethical awareness that is wider than just the music—is integral to the connection forged with the audience.

With both Christine and Afropunk, limiting factors such as genre, gender and nationality have been put aside, allowing artists to more accurately represent the variety of influences that formed, and continue to form, their identity. Popularity can come from a transparent, self-depreciating public image, as Christine's twitter account attests, as well as Kanye West style showmanship. The digital world promotes a process of cross-cultural fusion and curation. Today, artists are not just looked up to, but share a dialogue with their fans which allows for a two-way exchange.

Christine's ability to create such an atmosphere of freedom is all the more remarkable as a French artist in the UK. Rather than being hindered by the language barrier, her success in English-speaking countries has blossomed because of the way in which she blends native and foreign cultures. Just as her songs explore the androgynous, their language is fluid, flitting back-and-forth between French and English. The difference between the familiar and the alien becomes blurred as she selects her lyrics from two separate vocabularies. In 'Tilted', a bridge of French rap transitions into a verse in English, she sings, 'I'm doing my face with magic marker'. Even in English, Christine's language is playfully oblique, demanding individual, personal interpretation.

When Christine and the Queens performs, she embraces imperfection and transforms mistakes into successes: her choreography often features stumbling and rebalancing, turning failure into elegance—the audience is inspired to do the same. In 'Half Ladies', she captures this self-empowerment: 'Every insult I hear back / Darkens into a beauty mark'. This is part of the dancefloor transition from strict predisposed 'real-world' notions of identity into something new, enigmatic and hopeful. In 'Science Fiction' she roams the dance floor proclaiming 'In this sea of eyes / Every move's a coup'. Even guilt at her own inaction reinforces her positive message for the future: 'Saint Claude' tells the story of her failure to intervene when she witnessed an extravagant young boy being bullied at a train station.

Christine is conscious of society's response to 'anomalous' individuals, of insults thrown by those who seek to elevate themselves above others. Her increasing popularity, along with other LGBT+ artists such as Frank Ocean and Anohni, signals a growing public conscience regarding these instances of prejudice. Though her music is not overtly political, it speaks of ethical issues that we must face in daily life–the social politics of 'long-time mockery': as she sings in 'Ugly-Pretty'. Freedom in society allows for any individual to express themselves, even if their message is of hate. But Christine reminds us that it also gives us the chance to eschew cynicism, and to be empathetic in every exchange whether that is a passing encounter or a Brixton concert.

Music

Artwork by Alice Aedy

Freeze Peach

Lyrics by Rosemary Moss.

Through the extended metaphor of 'Freeze Peach' words become merely functional, stale and monotonous as the song progresses. The conceit of its title presents words as 'Hard and Frosty'; a difficult vehicle for the expression of an individual voice.

Something about cobbling things together
Slashing verbs, slumming vowels, it's obscene
But it makes them think we're clever

Ruins the fresh, bouncing rhythms of the tongue
Deadens flesh, acidic freeze
Far from evolution

Like throwing fruit away
Into an icy grave

Nothing about Freeze Peach gives me appetite
Hard and Frosty
It's like a pantomime fakeness
So preserved and precise, concise
Something it's easy to repeat every night

Nothing about Freeze Peach gives me appetite
Let it thaw in your hands
Freeze until it feels burning
Then it's good, know it's working
Numbing every bit of sense

Try as a might, my calmness gets the best of me
I slip too easily
Much too imitatively

Jamming well, while rotting in a plotting of poor vines
Idly wishing we
Were subject to a spot of pruning

Like throwing fruit away
Into an icy grave

Nothing about Freeze Peach gives me appetite
Hard and Frosty

It's like a pantomime fakeness
So preserved and precise, concise
Something it's easy to repeat every night

Nothing about Freeze Peach gives me appetite
Let it thaw in your hands
Freeze until it feels burning
Then it's good, know it's working
Numbing every bit of sense

When you're home grown, spun along
Filling up on the edge of the branch that you're hung on
It's not enough to be plucked,
Passed from hand to hand, clutched and bruised.
If you're lucky, you're consumed
(We few, we happy few)
But well the rest of us can presume
That it's enough to be all fumbled in a mush
Feeling frenzy flowing steady lacking purpose lacking energy
Never started heavy hearted but it came to me as harvest parted
My glowing flesh was cruelly smarted

Nothing about Freeze Peach gives me appetite
Hard and Frosty
It's like a pantomime fakeness
So preserved and precise, concise
Something it's easy to repeat every night

Nothing about Freeze Peach gives me appetite
Let it thaw in your hands
Freeze until it feels burning
Then it's good, know it's working
Trying to make a bit of sense

DYLAN AND THE BARDS

Beatrice Bacci revisits the shared history of lyric and song.

COME YOU LADIES AND YOU GENTLEMEN, A-LISTEN TO MY SONG,
SING IT TO YOU RIGHT, BUT YOU MIGHT THINK IT'S WRONG.
HARD TIME IN NEW YORK TOWN
–BOB DYLAN

Search for the ancestors of poetry and you will arrive at the figure of Orpheus–a man whose singing could move rocks and tame beasts. Orpheus was the son of Calliope, the 'beautiful-voiced' muse of poetry. He is the archetype of poetic inspiration.

