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Guest editors:

Helmi Järviluoma and Jan Sverre Knudsen
(The Nordic network Researching Music Censorship)

Editorial board:

Martin Knakkegaard, Mads Krogh, Søren Møller Sørensen



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Introduction

When the NordForsk-funded network *Researching Music Censorship* (RMC) was initiated in 2010, it was obvious that music censorship was not decreasing. There were severe conflicts over freedom of expression in various parts of the world, but also a growing awareness of issues concerning control and regulation of the arts. Censorship could be observed in areas of conflict and political tension as well as in politically stable regions like the Nordic countries. Today we experience that censorship of the arts is an issue of increasing social and political significance. We feel that we have been heading in the right direction when assuming that it is essential to direct academic scholarship towards issues of censorship, freedom of expression and human rights in relation to the arts, in our case music.

The objective of the RMC network has been to contribute with an academic approach through the development of multifaceted, scientifically based research. At the outset, the aim of the network was stated as follows: “[...] to question the often uncomplicated and simplified definitions of the concept in popular discourse, and based on a firm understanding of music as a socially organised means of communication and through identification and documentation of discourses on restrictions and regulations in musical expression, the participating researchers will examine global, regional and local frameworks for music censorship”.¹

As the contributions to this issue clearly demonstrate, research on music censorship is, on the one hand, concerned with social and political issues. Since censorship plays a part in struggles concerning class, race, gender and religion, the study of censorship inevitably involves a focus on power relations; on the mobilisation and implementation of power both by the censors and those being censored. On the other hand, the study of music censorship is obviously also about music. It directs our attention towards the particular potential of music to articulate and communicate attitudes and opinions in ways that surpass what can be accomplished by use of the spoken word. Music may serve to empower or distribute a social or political message, but additionally, by way of association or representation, music may constitute a message in itself and can hence be studied both as a medium and as a message. Thus, we have seen that the object of censorship may be both the lyrical content of particular songs and the artists that perform them, but also entire music genres or even the performance of music as such.

The RMC network was officially brought to an end in late 2014, but the rich outcomes are only now starting to appear. The network has consisted of a total of 48 scholars and PhD researchers from all the Nordic countries plus associated researchers from other parts of the world. Their varied academic backgrounds include the fields of popular music studies, music education, ethnomusicology and religious studies. We

1 RMC Website, accessed 4 February, 2015: <http://rmc.ku.dk>.

are confident that the activities of the network have created a new awareness of the significance and ramifications of the study of music censorship and artistic freedom of expression in the Nordic countries and beyond. Through conference presentations, papers and articles RMC members have shared their research perspectives with peers, and through media appearances and teaching at universities and university colleges they have raised public attention to the topic.

Based on the many presentations at seminars and conferences organised by RMC, 25 articles were selected for publication in four forthcoming books and special journal issues. The seven articles published in this issue of Danish Musicology Online are the first publications coming out of the network.

In our first article, based on the repercussions following Pussy Riot's performance of "Punk Prayer" in the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow, Tore Tvarnø Lind discusses different notions of blasphemy in view of religious and political discourses in Russia. He shows us how censorship and persecution of the group can be understood as a response to their intrusion into sacred space, their political critique, the "imagined violence" of their act, and finally, their feminist agenda. Thomas Solomon's article questions the understanding of self-censorship as merely a capitulation to the censoring forces. Through a case study of the Turkish rapper Sagopa Kajmer (also known as DJ Mic Check) Solomon argues against a "victimology approach", claiming that self-censorship potentially opens up space for creative practice, even involving a critique of censorship itself. In his article on Cuban popular dance music as an expression of political values, Kjetil Klette Bøhler invites the reader to join and reflect together with the political theorists Arendt and Rancière on the aesthetic *polis* space. Through his ethnomusicological fieldwork and careful music analysis Bøhler shows how grooves and melodies shape opinions, values and preferences potentially critical of the state, thereby contributing to participatory democracy in Cuba. Ursula Geisler explores institutionalized music censorship enforced by the Third Reich in Germany. Her article summarises the laws and principles enforced by two specialized cultural institutions assigned with the task of controlling and limiting music in relation to a variety of issues, including Jewishness, Bolshevism and atonality. Geisler draws a complex picture of the Nazi regime's pervasive control system and its strategies of cultural concessions and prohibitions. With a focus on censorship and self-censorship in Finnish newspaper journalism Antti-Ville Kärjä discusses cultural politics in view of major societal changes in "post-Soviet" Finland. Analysing more than 400 newspaper articles from *Helsingin Sanomat* Kärjä identifies four different censorship discourses related to music after the abolition of the Soviet Union. Kristine Ringsager investigates the use of rap music in social integration work among ethnic minority youth in Denmark. She discusses some of the obvious tensions between agencies that are ideally offered by such projects and the often provocative expressions promoted by the young rap performers themselves. In effect, Ringsager suggests that social work of this kind can be understood as a strategy of "repressive tolerance" and part of a dominant ideology. Johannes Frandsen Skjelbo explores the Danish debate following the near cancellation of a controversial concert with the Jamaican dancehall artist Sizzla. From a post-

colonial perspective, Skjelbo discusses the controversy in view of freedom of speech and the protection of minorities as well as notions of the black body and black music.

During the past years we have moved from a vague and, perhaps, too rigid understanding of music censorship towards a much broader idea of it. We have become acquainted with the many ways in which music censorship is articulated and exercised in different locations, as well as a variety of perspectives on the how it can be approached in scientific research. As guest editors of this special edition we hope these insights are useful to you as a reader.

Many people have contributed to the completion of this special issue. We would like to thank the authors for their inspiring article contributions, the peer reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions, Mads Krogh and the DMO editors for their patience and for supporting the idea of a special issue, NordForsk for funding the network over four years, and finally, RMC leader Annemette Kirkegaard and Jonas Otterbeck for excellent cooperation and the great atmosphere in the organizing committee.

Helmi Järviluoma and Jan Sverre Knudsen

The Nordic network Researching Music Censorship

Blasphemy Cries over Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer"

Christianity, to put it bluntly, is the religion that made blasphemy popular.¹

If the state is so closely identified with the religion it has established and the head of the state is also the head of the church, then to subvert the doctrine of the established church is to undermine the authority of the state itself.²

Introduction

Cries of blasphemy directed at Pussy Riot still echo, asserting that a delicate line somewhere between the sacred and the profane has been crossed in ways causing offense to the Russian Orthodox Church and Christian Orthodox believers. These accusations of blasphemy and concern for people's religious convictions have been countered by those who defend freedom of speech and the important role played by activist art in legally criticizing state and church politics.

The mixing of profane and sacred domains in the images and lyrics in the video known as the "Punk Prayer: Holy Mother of God, put Putin away"³ is essential to its political message. It hardly makes much sense to expose the direct confrontation between state authorities and the "rioting" bodies of citizens if not as a deliberate provocation; indeed I suggest that some notion of blasphemy has been put into play as a means to

1 S. Brent Plate, *Blasphemy: Art that Offends* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 55.

2 Ivan Hare, "Blasphemy and Incitement to Religious Hatred: Free Speech Dogma and Doctrine," in *Extreme Speech and Democracy*, ed. Ivan Hare and James Weinstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 291.

3 See the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALS92big4TY> («Pussy Riot-Punk Prayer.mp4», YouTube; accessed 10 December, 2013); or at <http://pussy-riot.livejournal.com/>, and http://pussy-riot.livejournal.com/#entry-pussy_riot-12442, accessed 9 February, 2014. The song is known in a variety of translations and versions, for example "Mother of God, Drive Putin Out" (Polly McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically: Performance and Authenticity in New Media," *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* 9 (2013), 103), and "Our Lady, Chase Putin Out" (Lindsay Zoladz, "Take Me Seriously: Why Pussy Riot Matter," *Pitchfork*, August 16, 2012, <http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/8920-pussy-riot/>) or referred to as an "anti-Putin prayer" (Bernard Marcadé, "Cloaca, Crashes and Pussy Riot," *Art-Press* 395 (2012), 85). I will use the short "Punk Prayer" (Russ., *pank moleben*) throughout this article.

air the protest, to “cause a scandal and maintain its effects,” in media space.⁴ The video, filmed in two of Moscow’s most prestigious cathedrals, is framed as an invocation to the Mother of God to become a feminist, using religious gestures mixed with “anti-authoritarian” punk postures, chanting mixed with screaming voices and distorted guitars, and lyrics packed with curses and oaths aimed at both patriarch and president. The result is a critique of the “cozy ties between the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church.”⁵ As Jeremy Patrick, in his study of blasphemy, has suggested, the “shocking nature of blasphemy is exactly what makes it useful in creative endeavours.”⁶ The strategic deployment of some notion of blasphemy as a shock effect in “Punk Prayer” must therefore not be left out of the discussion. Pussy Riot claims to have no interest in the Russian Orthodox Church whatsoever,⁷ yet this seems to contradict the message that their Punk Prayer video promotes. Clearly, Pussy Riot want their video audiences to take notice and begin to ask urgent questions about the role of Orthodoxy in Russian society and politics, especially the Church’s support of Putin prior to the 2012 presidential election.

Since the early 1990s’ “freedom of Faith”-statute in the *perestroika*-spirit, Russia has seen a general religious resurgence in Orthodox Christianity as well as in non-traditional spiritual searching,⁸ giving further evidence to the spread of “un-secularization,”⁹ or “de-secularization,”¹⁰ as a dominant social phenomenon throughout the world in the late twentieth century.¹¹ This concept does not refer to an apoliti-

4 Maria Chehonadskih, “What Is Pussy Riot’s ‘Idea’?,” *Radical Philosophy* 176 (2012), 4.

5 Cathy Young, “Putin Goes to Church,” *Reason* 44/8 (2013).

6 Jeremy Patrick, “The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy,” *Florida Journal of International Law* 23 (2011), 211.

7 Short interview with Nadezhda Tolokonnikova after the symposium: “Pussy Riot Meets Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti,” at the University of Oslo, 12 May, 2014.

8 Davis mentions religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hare Krishna, Church of Scientology, etc.; see Derek H. Davis, “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Future of Russia,” *Journal of Church and State* 44/4 (2002), 660; see also James W. Warhola, “Religion and Politics Under the Putin Administration: Accommodation and Confrontation Within “Managed Pluralism”,” *Journal of Church and State* 49/1 (2007), for a discussion of religious pluralism in Russia.

9 George Weigel, “Religion and Peace: An Argument Complexified,” *The Washington Quarterly* 14/2 (1991), 27; see also Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 3 (1993), who in his famous theory of the clashes of civilizations notes the growing role of religion in late-modern political conflicts.

10 Christopher Marsh, *Religion and State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival* (New York: Continuum 2011), 16; see also Zoe Knox, “Church, State, and Belief in Post-Soviet Russia,” *The Russian Review* 71 (2012), 123.

11 One of the most dominating structural modernization paradigms, that of coupling the modern society with secularization, preconditions at least theoretically the notions of un-secularization and de-secularization. Though several scholars have argued for “multiple modernities” that include religious commitment and religious belief; see for example Elisabeth Prodromou, “Negotiating Pluralism and Specifying Modernity in Greece: Reading Church-State Relations in the Christodoulos Period,” *Social Compass* 51/4 (2004); Victor Roudometof, “Glocalization, Space, and Modernity,” *The European Legacy* 8/1 (2003); Shmuel Eisenstadt, “The Reconstruction of Religious Arenas in the Framework of “Multiple Modernities”,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29/3 (2000); and James D. Faubion, *Modern Greek Lessons: A Primer in Historical Constructivism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Gordon Lynch calls for a clear distinction between a secularized and a “de-sacralized age” with reference to the persistence of the sacred in modern life; see Gordon Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World: A Cultural Sociological Approach* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

cal re-spiritualization of society, but rather to an increased interaction of politics and religion – and, of specific interest here, “the re-emergence of the Russian Orthodox Church [...] on the political stage”¹² as a strong actor in the molding of Russian culture and politics aligned with the presidential administration, if not an outright turning the Orthodox Church into a de facto official religion.¹³ Regardless of what else might be said about the Pussy Riot case, it has made “it clear that religion and politics are inextricably intertwined in Russia today.”¹⁴

Precisely because of the transgressive character of the images, sounds and utterances, those who find the video offensive have a hard time seeing how it does anything but display disrespect toward faith, believers, and sacred symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church. The sacred-profane partition, which, along with the revitalization of Christian Orthodoxy is gaining ground as a normative construct in Russia, is challenged by the “Punk Prayer” video in practically every aspect of performance: for the sonic aspect, Orthodox chanting is contrasted with the noisy sound of punk pop; for the lyrical aspect, an original prayer is modified and blended with feminist agendas, political utterances and swearing; for the visual aspect, bodily gestures commonly associated with praying such as prostration and making the sign of the cross are in stark contrast to the kicking legs and fists thrown in the air. In total, the video makes use of subversive imagery and sound, aspects of which will be discussed further below. By bringing elements of performance that are normally restricted to the space outside the doors of the church right into the nave, Pussy Riot also challenges normative Christian Orthodox gender roles, notably the idea that women are politically passive.

The video was posted on *YouTube* on February 21, 2012, a few hours after five Pussy Riot members had been escorted out of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow where they had carried out a carefully planned happening filmed by anonymous associates. Despite this planning, after about 40 seconds of tumultuous action the whole

12 Katja Richters, *The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture, and Greater Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1; see also Davis, “The Russian Orthodox Church”; Irina Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Marsh, *Religion and State*; Knox, “Church, State, and Belief”; Andrei E. Sebestov, “Religion in the System of State Power,” *Russian Social Science Review* 53/1 (2012); Nadezhda Kevorkova, “The Russian Orthodox Church’s Emerging Role,” *Telegraph (Russia Behind the Headlines)*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/rbth/6269877/The-Russian-Orthodox-Churchs-emerging-role.html>; Andrew Higgins, “Born Again: Putin and Orthodox Church Cement Power in Russia,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 18, 2007. Dallago refers to ethnologist Olga Kazmina’s observation that by the late 1990s, the Russian Orthodox Church successfully adopted an “isolationist” position emphasizing the historical ties between religion and Russian ethnicity, which gradually has led to a more widespread embrace of traditional values and national patriotism, see Christian Dallago, “The Russian Orthodox Church in the Post-Soviet Period: Challenges and Responses,” Kennan Institute/Wilson Center, April 25, 2011, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-russian-orthodox-church-the-post-soviet-period-challenges-and-responses#> (visited January 3, 2014).

13 Clifford Levy, “At the Expense of All Others, Putin Picks a Church,” *New York Times*, April 24, 2008; see also Michael Bourdeaux, “President Putin and the Patriarchs,” *The Times*, January 11, 2008; and Alexander Osipovich, “Piety’s Comeback as a Kremlin Virtue,” *The Moscow Times*, February 12, 2008.

14 Ksenia Radchenko, “The Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Politics” (Review), *Slavic and East European Journal* 57/2 (2013), 329; see also Benjamin Bidder, “Pussy Riot Trial Sheds Light on Kremlin’s Religious Ties,” *Spiegel Online*, August 8, 2012.

thing was effectively brought to an end by cathedral guards, and the members of Pussy Riot were asked to leave.