The roots of poetry and music are inextricably entwined. Alexander Pope's translation of *The Iliad* begins:

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!

Considered the first example of classical literature, Homer's *Iliad*, also known as the 'Song of Ilium', has a history as complex as its plot. One thing is certain; it was not written by 'Homer'. The *Iliad* exists today as the product of sedimentary retellings of a story memorised and performed by oral poets known as *aoidoi*. Across generations of performances, the 'Song of Ilium' became ingrained in the collective consciousness, well before the invention of writing.

The tradition of poetical-musical performance endured even after the birth of the Greek alphabet in 800 BCE. Greek tragedy was performed to music, with a section called the *stasimon* where choruses sang and danced. When the foundations of Greek democracy were laid by a poet named Solon, writing had yet to be extricated from music as a medium of communication in its own right. More modern Romance languages continued the tradition of musical poetry into the Middle Ages, through the ballad form taken up by travelling Troubadours. Sold and sung on street corners throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the Romantic period later adopted the ballad with gusto, notably with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's collaboration, the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).The German Romantic period saw a huge rediscovery of volk music and ballads which were integrated into 'high culture', Goethe and Schiller composed ballads that would later be set to music by Schubert, and the *volk* tradition continued across Europe well into the 20th century.

To deny song-writing from the field of Literature is to deny the very origins of Literature. Nonetheless, the award of this year's Nobel Prize for Literature to the musician Bob Dylan has sparked outrage worldwide. The permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy defended the choice, remarking that, 'if you look back 2,500 years or so, you discover that Homer's poetic texts were meant to be listened to,

YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS
ARE BEYOND YOUR COMMAND
YOUR OLD ROAD IS RAPIDLY AGING
PLEASE GET OUT OF THE NEW ONE
IF YOU CAN'T LEND YOUR HAND
FOR THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING.
THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING.

-BOB DYLAN

Artwork by Eleanor Johnson

to be performed, often with instruments. It's the same way with Bob Dylan'. Dylan himself recognises a 'Homeric value' in songs like 'Blind Willie', 'The Ballad of Hollis Brown', and 'A Hard Rain'.

While Bob Dylan is not a 'wrong' choice, is he a good choice—or have the Swedish Academy lost sight of the founding principles of the Nobel? Alfred Nobel is famous for two things; creating the Nobel Prize and inventing dynamite. These are linked by one fundamental aspect of Nobel's life: money. The Nobel Prize does not only confer worldwide recognition; it is a monetary prize, with winnings derived from the profits of commercialising dynamite. In 1818, obituaries published prematurely dubbed Nobel 'Le marchand de la mort' (the merchant of death). Disconcerted by this, the inventor attempted to clean up his reputation, founding the Nobel Prizes in an effort to be seen instead as a merchant of innovation.

Alfred Nobel was not only an inventor but a businessman. Having lived a large proportion of his life in poverty, he understood that money was essential to the realisation of great ideas. In his will, Nobel determined that the prizes should be awarded 'to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind'. Prizes were meant to support young talent; those in need of funds to make the world a better place. The diversity of subjects for which prizes are awarded demonstrates that Nobel's appreciation for excellence extended across the disciplines. For this reason, it hardly seems likely he would have condoned the segregation of song and poetry. Nevertheless, how should we be directing these Nobel funds now to best reward and encourage good work? In patronising Bob Dylan, we see a departure from the original aims of the Nobel: the seventy-five-year-old singer, worth an estimated $80 million, is reaching the end of one of music's most illustrious careers. Although central to the cultural landscape of the twentieth century, few would argue that Dylan has conferred a particular greatness to mankind during the last year; and what difference will this money make to his work?

I would not have awarded the Nobel Prize to Bob Dylan, for the same reason I would not have awarded it to Homer. In the furthering of literature, we must look to the future rather than reminiscing about the past. Although Dylan has influenced us all, it is young people who will create the next great literary inventions, and it is young people who need the money to do so.

Muted Confessions

Emma Desphande on overcoming taboos of mental illness.