Pussy Riot did not interrupt a service. Nothing was damaged, and nobody was physically hurt, which probably explains why nobody was immediately interrogated or arrested that night. A warrant for the arrest of the group members was effectuated only twelve days later, on Saturday March 3, 2012, and the timing of the warrant seems politically motivated – it was placed the day before the Sunday elections when Putin regained power. It resulted in the arrest of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (Nadya) and Maria Alyokhina (Masha), with the arrest of Yekaterina Samutsevich (Katya), taking place a little later, on March 16. They were released before Christmas in December 2013. Now, the question remains: why should we continue paying attention to the Pussy Riot case? One answer might be this: there is much more to learn about the still-largely-undiscussed blasphemy accusation, not only in an un-secularized Russian context, but also in a general sense, as the concept of blasphemy as incitement to religious hatred cuts through a complex of music, media, art activism, censorship, and the relationship between politics and religion.

Based on a variety of sources, I discuss in this article the notion of blasphemy in relation to the charge of hooliganism and the idea that Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer" constitutes a performance of the holy fool. In considering the politico-religious context, I argue that the video is a crucial part of Pussy Riot's media art activism and point to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior as a place of controversy where Pussy Riot's feminism has clashed with the reinvigorated virtues of Russian Mariology¹⁵ and re-established senses of sacred space.

As for the limitations of the discussion here, the specific areas of law, Russian law, and law philosophy, which I only briefly touch upon, will hopefully inspire other scholars who are more competent in these fields to pursue the discussion further.

The material for this article includes a variety of sources available on the Internet. Other than video material, I include excerpts of the closing courtroom statements, lyrics and other material published by Pussy Riot (in English translation), as well as international news reports and material from the official homepage of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The blasphemer as hooligan (khuligan)

The three identified Pussy Riot members were not charged with any formal blasphemy law, as none such existed at the time of the trial. They were charged with the catch-all paragraph of "hooliganism," which originates from late tsarist Russia. The meaning of the term hooliganism in the Russian context is interesting here, as it has been subject to considerable disagreement, as Neil Weissmann explains: "For some it was synonymous with crime itself, applicable to all illegal acts. For others it connoted a particular attitude with which certain crimes were committed."¹⁶ And the charge

15 I return to the notion of Russian Mariology, a special kind of devotion to the Mother of God, below.

16 Neil B. Weissman, "Rural Crime in Tsarist Russia: The Question of Hooliganism, 1905-1914," *Slavic Review* 37/2 (1978), 228.

is still used today for prosecuting unauthorized behavior that involves open "rejection of and defiance to authority."¹⁷ For example, it was put to work against the West German teenager, Mathias Rust, who in 1987 flew a private Cessna-plane through the Russian "iron-curtain" and landed on the Red Square. For Pussy Riot, the hooliganism charge came with the crucial addition that the three women's acts were "motivated by religious hatred." This is merely one example of a widespread care for laws that can put an end to extreme speech, religious vilification, and seditious libel in many jurisdictions,¹⁸ yet the accusation of hooliganism in Russia also has specific historical meanings.

Around 1900 in rural Russia, Hooliganism referred to quite diverse crimes, including not only serious crimes such as rape and murder, but also "such "mischievous" acts as public obscenity, singing indecent songs (often to the accompaniment of accordions!)."¹⁹ A report on hooliganism from 1913 mentions "insolence toward cultured and propertied people" among the most common forms of hooliganism, and the clergy, who constituted a specific target, "were frequently described as victims of "blasphemous" hooligan acts, that ranged from beatings to the disruption of church services."²⁰ Pussy Riot did not interrupt any service or physically attack anybody, and stated that they "harbor no hatred towards Orthodox Christians," and that their motivation for the protest was "purely political and artistic."²¹ Moreover, members of Pussy Riot emphasize: "Our performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was a political gesture to address the problem of the Putin government's merger with the Russian Orthodox Church,"²² and maintain that it was not the intention to challenge churchgoers' religious convictions or devotional sentiments.²³ Thus Pussy Riot explicitly opposes the part of the verdict that, in the absence of a formal blasphemy law, appears to be a judicial approximation of the public and clerical accusations of blasphemy.

17 Madeleine Kruhly, "The Strange History of Russian Hooliganism," *The Atlantic*, July 24, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/07/the-strange-history-of-russian-hooliganism/260255/> (visited May 29, 2014).

18 See for example Hare, "Blasphemy and Incitement to Religious Hatred;" and Patrick, "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy."

19 Weissman, "The Question of Hooliganism," 229; parenthesis original.

20 Weissman, "The Question of Hooliganism," 230. Weissman refers extensively to the detailed analysis (1913) of the nature of rural hooliganism produced by a special commission on hooliganism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the so-called Lykoshin commission.

21 Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, "Art and the Human Manifesto of Nadia Tolokonnikovoy," 2012, <http://www.freepussyriot.org/content/art-and-human-manifesto-nadia-tolokonnikovoy> (accessed February 17, 2014); these phrases have been widely quoted from a variety of sources.

22 This is the opening sentence of the group's open letter, "Art or Politics?," written shortly after the arrest of the three identified members on March 23, 2012; see The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom* (New York City: The Feminist Press at the University of New York, 2013), 15.

23 Tolokonnikova, "Art and the Human Manifesto"; Richard Boudreaux and Alexander Kolyandr, "Russian Band Found Guilty in Putin Protest," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, August 17, 2012; see also The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 117-118 ("Excerpts from the Appeal Statements").

The power of images

In applying Judith Halberstam's idea of "imagined violence" in feminist film studies to an understanding of the "Punk Prayer," I aim in this article to contribute to the general understanding of the dynamics of censorship: it is not so much the violent pictures, explicit lyrics or specific sounds that cause panic among authorities, rather it is the fear of what might come out of it. The imagination of what these Pussy Riot images, sounds and lyrics might inspire others to do poses a threat for which there is no solution in the "real", as it depends on how those in power imagine audiences' reactions. In this sense, censorship is an attempt to control public imagination.

According to Halberstam, the representation of violence through film has the power "not simply to effect change but to offer a potent challenge to the order of things."²⁴ Pussy Riot's Punk prayer includes violent gestures and the use of explicit, angry and aggressive language. Although they do not advocate literal aggression or violence in any strict sense, their video creates an imagined "place of rage," which might be seen as a "political space opened up by the representation in art, in poetry, [...] in popular film of unsanctioned violences committed by subordinate groups upon powerful [...] men."²⁵ Pussy Riot creates images that are meant to push the boundaries of what is possible to even imagine for Russian society. Halberstam identifies precisely what is at stake with images of powerful women, speaking and acting from positions otherwise occupied by men only, when she argues that "[i]magined violences create a potentiality, a utopic state in which consequences are imminent rather than actual, the threat is in the anticipation, not the act."²⁶ Furthermore, the idea that one of the "abiding divisions between the sacred and the profane is often seen reflected in the difference between male and female," is especially true for the Pussy Riot case: they staged their performance at the ambo,²⁷ which is intended for readings from the scripture and restricted to the (male) clergy only.

Performing the holy fool?

Pussy Riot's activist art is widely described in terms of performance. But how is it possible to understand the "Punk Prayer" video as a performance? "To perform is to carry something into effect," Deborah Kapchan asserts, and continues: "the notion of agency is implicit in the performance."²⁸ Therefore, to study the performance of Pussy

24 Judith Halberstam, "Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representations of Rage and Resistance," in *Reel Knockouts: Violent Women in the Movies*, ed. Martha McCaughey and Neal King (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 246.

25 Halberstam, "Imagined Violence," 247.

26 Halberstam, "Imagined Violence," 264.

27 In a traditional Byzantine church the ambo, or solea, refers to the raised platform in front of the iconostasis, typically a portable or stationary pulpit of some kind is involved; see Victor Davidoff, "The Witch Hunt against Pussy Riot," *The Moscow Times*, June 25, 2012, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/the-witch-hunt-against-pussy-riot/460968.html>; Pussy Riot did neither climb, nor jump, onto the altar as has been falsely, yet repeatedly, reported uncritically by the news media and some academic studies.

28 Deborah Kapchan, "Performance," *The Journal of American Folklore* 108/430 (1995), 479.

Riot demands a close look not only at what the performance consists of and what it aims at communicating, but also at what it carries into effect, that is, how its message is communicated and perceived. The video can be understood as a distinct performance genre (it is performed when watched on the Internet), which like other performance genres "are intertextual fields where the politics of identity are negotiated,"²⁹ and where social meaning is generated and performed.³⁰ The video points to social realities beyond itself: using global media for local purposes, addressing a global audience, and not primarily a Russian one, it brings international attention to violations of civil rights and censorship of political dissent in Russia.

Several scholars have aligned Pussy Riot with the notion of the holy fool.³¹ As Yngvar Steinholt has noted, footage for the "Punk Prayer" was shot during lent. In medieval times, lent was the carnival season. Medieval carnival "is known to have included mockery of church authorities, even swearing and indecent behavior from pulpits and altars,"³² thus suggesting Pussy Riot's appearance in the cathedral(s) in terms of the carnivalesque. And this, Steinholt observes, was acknowledged by parts of the clergy, willing to forgive Pussy Riot.³³ Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "the carnivalesque," is a "cultural expression that challenges reigning hierarchies with humor, parody, and subversive symbolism that draws on the "material lower bodily strata" in order to invert social categories.³⁴ One distinct point of inversion in the lyrics is the word "shit" or "crap," which plays a central role to the notion of blasphemy, as I will discuss below. The social categories put into play by Pussy Riot concern gender, religion, human rights, and politics. As a fixed performance, Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer" (understood as video) aims at articulating a *post factum* staged spontaneity, which is meant to provoke and capture the viewers' emotional engagement. Much in line with Artaudian theater, Pussy Riot draws on specific gestures and postures associated with Orthodox practice *and* punk at the same time, in other words, "a language of anarchy which pushes the actor and the audience toward a questioning of "object relationships" (usually taken for granted) and thus toward chaos."³⁵

29 Kapchan, "Performance," 482.

30 Nicholas Cook, "Music as Performance," in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (New York & London: Routledge, 2012), 185, 193.

31 See for example Nicholas Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary: An Analysis of Pussy Riot's Punk Performance in Moscow," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81/4 (2013); Timothy Beal, "Pussy Riot's Theology," *Chronicle of Higher Education/The Chronicle Review*, September 17, 2012, <http://chronicle.com/article/Pussy-Riots-Theology/134398/>; Harvery Cox, "Of Ezekiel, Gandhi and Pussy Riot," *The Boston Globe*, August 26, 2012, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/08/25/persecuted-punk-band-pussy-riot-has-parallels-with-ezekiel-gandhi/amWpK80npB6iGOpbzHzLVI/story.html>; Yngvar B. Steinholt, "Kitten Heresy: Lost Contexts of Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer," *Popular Music and Society* 36/1 (2013).

32 Steinholt, "Kitten Heresy," 123.

33 Steinholt, "Kitten Heresy," 123.

34 Kapchan, "Performance," 486 with reference to Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 368; see also Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 410-412.

35 Kapchan, "Performance," 481, with reference to Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double* (London: John Calder, 1970), 27.

The language of anarchy in the "Punk Prayer" is, at first glance, formed within the idiomatic, yet also stereotypical and well-established category of punk, aimed at questioning the State-Church relation. Yet, it seems also to contain a deliberate use of blasphemy markers, which acknowledges blasphemy as a *modus operandi*, while at the same time denying the possibility of "real" blasphemy. Denysenko notes that "the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1737 stipulated that those who "feign" holy foolery should be sent to a secular court."³⁶ Thus, whereas authentic holy fools and their prophetic voices are cherished by the Church,³⁷ those who pretend to be such should be persecuted. However, seen from the perspective of the carnival, where the deliberate and creatively-performed mocking of authorities is precisely the point, how would one discriminate between an authentic holy fool and just a fool?

Although smelling a bit of an apologia, Nadya Tolokonnikova claims to be inspired by holy folly. Linked to Pussy Riot's distinctive understanding of punk, she notes in her Closing Courtroom Statement: "We were searching for real sincerity and simplicity, and we found these qualities in the *yurodstvo* [the holy foolishness] of punk."³⁸ Here, punk supposedly functions as a "stylistically marked expression of otherness,"³⁹ and the notion of "simplicity" having proportions of childish *naïveté*, the truthfulness of which exposes the hypocrisy of the leaders.⁴⁰ If the accusation of blasphemy relates to a perceived transgression of the boundaries between sacred and profane properties, performing the holy fool in a punk costume might be understood as a means of suspending the logic of blasphemy. It is a "theatrical provocation,"⁴¹ which only shows Pussy Riot's ability to make use of the "visual part of a punk-kinetics and punk-aesthetics – which has for long been an established part of pop mass culture" – to further a political pun in their "YouTube-ready" video,⁴² as if the satire was so grotesque, hyperbolic, and gross⁴³ that nobody would ever dream of talking about blasphemy for real.⁴⁴

36 Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1081, with reference to Sergei Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 346-347; and Priscilla Hunt and Svitlana Kobets, ed., *Holy Foolishness in Russia: New Perspectives* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2011).

37 Among the most celebrated holy fools in the Russian tradition are St Basil the Blessed of Moscow and Blessed Xenia of Saint Petersburg; see Kallistos Ware, *The Inner Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 19; and Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1080.

38 The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 92; Tolokonnikova's Closing Courtroom Statement. The Russian word *yurodstvo* denotes in Byzantine hagiography the type of saint described in terms of the holy fool, who is "free, a stranger, naked, elusive, and prone to folly, whose ministry is to speak prophetically; Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1080 with reference to Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 153-156.

39 Kapchan, "Performance," 479.

40 Cf. Beal, "Pussy Riot's Theology."

41 Julia Listengarten, "Profile: Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer" and National Controversy," *Ecumenica: Journal of Theatre and Performance* 5/2 (2012), 67.

42 Zoladz, "Take Me Seriously."

43 On the grotesque and satire, see for example Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 303-304.

44 The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 43-44; Nadya Tolokonnikova notes in her Opening Courtroom Statement that they did not imagine that their actions would be offending.

The video and media art activism

Pussy Riot, the "performance art collective,"⁴⁵ takes on "the angry women in rock"-attitude⁴⁶ to communicate their political message and thus transform the punk-like "Riot Grrrl" spirit of the early 1990s into a new context for performance practice and communication: "Whereas riot grrrls communicated privately, Pussy Riot benefit from the connectedness of the digital world."⁴⁷ Most news media coverage around the globe has misleadingly talked about the event in terms of a concert, and about the video as a documentation of that event. Yet, as established by now, Pussy Riot's video cannot be seen as documentation of a live performance, rather, the heavily circulated video comes closest to constituting the real performance as it is part and parcel of the multi-media enterprise character of Pussy Riot's activism, here described by Polly McMichael:

Each stage of the group's public confrontation of the Putin state was a multimedia event par excellence: the group's members layered references to their artistic, theoretical, political and musical influences and their revolutionary, political objectives in a synthesis of sound-bites, photographs, manifesto-blogs, videos and interviews, all of which were curated and archived on the *LiveJournal* account pussy-riot.⁴⁸

Several writers and scholars have noted that "Pussy Riot's performances are meticulously designed for dissemination via the Internet,"⁴⁹ and rapid dissemination (of all their videos) via the internet seems to have been at the heart of Pussy Riot's media strategy,⁵⁰ the overall aim of which was to disturb the carefully controlled media image of the Russian presidency. As Russian art critic Maria Chehonadskih argues "One lesson of the Pussy Riot case," "lies in the fact that local activism and radical art can survive only if they are visible in media space."⁵¹ Other than making camera-friendly activist art, Pussy Riot and their crew of professionally skilled technicians and branding agents⁵² "knew

45 Brian Whitmore, "Pussy Riot: The Punk Band That Isn't and the Concert that Wasn't, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 30, 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/pussy-riot-what-really-happened-russia-trial/24660925.html>.