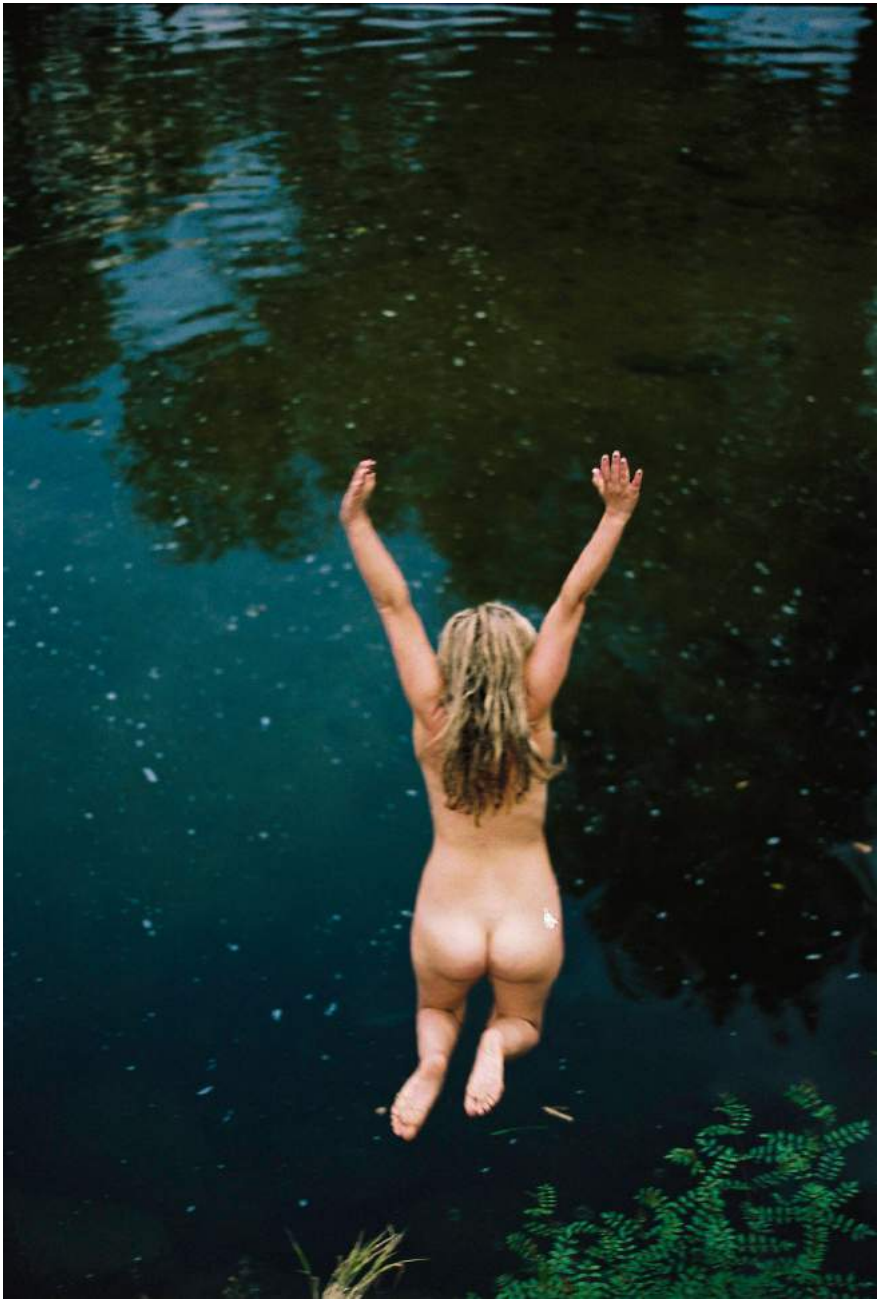
In her seminal novel of female depression *The Bell Jar* (1963), Sylvia Plath wrote, 'I would rather have anything wrong with my body than something wrong with my head'. Mental illness—having 'something wrong with your head'—has been a gendered concept throughout history. When seeking a term to denote emotional disturbances, 19th century scientists chose 'hysteria' from the Greek *hystera* meaning womb. Fundamental to the development of many modern scientific discourses like psychology was a distinction between masculinized objective thought and a female object to be studied. In 1892, the psychiatrist Gustave Bouchereau wrote that 'insanity must be suspected and looked for if a woman gives herself suddenly to debauchery'; treatment of mental illness has followed in this vein. So-called 'hysterical women' made up the majority of patients treated with electroconvulsive therapy; Sylvia Plath among them. As recently as the '90s, Prozac adverts featured women cheerfully fulfilling work and family roles. This deep-rooted gendered history of the treatment of mental illness has hindered the creation of an open discourse about female mental health today. While the situation is beginning to improve, for the twentieth century short story writers Lucia Berlin and Alice Munro the stigma surrounding discussions of female mental health made fiction the best place for examination of their struggles.

Lucia Berlin's short story collection, *A Manual for Cleaning Women* (1977), features characters in various stages of alcoholism: from a mother desperate to buy alcohol in the middle of the night, to a woman entering rehab for the first time. The story 'Let Me See You Smile' stands out for being narrated not by a woman in the throes of alcohol dependency, but by a male lawyer who befriends his clients: as the lawyer grows closer to a couple, both of whom are alcoholics, he enters a half-lucid world which presents a new and more alluring portrayal of alcohol. Liquor comes to symbolise a respite from the lawyer's corporate life and renders romantic the couple's flawed relationship. 'Let Me See You Smile' acknowledges the glamorisation of alcohol abuse and contrasts sharply with the shame and anxiety that punctuates Berlin's more autobiographical accounts of dependency. Perhaps Berlin wished to offer an accessible narrative perspective for readers who did not share her experiences, providing a high-paid, corporate male narrator as a foil to Carlotta's stigmatized lifestyle. While Berlin

is able to explore the hardships of addiction with her female characters, this suggests that the stigma surrounding mental illness is such that she is only able to acknowledge the appeal of alcohol through the prism of a male perspective.