46 Kristen Schilt, "A Little Too Ironic?: The Appropriation and Packaging of Riot Grrrl Politics by Mainstream Female Musicians," *Popular Music and Society* 26/1 (2003), 5.

47 Zoladz, "Take Me Seriously."

48 McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically," 101, see note 1 for links to the group's *LiveJournal* site.

49 Ivan Gololobov and Yngvar B. Steinholt, "Preface. The Elephant in the Room? Post-Socialist Punk and the Pussy Riot Phenomenon," *Punk & Post Punk* 1/3 (2012), 250; see also McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically;" Chehonadskih, "What Is Pussy Riot's 'Idea?';" Zoladz, "Take Me Seriously."

50 The "Punk Prayer" was the fifth actionist performance of Pussy Riot. For a brief overview of Pussy Riot's performances between late 2011 and February 2012, see for example Stephen Morgan, *Pussy Riot vs Putin: Revolutionary Russia* (Steven John Morgan, 2012), 20-24 with translated lyrics; lyrics are also translated in The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!: "Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away (Punk Prayer), 13-14;" "Death to Prison, Freedom to Protest," 25;" "Kropotkin-Vodka," 30;" "Putin has Pissed Himself," 36-37; and "Raze the Pavement," 48.*

51 Chehonadskih, "What Is Pussy Riot's 'Idea?'," 4.

52 Chehonadskih refers to a meeting with "the secret director of the Pussy Riot performances," who emphasized the importance of "a tactical media technology which can borrow from pop culture and commercial advertisements;" see Chehonadskih, "What Is Pussy Riot's 'Idea?'," 5; see also Listengarten, "Profile: Pussy Riot's 'Punk Prayer,'" 69.

how to make things work, which means to put street politics into the field of technology and media.⁵³ In "post-shock society," Chehonadskih's word for the stagnant 2000s in Russia,

alternative politics is relegated to the ghetto and official public life is concentrated on the affirmative rituals of representatives of power. The only way to break the situation of passivity and silence is – somehow – to practice this hysterical and obscene speech. There are no other tools to use. This is why actionism became the main artistic movement in Russia and always had a strong political spirit. All the actions that were produced during this period depended on public scandal to distort the surface of a fake 'stability'.⁵⁴

The Russian internet is described in terms of an "alternative public sphere,"⁵⁵ and its significance for activism: "as an alternative medium for information diffusion, communication and mobilization has grown markedly with the strengthening of state control over traditional media, particularly television, in the early twenty-first century."⁵⁶ The performance of state power depends heavily on having control over the media that nourishes citizens' imaginations of a strong nation. Based on Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as "an imagined political community," Halberstam's idea of "imagined violence" might be understood here as the resistance to dominant political powers. Anderson explains that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."⁵⁷ Pussy Riot operates and communicates political statements through mediated networks; this is an appropriate means to oppose state control, and to challenge the unifying national narrative continually produced and aired through other mediated forms. Katya Samutsevitch speaks of the "Punk Prayer" video as a "media intrusion,"⁵⁸ and highlights the degree to which Putin's political project depends on modern media technology and airtime on national television for hours of live broadcasts

Our sudden musical appearance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior with the song "Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away" violated the integrity of the media image that the authorities had spent such a long time generating and maintaining, and revealed its falsity. In our performance we dared, without seeking the patriarch's blessing, to unite the visual imagery of Orthodox culture with that of protest culture, thus suggesting that Orthodox culture belongs not only to the Russian Orthodox Church, the patriarch, and Putin, but that it could also ally itself with civic rebellion and the spirit of protest in Russia.⁵⁹

53 Chehonadskih, "What Is Pussy Riot's 'Idea'?", 5.

54 Chehonadskih, "What Is Pussy Riot's 'Idea'?", 4.

55 Chehonadskih, "What Is Pussy Riot's 'Idea'?", 3.

56 Markku Lonkila, "The Internet and Anti-Military Activism in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60/7 (2008), 1126, 1131.

57 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1991), 6; see also Halberstam, "Imagined Violence," 252.

58 The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 89; Katya Samutsevitch's Closing Courtroom Statement.

59 The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 89.

The explicit media self-consciousness of Pussy Riot should therefore not be overlooked. Pussy Riot is a perfect example of Russian art activists who have "turned communication media into their art media," a phenomenon that has a certain resemblance with what Norie Neumark calls "distance art/activism," where distance is "always multiple and relative in its configurations,"⁶⁰ but does not prevent audiences from engaging emotionally in what they see and hear. In the case of the "Punk Prayer," the distance between its production and the various meanings ascribed to it by a variety of audiences was treated as insignificant; in court it was totally neglected. A video might be "blasphemous" in much the same way as a live performance, as the performativity of the blasphemous work in the video is as much located within the audiences as within the performers.⁶¹ In line with Neumark's remarks on "distant art/activism" as "playfully serious and parodically truthful"⁶² it might also be productive not to focus on any singular meaning of "Punk Prayer," but rather on how it works, and the different reactions it has produced.

Blasphemy

Definitions of blasphemy are fluid and contested, and all are susceptible to manipulation by those positioned in power. Still, blasphemy "is fundamentally about transgression, about crossing the lines between the sacred and the profane in seemingly improper ways," as S Brendan Plate notes in his *Blasphemy: Art that Offends*.⁶³ Or, as Peter Olen has it, historical definitions of blasphemy typically "include some sort of religious reference."⁶⁴ These propositions imply that blasphemy requires someone positioned within a given religious or political power structure to define someone else's specific actions as blasphemous. Following Plate, who focuses on the power of images in art and film, it is only in specific contexts that images are identified as "blasphemous, sacrilegious, idolatrous, obscene, or immoral."⁶⁵ Moreover, a "blasphemous image needs both an artist and an accuser. The context for accusation includes everything from religious dogmatic assertions to media coverage to political posturing made by authorities seeking to appear as defenders of social decorum and morality."⁶⁶ Again, it is emphasized that accusations of blasphemy, like the boundaries between

60 Norie Neumark, "Introduction: Relays, Delays, and Distance Art/Activism," in *Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet*, ed. Annemarie Chandler and Norie Neumark (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005), 3. Neumark's work concerns primarily distance art before the internet and mainly on projects of the 1970s and 1980s, but in my view, and to take serious Neumark's own remark of "the rich potentiality of the virtual," the notion of distant art might well be applicable to art activism on the Internet.

61 Cf. Neumark, "Distance Art/Activism," 15.

62 Neumark, "Distance Art/Activism," 17; Neumark refers here to the works of distance art/activism as "Deleuzian assemblages," focusing on *how* they work, rather than what their meaning is.

63 Plate, *Blasphemy*, 43.

64 Peter Olen, "Now, Is That Really Blasphemy? Heretical Meaning and Belief," *Florida Philosophical Review* 8/1 (2008), 33.