Alice Munro is even more self-censored in her approach to the subject of bulimia. In 'Hard Luck Stories', the character Julie relates her experiences of binge eating and subsequent purging. It is not a poignant confession: Julie tells the story to the nameless female narrator and her friend—hitherto a stranger—after several glasses of wine. The narrator is embarrassed by Julie's admissions and worries that her male friend will not like her. Concern over the man's approval, rather than Julie's well-being, elegantly demonstrates the stigma we have been discussing and its link to the suppression of women. In 'Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You' this stigma proves fatal when the character Char dies of a heart attack after suffering from bulimia for many years. The narrator, her sister Et, forgoes mentioning the eating disorder even to us readers until halfway through the story, and only does so when telling us about cooking for her brother-in-law during her sister's periods of purging. Arthur never learns about his wife's eating disorder, presenting the issue as a problem not meant to burden men. Although to some extent drawing attention to ways in which mental illness is ignored and pushed into the margins, the author seems forced to keep the experience of it in the fringes of her narratives—hiding it from male characters or trivializing it in their presence. Moreover, the title, *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), enacts the same relegating fictionalization: Munro cannot be explicit with her reader any more than Et can be with Arthur. Discussion of issues like bulimia can only happen in a roundabout, evasive manner, we get very little access to its experience.

The enforced hush around mental illness is undoubtedly beginning to break: J.K. Rowling, who suffered from depression in her twenties, speaks about her illness openly and without shame. Yet the insidious taboo endures. Female suicide rates in England increased by 14% between 2013 and 2014; this at a time when austerity cuts have made UK mental health services less accessible to patients. Despite the gendered muting and evasion of tacking mental illness head on, Berlin and Munro have been an important part of encouraging conversation through their work. Their stories are not only artistic achievements, but triumphs over personal and societal obstacles; triumphs that remain particularly noteworthy as long as those who suffer from mental illness feel unable to discuss it. We can hope that thanks to their legacy more writers will now be able to move further on.



Artwork by Ned Botwood

MONUMENTALISING THOMAS MORE

Theo Tamblyn deconstructs More's reputation as a Communist forefather.

For one year short of a century, a colossal monolith loomed large in the Aleksandrovskiy Gardens in central Moscow. Engraved by the Tsars with the coats of arms of every Russian province in 1914, the stone was soon stripped of Romanov legends as the chaos of revolution swept Russia. By order of Lenin, the monument was re-inscribed in 1918 with a simple list: the 'Monument Obelisk' now honoured great thinkers who had sowed the seeds of revolt that had burst forth in October the year before. Beneath Marx, Engels, and other recipients of state honours under Russian Communism, there was written another name: *Ш. МОР*. In Latin script this reads 'Sh. MOR'; Thomas More, Chancellor to Henry VIII, Catholic scholar, and author, in 1516, of the singular text *Utopia*.

Scholars commonly venerate More as a humanist thinker and father to the left. In *Utopia* he imagined a society radically different from his own; both a dystopian critique and a utopian thought experiment, this society was based on communal property and finance, and a centrally administered system of government. It is no surprise that this experiment appealed to those setting up the first ever Communist government. A closer analysis of *Utopia*, however, reveals motivations irreconcilable with the central tenets of Communism, and More's own life followed a path which seems alien to the principles of both Communism and his own *magnum opus*.

In the past, much has been made of the social propositions of *Utopia*; chief among which are nominal gender equality, freedom of religion, and centrally-administered healthcare. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that More believed these policies to be either feasible or desirable in a real society.

The functionality of the Utopian state rests on free—slave—labour. Citizens are assigned to

different tasks based on ability, and dissenters are distributed to conformist households as slaves. Food, water and supplies are provided free on application, but in return the Utopians must abandon the concepts of property and privacy, and live in a world where locks and private meetings are forbidden. This fascinates More's narrator, but beneath this surface we are invited to be more suspicious.

Utopia's distinctly illiberal stance (on what might now be considered 'liberal' issues) is illuminating. Utopian collectivism relies on a degree of self-sacrifice which would be nigh-on impossible to achieve with real human subjects. Indeed, the impossibility of the Utopian model seems crucial to More's thinking. The name 'Utopia' derives from the Greek 'no place' as much as 'good place'. Despite its obvious efficiency, the sterility of such an ordered system is horrifying and repellent in its oppressiveness. Contrasting the chaotic depiction of Europe bemoaned in the first part of the book, More demonstrates through *Utopia* the futility of aspiring towards an ideal society considering that it is impossible to rid humans of possessions. Utopia dramatises the implausibility of aligning all individuals with the motivations of the state.

If *Utopia* is conceived as a satiric impossibility, we can perhaps forgive More for the ill-treatment of his allegorical citizens. It is harder to extend the same forgiveness to his actions as Chancellor. More was a member of the religious aristocracy and dispenser of arbitrary justice as Chancellor to Henry VIII. As the influence of the Lutherans reached England, More endeavoured with great zeal to quash the bourgeoning Protestantism, employing torture and burning heretics at the stake. When political expediency subsequently led Henry VIII to the Reformation, the Chancellor was driven to choose between King and Pope; choosing the latter he was swiftly executed. How do we understand More's writing in the light of his life: was his *Utopia* a critique of the totalitarian regime that would have him executed, or a model for the new centralised state he had helped administrate?

The Monument Obelisk no longer stands in the Aleksandrovskiy Gardens. It was quietly demolished in 2013, one year short of its centenary and just three years before the 500th anniversary of *Utopia*'s publication. Despite More's sometime reputation as a radical, his inclusion on the Monument Obelisk seems a strange decision. In fact, More's name seems to anticipate the eventual collapse and failure of the USSR, as much as its hopeful beginning. Pitting their success against all the individual desires of the world, the Revolutionaries were drawn into a long and bitter struggle, drawn along lines that *Utopia* indicates. For Russia, much like More's England, the formation of an ideology of central state power led to heresy trials and bloodshed. In *Utopia*, Thomas More seems himself to have known that a society of perfect unity is beyond reach.

Literature

VOICES

Emma Deshpande

He is an alarm clock. Every morning, the day begins with his voice. A whisper that opens my eyes and moves my body. Did I ask for him? I can't remember now, but that doesn't matter. I can't wake up without him anymore.

He talks incessantly. Once I tried to listen, but the things he said didn't make any sense: Silly, you slept until one today. Come on now, move your arm so I can put on your jumper. Lift your feet. Do you want socks today? It's cold outside.

Other things once we left my bedroom, but I'd stopped listening by then. That was a long time ago. I think if I tried to listen now I'd understand even less.

Not listening is easier anyway. I can still hear him, always, so my consciousness is narrated by the rhythm of his sentences. When they are stronger, louder, I know I'm supposed to do something. Or maybe that's because they're accompanied by pressure—on my back, my arm, against my lips. Regardless, I do the things. Does it really matter why?

There are other voices. Sometimes they're in front of me, or behind me, like his, and sometimes they're right up against my ear. That type of voice is accompanied with a pressure, so I feel I must do something for those voices. For them, I listen.

Hello, they say. They speak so slowly. How are you?

Of course I don't reply. I don't know how I am.

When there are voices in front of me, the noise runs right into my eyes and brings colour to my vision. Splotches of red clouded with black. They say the same things: Hello. How are you? Also: happy birthday. The last two words I recognise but no longer understand.

There is a pressure I don't like accompanied by these colour voices. On my forehead: a kiss with only one set of lips. It leaves a dampness on my skin that lingers after the voices have left. Maybe

that's why I think it lasts longer—I can't listen when I'm thinking about that strange, cold patch in the centre of my forehead.

Most days are very quiet. I hear his murmur and the only sensation on my skin is dripping food or saliva. That is much, much worse than the residue of a kiss. It moves. I feel the trail down my jaw, a hardened film that cannot evaporate because I cannot make myself do anything without someone else's pressure. I have to sit aware of its itch and unable to forget the sensation of a drip long gone, fallen and absorbed somewhere below my head.

When he notices, his solution to these stains are more words and pressure on the skin around my mouth. It's unique because it's rough, leaves my skin raw. I tingle. I love it.

There is another word that I hear through the pressure on my ear. Grandad. I forget it often because the voices become frail when they say it. Shrill. It's uncomfortable. I don't understand it but I know I don't like it. They say it so delicately but that's not how it feels in my mind: heavy, as though it should be important. Something else I've forgotten.

Recently, there have been a lot of slow voices. More in my ear than in front of me, so it's easy to listen. I think about my words—theirs, really, but I've adopted them. Hello. How are you. Happy birthday. Grandad. I think about them after I'm listening so I can practise them.

Hello. My lips and my tongue should do something about these. How are you? If I could open my mouth and hold it there, would that give me a voice? Happy birthday. I don't know how I'd know if I had a voice, because the noise wouldn't be against my ear or my eyes but out in the world, travelling away from me. Grandad. No, I wouldn't be able to keep it with me the way I can keep my thoughts with me. I don't have enough control.

If he could move my mouth the way he moves my body, I could speak. Pressure wouldn't be enough. If he could do anything for me, I'd want him to lift my head up by the ears so quickly that my mouth would fall open. I'd have a voice before I could think about it. But I don't know how to ask him. And besides, he's not the one I listen to. He must know that. I think he would speak slowly like the others if he wanted me to listen. I don't listen to him and he knows and doesn't care so he doesn't listen to me. I know. Which means I shouldn't care, either.

IN YER FACE THEATRE

Alastair Curtis on theatre's unique ability to shock its audience.