65 Plate, *Blasphemy*, 10.

66 Plate, *Blasphemy*, 50.

the sacred and the profane, always depend on specific historical contexts and religio-political agendas.

Blasphemy, then, depend on notions of sacred forms and spaces, however, as Gordon Lynch emphasizes, "sacred forms are historically contingent and under continual reproduction and contestation."⁶⁷ Orthodox Christianity in today's Russia has reintroduced "established notions of sacred space"⁶⁸ as expressed in neo-Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture; these accepted norms are intimately related to the sacred space that Pussy Riot was accused of desecrating. What blasphemy means in relation to the Pussy Riot case relates to "the nature and significance of what people take to be absolute, normative realities that exert claims on the conduct of social life."⁶⁹ Hence, actions such as those of Pussy Riot that point to alternative modes of social conduct will also violate implied notions of sacredness.

The term blasphemy is of Greek origin (*vlasphemía*, or *vlastémia*, from *vlátto*, injure, and *phéme*, utterance, speech), the general meanings of which include uttering a curse, an unauthorized use of god's name, holy persons, places, objects, or religious doctrines, and otherwise-expressed contempt for a religion or deity. Within general (Christian) theology, blasphemy is often understood as utterances that are deliberately or intentionally meant to mock or ridicule religious symbols or gods; this suggests that some charges of blasphemy rely on speculation about the *intention* on the offender's part, a notion which will not fit into all definitions of the idea. The logic of blasphemy is traditionally rooted in the fear of god: if a society will not punish the blasphemer, god will punish society. More narrowly speaking, blasphemy is considered a sin committed against god (God) himself, in Mark 3:29 (the New Testament) described as the "eternal sin," which means it is unforgivable. Blasphemy and sacrilege refer to unauthorized and incorrect actions (by some) in relation to something considered sacred or inviolable (by others), which means, again, that all instances of the sacred are specific as they are "woven through contemporary social life."⁷⁰

The official website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church states the Church's view of blasphemy: "In the Church's tradition, blasphemy is understood as an outrageous or disrespectful action, statement or intention about God or a sacred thing [...] St. Paul describes blasphemers as those who made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim. 1:19), understanding blasphemy not only as an outrage against God or His holy name but also any act of falling away from the faith."⁷¹ The website also emphasizes by use of quotes from the *Russian Orthodox*

67 Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World*, 54.

68 Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1065.

69 Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World*, 5.

70 Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World*, 2.

71 The site informs that these lines were adopted on February 4, 2011, by the *Bishop's Council of the Russian Orthodox Church*; English translation original; see website of the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, <https://mospat.ru/en/>. The site refers to several passages where blasphemy is mentioned in the biblical texts, for example Lev. 24:15; Ps. 74:18 in the Old Testament books; and Mk. 7:21-23; Jn. 10:33; Rev. 13:1 in the New Testament.

Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights, that "freedom is one of the manifestations of God's image in human nature," followed by a warning that it "is wrong however to use this freedom to oppose God who created man [...] Such resistance to the Creator destroys the order of the universe established by Him and leads to much distress and suffering."⁷² The website does not, however, specify exactly what blasphemous actions might look like. The actual accusations of blasphemy in relation to "Punk Prayer," which I will return to below, provide a clearer idea.

Jeremy Patrick, in his "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy," demonstrates that blasphemy laws "maintain a surprisingly strong foothold in several jurisdictions,"⁷³ including the "defamation of religions" resolutions of the United Nations, and anti-blasphemy legislation in countries such as Ireland, Pakistan, Australia, Canada and England. In this sense, blasphemy concerns after 2000 is by no means solely a Russian phenomenon. Operating with three conceptualizations of blasphemy, a religious, a legal, and a secular or cultural concept, Patrick notes that the "ability of the religious groups to police their ranks and purge them of blasphemy depends on how much influence the religion has with civil authorities [...] With the assistance of the State, however, far more severe punishments become available."⁷⁴ Patrick also reminds us that "blasphemy is often thought of as something the irreligious do to the religious, but historically sincere differences in religious belief were the common cause of blasphemy prosecutions."⁷⁵

Somewhere in the discussion lurk ideas regarding intentionality: whether the intention of Pussy Riot to blaspheme will count or not, or whether the protest had a legitimate artistic or political purpose. While arguably part of their carnivalesque *modus operandi*, the Pussy Riot members have been careful to apologize to offended believers. Though offense was exactly the point of the style of the protest, blasphemy and desecration was arguably not an end in itself.

If one of the justifications for prohibiting blasphemous speech is fear of divine wrath, society can demonstrate that the blasphemous individuals do not represent the community as a whole. Yet, historically this "fear often operated alongside a far more diffuse anxiety that blasphemy undermined society itself."⁷⁶ The promotion of the dialogue between the public and its leaders "in service to the fatherland and the nation," is far more in concord with the patriarch's view of the role of the church in Russian political life, which is "the safeguarding of civil peace and accord in society."⁷⁷ This explicit concern for the "*Recasting [of] the Church as the True Guardian of the Nation*," in the patriarchal strategy – "one that is intended to preserve the Orthodox Church's dominant position" – amounts, in Davis' words, to "religious nationalism."⁷⁸ Illustrating the relevance of this point, a statement by a spokesman of the

72 <https://mospat.ru/en/>; English translation original.

73 Patrick, "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy," 190.

74 Patrick, "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy," 204-5.

75 Patrick, "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy," 208.

76 Patrick, "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy," 213.

77 Davis, "The Russian Orthodox Church," 665.

78 Davis, "The Russian Orthodox Church," 666, italics original.

Russian Orthodox Church, Vsevolod Chaplin, maintains that: "our ideal is the unity of the church and the authorities, and the unity of the people and the authorities."⁷⁹

Before turning to the specific blasphemy accusations, and how Pussy Riot was perceived as a threat to law, order, and normative social conduct in church, I find it worthwhile to take a look at the video in more detail.

The pseudo-documentary character of the video, or: what exactly does the video document?

The Pussy Riot video affords, on the one hand, the illusion of "privileged access"⁸⁰ to the live "Punk Prayer" performance. In a professionally edited pseudo-documentary style, it utilizes familiar aesthetics of the documentary, such as the shaky hand-held camera and grainy film quality which communicates immediacy and authenticity of the tumultuous events, as if the viewer is bearing witness to a slice of real life. Playing on the audience's awareness that they in fact *did it*, the video postulates one coherent live performance in the central cathedral of Moscow. Yet, as the different scenes in fact show, it was anything but coherent until footage shot at two different locations was aligned into one video and synched to the pre-recorded song in the subsequent editing process: The footage from the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was edited together with footage from the Epiphany Cathedral in Yelokhovo (also in Moscow), made two days before, on 19 February.⁸¹

The news media has continuously – though misleadingly – described Pussy Riot's stunt in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior as a "concert." Brian Whitmore's analysis on *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* stands out from the majority of news articles on the case, hitting the head of the nail with the title: "Pussy Riot: The Punk Band that Isn't and the Concert that Wasn't."⁸² The activists do not comprise a punk band,⁸³ and did

79 Miriam Elder, "God Is Judging Pussy Riot, Says Russian Church Leader," *guardian.co.uk*, July 31, 2012.

80 Diane Raiton and Paul Watson, *Music Video and the Politics of Representation* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 49; also Korsyn's dialogical analysis questions the "privileged position of spectator" in Kevin Korsyn, "Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence, and Dialogue," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 61.

81 According to the media group, *Interfax*, it was reported almost a month later, on 19 March, 2012, that the Spokesman of the Church, Vsevolod Chaplin, had recognized the interior as being the Epiphany Cathedral in Yelokhovo; see *Interfax* (no author), "Pussy Riot Gave a Concert in Yelokhovo Cathedral Two Days Before Their Action in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior," *Interfax*, March 19, 2012, <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=9161> (visited March 6, 2013).

82 Whitmore, "The Punk Band That Isn't."

83 In the news media, Pussy Riot has repeatedly been described in terms of a "band," see for example Caryn Riswold, "Pussy Riot = Feminism + Religion + Russia," the blog 'Feminismxianity' on the website *Patheos: Progressive Christian/Hosting the Conversation on Faith*, November 12, 2012, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/carynrswold/2012/11/pussy-riot-feminism-religion-russia/> (visited May 29, 2013), and Roy Schwartzman and Christie Maillet, "Riot Grrrl Feminist Counterculture from Sleater-Kinney to Pussy Riot," *Topical Problems in Communication and Culture* 15 (2013). Pussy Riot has also been called "punk rockers" and "punks" (James Brooke, "Russia Frees One Punk Rocker, Keeps Two in Jail," *Voice of America*, October 10, 2012, <http://www.voanews.com/articleprint-view/1523761.html>), "fem-punks" (Joshua Foust, "The Kony-ification of Pussy Riot," *The Atlantic*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/the-kony-ification-of-pussy-riot/261262/>), a "feminist punk rock group" (CBC News (no author), "Hot Docs: Pussy Riot:

not perform a concert or a "gig,"⁸⁴ a word for a paid job in the entertainment business, to be precise – not an equivalent for Pussy Riot's unsanctioned acts. Assuming that the point was to make just enough footage for a video to be shown to an online audience, the Pussy Riot members and their technical crew got what they came for, as they acted promptly and were well coordinated. Guitars, portable amplification equipment and microphones served the sole purpose of acting as "visual signifiers of live performances"⁸⁵ in the edited video context. The musical immediacy is, as suggested, deceptive. For example, the sound of a piano is prominent, but there is no sign of a piano in the video; also, microphones and plugged-in guitars are only visible in the scenes shot at the Epiphany Cathedral in Yelokhovo, not in the images from the Christ the Savior Cathedral. Thus the audio functions much like a sound track to a montage of different sequences, like in many commercial music videos, even though it postulates the authenticity of the filmed event. As McMichael puts it, the sequences act "as transparent traces of what Pussy Riot had actually done in front of their live audiences."⁸⁶

The Head of Amnesty International in Moscow appropriately characterized the stunt as a "pantomime,"⁸⁷ as opposed to a "real" punk performance. But the questioning of the authenticity of the documentary had the strategic purpose of reducing the sentence facing the accused, the logic of the argument being that if they had not performed the song "live," they were less guilty. By contrast, the prosecutors seem to have taken the authenticity of the video for granted during the trial and insisted on the primacy of a live performance.

The only words audible on the video, unmistakably stemming from the activists themselves, are from the so-called crap-chorus: "crap, crap, this holiness, crap" (shouted in Russian: "Sran' gospodnia!"), directed at Putin and the authorities. At 1:35 in the original footage⁸⁸ some kind of playback device can be seen, which is grabbed by a guard and carried aside. This happens before the semi-chaotic actions on the ambo in front of the iconostasis which lasted no more than 40 seconds, as can also be witnessed in the original footage.

The video opens, intersects, and ends with a melodic line which, I imagine, must be both familiar and unfamiliar to Russian audiences: familiar, because it is the sound of

A Punk Prayer, High Five: An Adoption Saga," *CBC News*, April 25, 2013), "feminist punk collective" (Zoladz, "Take Me Seriously"), "punk provocateur band" (Natalya Vasilyeva, "Women Behind the Mask of Russia's Pussy Riot Band," *US News*, August 16, 2012, http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2012/08/16/women-behind-the-mask-of-russias-pussy-riot-band_print.html), a "Moscow guerilla punk band" (Bidder, "Kremlin's Religious Ties") and "guerilla feminist punk collective" (Beal, "Pussy Riot's Theology"). Often Pussy Riot members present themselves in line with these characterizations.

84 See for example [85 McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically," 107.](http://filmacademytv.mirocommunity.org/video/120/pussy-riot-gig-at-christ-the-s; see also reference in footnote 88.</p>
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86 McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically," 105.

87 McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically," 108-109; for a similar argument, see Nicolas Tochka, "Pussy Riot, Freedom of Expression, and Popular Music Studies after the Cold War," *Popular Music* 32/2 (2013), 304.

88 See and listen: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grEBLskpDWQ>

the first 8 bars from Rachmaninov's "Ave Maria" from his work *Vespers, or All Night Vigil*, Opus 37 (1915); unfamiliar, because it is Pussy Riot's altered version with female voices in Russian polyphonic hymnody style accompanied by a piano. This part of the Rachmaninov hymn that frames the piece as an invocation to the Mother of God is based on the Orthodox liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom (4th Century). It originates from pre-reform Russia and is praised as one of the greatest musical achievements within Orthodox liturgical music, "which enjoyed a brief blossoming period in Moscow, to disappear abruptly with the advent of the revolution."⁸⁹ Addressing the historical circumstances, Maes argues that "no composition represents the end of an era so clearly as this liturgical work."⁹⁰ The act of quoting this much-loved piece of music plays on the familiarity of it, albeit in a quite unorthodox fashion, while changing certain key elements.⁹¹

Sincere or not, changing the original lyrics to "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, please be a feminist," becomes a way to claim the prayer as common heritage, as a voice owned by everybody, and therefore suitable for promoting even feminist ideas. Yet, it also functions as a historical and political comment, in the sense that Pussy Riot compares Putin's administration with the Soviet era which tried to control people's belief and religious practices; at least the lyrics' references to the KGB points in this direction.⁹²

Lyrics: "Punk Prayer"⁹³

(prayer)	Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away, put Putin away, put Putin away!	[00:00-]
(verse 1)	Black robe, golden epaulettes, all parishioners crawl to bow. The phantom of liberty is in heaven, Gay Pride sent to Siberia in chains	[00:15]
(verse 2)	The head of KGB, their chief saint, leads protesters to prison under escort. Don't offend His Holiness, ladies, stick to making love and babies.	[00:29]

89 Frances Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 206.

90 Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 206.

91 For the Lyrics, see below.

92 It is well-known that the Moscow Patriarchate was virtually a subsidiary organization to the KGB in the Soviet period, and that cooperation continues: President Putin served KGB in 1975-1991 and was head of the successor of KGB, the FSB, before becoming president; Moscow's Patriarch Kirill has a past in the KGB, and his predecessor, Patriarch Aleksey II, was allegedly a first generation KGB agent since 1958 (James Meek, "Russian Patriarch 'Was KGB Spy'," *The Guardian*, February 12, 1999), even though this is denied by the spokesman of the church, Chaplin.

93 I mainly follow Nicholas Denysenko's translation (Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1069), except for the crap-chorus, which I take from Carol Rumens (Carol Rumens, "Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer Is Pure Protest Poetry," *The Guardian*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/aug/20/pussy-riot-punk-prayer-lyrics>), and for Verse 2, line 3 I use a mix of the two, whereas Verse 2, line 4 is Rumens' rhyme, which I prefer to Denysenko's: "Women must give birth and love."