Legend has it that when John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) was first performed it provoked gasps from its audience. Visitors to the Royal Court Theatre were alarmed by the verbal artillery of Osborne's working class antihero, Jimmy Porter, who rails against the elitism and patriotism of the post-war British Establishment. Osborne's candid depiction of working class life was deemed 'unspeakably filthy' by critics; many objected to the play's setting in a grubby one-bedroom flat and the presence of an ironing board on stage. Amongst the play's few approving voices was that of novelist Alan Sillitoe, who described how the play 'didn't contribute to British theatre, [it] set off a land mine and blew most of it up'. Though Look Back in Anger is rarely performed today—in part because Jimmy's speechifying can seem dated—the play's significance is undeniable: it led to an influx of working class British drama, written by a group of fiercely political playwrights known as the 'Angry Young Men', including the likes of John Arden and Edward Bond.

The label 'Angry Young Men' is as imprecise as it is contentious, but it remains a helpful tool in defining the moment in British drama when widespread disaffection with traditional social institutions—like the government, monarchy and church—birthed a radical new theatrical language: one that was confrontational and unafraid to shock its audience. Kitchen sink realism replaced the drawing-room drama of the early twentieth century and seminal works like Arden's *Live Like Pigs* (1958), Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1961) and Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958) won acclaim for staging the struggles of the disadvantaged. The belief that plays can provoke a conversation with their audience about society is commonplace now, but it was an idea that originated with the 'Angry Young Men', whose drama had the effect of 'speaking directly to the audience', according to director William Gaskill. In *A Taste of Honey*, Delaney dramatised life as seen from below: the tragedies of impoverished families taking place along the cobbled streets of Salford. Delaney knew this world well, but the 'taboo' subjects her play touches upon—alcoholism,

homosexuality and racism—shocked audiences. Like her 'Angry Young Men' contemporaries, Delaney used shock tactics in order to establish a conversation with her audience and society at large, directly confronting its prejudice and discrimination.

Theatre as a medium holds a specifically potent ability to shock because the subversion it stages unfolds in real time, performed by real people at close proximity to the audience. There can be no escape once the lights go down, forcing audience members to bear witness to—hence become complicit in—scenes of extreme violence and emotional suffering. With *Saved* (1965), Edward Bond's harrowing tale of urban poverty, the Angry Young Men adopted the use of transgressive acts on stage in order to redefine the theatrical form. Bond's play is notorious to this day for its scene in which a baby is cruelly stoned to death; a scene that completely changed the face of British drama. Since the eighteenth century, the Lord Chamberlain's Office censored obscenity in plays before they reached the stage. Though *Saved* was banned from performance, the Royal Court Theatre continued with its premiere and criminal charges were filed against the theatre. A groundswell of public support for the theatre's artistic integrity, alongside a large media campaign, eventually resulted in the abolition of theatrical censorship by 1968.

Liberated from the Lord Chamberlain's Office and buoyed by *Saved*'s success, British drama began to experiment with the limits of what was permissible on stage. It was in the 1990s that the confrontational spirit of the Angry Young Men found a new incarnation: 'in-yer-face theatre', a challenging wave of drama which critic Aleks Sierz characterises as 'taking an audience by the scruff of the neck and shaking until it gets the message'. The work of playwrights like Mark Ravenhill and Sarah Kane was marked by a new frankness of tone that took its ideological inspiration from Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* and the belief that the depiction of violence on stage can invigorate theatre by freeing it from ethical constraints. Kane's *Cleansed* (1998) is a play only for the strong-stomached. This mysterious play is set in an institution ruled by the sadistic Tinker, who tests the limits of loving couples by way of incest, mutilation and rape. Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) is another catalogue of casual cruelty, which makes creative use of a drill.

While it is impossible to divorce these works from the context of Thatcherite Britain, 'in-yer-face' writers direct their frustration with society into an apolitical perversion of morality. Recent revivals of *Cleansed* and *Shopping and Fucking* have packed out auditoriums, producing sensational media headlines about fainting, complaints and mass walkouts. However, audience responses imply their attraction is puerile rather than political, unlike their Angry Young Men predecessors. 'In-yer-face theatre' pares life to the bone, but without its politics, it fails to touch a nerve.

Artwork by Alba Sanzo Sahagún

Self-Fashion, Darling

Sophia Compton looks at theatrical costumes from Shakespeare to now.

'The principles of a world are found woven into the fabric of its clothing', according to the anthropologist Grant McCracken. Stage costumes give further clues: the different ways historical audiences have looked at costumes reveal complexly changing understandings of how characters relate to their costumes both on stage and off. A snapshot of theatrical costumes at two different moments asks whether by assuming a 'new look' someone can fundamentally change who they are.

Elizabethan Sumptuary Laws give a whole new meaning to the idea that clothes define us. The highly detailed legislation explained which materials and styles were available to which social ranks. Clothes—what we now think of as the ultimate form of self-expression—were used practically to enforce a visible hierarchy. They marked out identity, tied closely to social rank, all according to a pyramid headed by the Queen's divine right. Not only a status symbol, Elizabethan clothes determined 'what could be said, thought, felt', or so says the critic Stephen Greenblatt. Actors were the sole exemption from these laws; the only people legally permitted to saunter around in purple silk, sable fur, or silver apart from top-flight aristocrats. Stage costumes were vital character signposts in a theatrical culture which demanded a new play each day from theatre companies, and often required actors to play multiple roles. Audiences, trained to recognise status on the basis of outfit, accepted a character's gender, age, class or nationality according to what they wore, including boys dressed up as girls. If a modern production cast a male Juliet the audience would expect a homoerotic reading. Similarly, the unique, kaleidoscopic potential of actors' freedom from Sumptuary restrictions fed theatre's reputation as a subversive space. However, while staging two male actors as lovers, of course, implies homosociality, perhaps this practice had more to do with the degree to which women were alienated from their culture, which only perceived one 'complete' sex: the male. Clothes seem to be tied in unnervingly literal ways to Elizabethan structures of identity, with the stage providing a space where these associations could be to a certain, qualified degree unfettered.

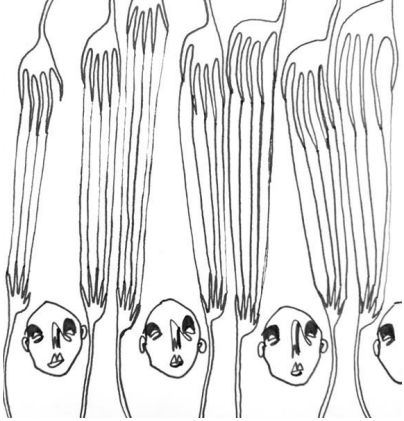
Leap forward to the mid-eighteenth century. To whizz through huge timeframes and complex social structures risks simplification, but again glancing at stage conventions reveals the fascinating structures by which identity is organized. James Boswell wrote in *The London Magazine* of the

'mysterious power' by which an actor literally '*is* what we behold': contemporary commentators debated whether Garrick, the A-list actor of the day, had been so transformed by donning the physical and metaphorical guise of Macbeth that he should be jailed for treason. Boswell presents identity as something literally mutable, shedable, transformable—with dress as the key agent of these change. It is hard to conceive of a period in history when clothes held more power to actually alter character. Stories abound of people losing their identity in the middle of a masque, or girls passing as men for decades in the army: this was a culture that obsessed over the sex of the cross-dressing diplomat the 'Chevalier d'Eon'. Off-stage, Boswell can don the clothes of a 'Blackguard' and literally become one for the night. For the duration of the act, an adopted character is accepted to 'be' a person's identity, just like Garrick on stage really is Macbeth. The transformative potential of theatrical and social costumes seems disconcertingly literal. A caveat here: the options were not unlimited, identity performance was dictated by (male, patriarchal) social politeness, and the fascination with aberrations was perhaps more of a fashionable source of laugher than a conscious destabilisation of norms. Nonetheless, like never before (and perhaps never again) people thought that costume could instantly and fundamentally change identity.

These two ways of viewing costume seem radically material: clothes *are* identity, they don't express it. Identity, in these moments, was not inner, stable, essential or tied to biology, but something worn on the surface. Costumes in theatre were steeped in power and politics: an anomaly in the Elizabethan hierarchy, and then a portal through which eighteenth-century actors could literally become new characters. However, the potential of this materiality to subvert patriarchal structures had major limits.

So where are we now; what does this mean for the present? Let's start once again by looking at clothes in our theatres: while much costume follows a 19th century model of communicating inner characteristics, productions also manipulate the subversive power of androgynous dress, drag, colour or gender-blind casting and significantly anachronistic costume design. Rather than asking you to read identity directly from dress, costumes can now probe and obfuscate notions of identity. Clothes have lost the immediate (even God-given) power they once had to confer or shape identity (although anyone who's ever found themselves walk/talk/eat/thinking in a different way because of a ballgown or tracksuit might wonder…).

Off-stage outfits now seem to be doing just as much work in terms of performance as their theatrical counterparts. However, as pointedly-evasive stage styles imply, we seem to be learning how to use clothes to question identity structures. More than ever before they are used as non-normative statements—think of the use of outfits in Queer clubbing scenes. Postmodern debates about how our identities and bodies are written by culture has shown the limits of our powers to self-fashion, but this inspection of limits has revealed which borders can be challenged—until this horizon becomes the new norm. Judith Butler has the definitive word on this, distinguishing between the conscious, skilled performances—for instance of the stage—and the performative process that forms our identity, whose lines have been written by culture and which becomes real through mundane, ritualized, and mostly unconscious repetition. This awareness of limits has broadened the scope of what it is possible to wear, think, or be.

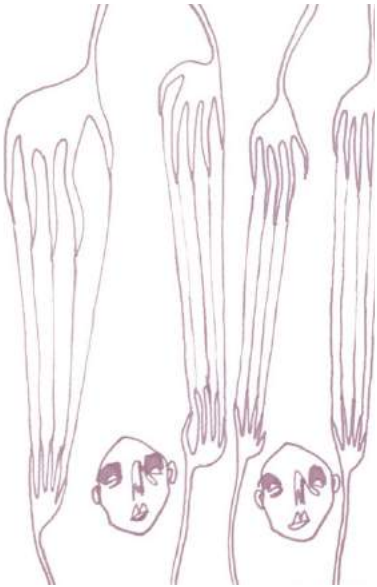


21ST CENTURY SHAKESPEARE

Uri Inspector explores how (not) to modernise Shakespeare.

In the 400 years since Shakespeare's death, his plays have been rewritten, restyled and reimagined more than any other playwright. But as well as radical modernisations there have been movements to keep Shakespeare's texts and staging unadulterated. Victorian 'realistic' productions were fixated with historical accuracy in dress and setting (although paradoxically the long scene changes meant that texts were cut with impunity). Shakespeare's Globe has since 1997 attempted to put on plays as they were originally performed. The theatre's most recent artistic director, Emma Rice, subverted this tradition through textual alteration and use of contemporary technology, and was subsequently fired. The debate as to why, and in what ways, Shakespeare should be modernised has resurfaced.

Artwork by Isabella Childs and Poppy Wood



Throughout her early career, Rice showed an urge to bring contemporary relevance to age-old stories in her work with Cornish theatre company Kneehigh. Her adaptation of the classic Hans Christian Andersen fairy-tale *The Red Shoes* embodied this idea, integrating references to concentration camps and anarchism. She made use of archetypal characters to depict modern alienation. *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* her first incursion on the Globe stage, explored the fluidity of gender and sexuality with the casting of a male Helena, in a way that not only complemented but also elucidated the script. Similarly, Oberon's scheming was aligned with sexual abuse, as the flower's essence became a date-rape drug.

As such, Rice follows in the footsteps of a tradition of 20th century directors who have liberated reading Shakespeare, finding in his texts relevance to contemporary society. In 1936, Orson Welles' astounding, all-black *Macbeth* drew on the play's political realism to examine issues facing the contemporary African-American community in the US. Michael

Bogdanov used modern dress and an emphasis on abuse to depict oppressive patriarchy in *The Taming of the Shrew* (RSC, 1978). In film, Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) retold the *Henry IV* plays in a way that expanded on themes of family while exploring gay identity and love. Again and again, the ability of Shakespeare's plays to reach into our lives all the way from the 16th century has been demonstrated; this is the essence of how to modernise Shakespeare well.

Rice's attempted innovations at the Globe, however, have been inconsistent and sometimes gratuitous. While making the *Dream* accessible to a broader audience is laudable, its setting in Hoxton verged on a cheap play for laughs. Rice's irreverence for the text, expressed in the aside 'Why is everybody so obsessed with text?', at times seems subversive for the sake of subversion. Script alterations can enliven a text and reveal unthought-of dimensions, but they need to be justified by strong and clear underpinning intentions. Rice's desire for change has focused on accessibility and entertainment value. Sometimes this worked to engage with contemporary issues—her tenure has seen incredible involvement of deaf actors and audiences—but at other times it came at the expense of meaningful theatre. There has always been a temptation for voguish reworkings which can sell tickets: John Dryden transformed *The Tempest* into a comic opera because of opera's contemporary popularity and Nahum Tate imposed a happy ending on *King Lear* reflecting the Restoration idea that theatre is a tool for morality. The Hoxton setting of the *Dream* and *Imogen's* (*Cymbeline* renamed) location in modern gangland seem similarly incongruous. *Imogen*'s patronising caricature of youth culture added little to the meaning of an adaptation purportedly centered around the character Imogen, losing a possibly innovative feminist refocusing of *Cymbeline*. The mystery remains as to why Rice was initially hired by such a committedly traditional theatre given her reputation for radical performance; was it that the Globe want to cash in on her proven ability to sell tickets? Whatever the answer, the experiment has been cut short.

The reason Shakespeare lends himself time and time again to adaptation is the universality of his themes and characters. His plays should be modernised: Elizabethan society centred on antiquated values and society has changed since. We need modernised versions of Shakespeare just as much as we must continually return to Shakespeare's original texts (even if only as a point of departure). Modern retellings can counteract ideas in Shakespeare's plays, like the conflation of beauty and virtue, that now seem preposterous, or even dangerous. However, there is no danger of modern interpretations ending with Rice's tenure. In fact, this might lead to a return to form from her.

On the other side of the coin, the Globe's mission to present Shakespeare's plays as they would have been performed can be intellectually, culturally and artistically stimulating for audiences. The theatre is not only an academic resource: audiences new to Shakespeare are time and again surprised by how relevant, funny and approachable the works can be in their original formats, and leave feeling the bearing that such old plays can have on their lives. An imposing style in itself is not the only end of productions. Modernisation should not merely facilitate understanding and interest, but should primarily enlighten both the text and the audience.

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