(crap-chorus)	Crap, crap, this godliness crap! Crap, crap, this holiness crap!	[00:39]
(prayer)	Virgin Mary, Mother of God, become a feminist, become a feminist, become a feminist.	[00:47]
(verse 3)	The Church's praise of rotten dictators. The cross-bearer procession of black limousines. A teacher-preacher will meet you at school. Go to class, bring him money!	[01:06]
(verse 4)	Patriarch Gundyaev believes in Putin. Bitch, better believe in God instead. The belt of the Virgin can't replace mass-meetings. Mary, Mother of God, is with us in protest!	[01:16]
(crap-chorus)	Crap, crap, this godliness crap! Crap, crap, this holiness crap!	[01:26]
(prayer)	Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away, put Putin away, put Putin away!	[01:34] [-01:52]

In the Cathedral of Christ the Savior the cameras are focused on the action in front of the iconostasis and the heavenly doors, which lead to the altar. Only four of the five members can be seen in the edited music video. In the released raw footage, the fifth member (later identified as Katya Samutsevitch) is seen trying to get to the others while handling her guitar⁹⁴ – but she is escorted out and is never really part of the “performance.” This fact was later established in court and became the argument that got her out of prison on probation in the appeal case on October 10, 2012. In the footage from the Epiphany Cathedral in Yelokhovo, the camera angle is different, the interior of the church is different, and we see six Pussy Riot members dressed in different clothing. These scenes include much more “musical action,” with microphones and guitar playing, giving the scenes from this church a clearer sense of a concert performance.

Judging from the color combinations of the costumes of the Pussy Riot members, one gets the impression of a church swarmed by 10 or 11 rioting female punk rockers (Katya Samutsevitch's outfit is seen in both shootings). But only five members were reported to have been escorted out of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Yet, in the trial and the unofficial blasphemy accusations, as well as for most of the Western press, the possible impact of the video on the public imagination of what happened in the cathedral is completely ignored. However, my concern here is not really whether the pseudo-documentary images and sounds in the video did or did not convincingly blur the boundary between representation and reality. Because blasphemy appears as a phenomenon somewhere between the production and reception of the video, the real issue is that the *outré* utterances, sounds and kinetics on the video constitute, to some

94 The clip can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grEBLskpDWQ>.

audiences, blasphemous actions that are real enough in themselves, as they violate established notions of Orthodox sacred space in a neo-Byzantine church-design. Although I address the video as a pseudo-documentary, I should also clarify that it does document a very important aspect of the event: namely the scuffle or fight between the Pussy Riot members and the church officials, as if saying: "Look, they are throwing us out!" In this way, Pussy Riot let personnel representing church and state expose themselves as if on hidden camera. This seems to involve ideas about how to convincingly create a scandal in a church. I deliberately use the expression "playing" (with notions of blasphemy) as the "Punk Prayer" is performed (in the video as well as in the imaginary space of the cathedral) in that hard-to-define area, where the contingent boundaries of the profane and the sacred are always negotiated and fueled by those in power, who see the blasphemy argument serving their political ends.

Blasphemy accusations

Vsevolod Chaplin, acting as spokesman for the Russian Orthodox Church, stated that it was "a sin against God and it is God that is judging it [...] when symbols are overthrown and others are put in their stead, people want to say: we've taken power here. All these acts around symbols are attempts to redistribute power."⁹⁵ In the Orthodox Church, the patriarch is considered a symbol of the Church, and a sin committed against him is a sin directed against god. Blasphemy accusations have been expressed widely in public by patriarchal or ecclesiastical representatives and by individuals, whose statements have been referenced in the press both inside and outside Russia. The state-run *Rossiia* television channel repeatedly referred to the women as "blasphemers."⁹⁶ The western news media, by and large, gave a lot of attention to very negative reactions from the Russian public. For example, it has been reported that in Russia "many people were offended," and that they were "genuinely outraged."⁹⁷ However, neither Russians nor all people within the Russian Orthodox Church have been unified in the question.⁹⁸ The members of Pussy Riot were not the only Russians disturbed when Kyrill, in a speech before the presidential election, described Putin as

95 Elder, "God Is Judging."

96 Young, "Putin Goes to Church."

97 Lizzie Seal, "Pussy Riot and Feminist Cultural Criminology: A New 'Femininity in Dissent'?", *Contemporary Justice Review: Issues in Criminal, Social, and Restorative Justice* 16/2 (2013), 297; see also Daniel Sandford, "Pussy Riot Jail Terms Condemned as 'Disproportionate'," *BBC News*, August 17, 2012.

98 For example, in an open letter (the now former) Deacon Sergei Baranov has expressed his critique of the Church's stance against Pussy Riot, causing the regional clergy to defrock him; see Laura Mills, "Orthodox Russian Deacon Stands up for Pussy Riot," *Yahoo News*, September 18, 2012, http://news.yahoo.com/orthodox-russian-deacon-stands-pussy-riot-130801344.html;_ylc=X3oDMTNu-NzgYaGdjBF9TAzIxNDU4NjgyNzQeYWN0A21haWxfY2IEY3QDYQRpbNRSa3VzBGxhbmcDZW4tVVMecGtnAzMzMje4ZWU1LWE4OGMtMzQ0Ny1hNDdjLTl0YmQxZGVhMG10NQZRzZWM-DbWl0X3NoYXJlBHNsawNtYWlsBHRlc3QD;_ylv=3. Tayler reports that 42% of Russians considered the "Punk Prayer" an attack on the Church, while only 19% saw it as a protest against Putin, see Jeffrey Tayler, "What Pussy Riot's 'Punk Prayer' Really Said," *The Atlantic*, November 8, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>

a "miracle of God."⁹⁹ Verse 4 of the "Punk Prayer" addresses this famous line, reminding the patriarch (whose civil name is Gundyayev) that he should believe in God, not in Putin. Also in court, Masha Alyokhina parodied the Church for completely missing the point when they refer to John 10:33, where the Jews say to Jesus: "We are ... stoning you ... for blasphemy." That is, the term applies to the son of god himself.¹⁰⁰ The official indictment presented in court contains several "opinionated adjectives," Daria Zagvizdina argues; Pussy Riot's actions are for example described as "devilish."¹⁰¹ Although the indictment does not make explicit use of the term blasphemy, there is no shortage of these "opinionated adjectives" commonly associated with, or used as, synonyms for blasphemous action or speech. Zagvizdina refers to details from the bill of indictment, published in *Novaya Gazeta* on July 19, 2012, according to which the gestures seen in the "Punk Prayer" video are described as "sassy," "vulgar," "licentious," "inappropriately sexual," and "sexually debauched", as performers "jumped, lifted their legs, imitating a dance and hitting imaginary adversaries with their fists," emphasizing that the "high lift of the legs" was "higher than the belt line." The indictment argued that the group aimed "to devalue church traditions and dogmas" and "to diminish the creed of believers."¹⁰²

Easily discernible in practically any language, the word "crap" (or as it has been more widely translated, "shit") appearing in what I refer to as the crap-chorus of the "Punk Prayer," has played a central role in the blasphemy controversy. The word has been seen as a "blaspheme towards Jesus Christ," and the small number of "victims" presented in court as witnesses stated that they felt offended by what they experienced, and described what they saw as "a parody of believers' actions" when the activists crossed themselves.¹⁰³ "Crap" or "shit" is not compatible with "holiness" or "godliness" here and clearly violates ideas about the sacred if read in this way. The Russian word "sran" has mostly been translated as "shit," yet in English, as Carol Rumens argues, "crap" has "a stronger metaphorical dimension than 'shit' and comes a shade closer to 'bullshit'."¹⁰⁴ In line with this interpretation, the chorus simply says that the State-Church relation is bullshit, not that the Lord is shit.

The activists' clothes were described by Russian investigators as "clearly contradicting the common rules of the church and demands of order, discipline, and church practice [...] in particular the face masks and short dresses, showing certain parts of the body."¹⁰⁵ Not least the conclusion of the indictment is of interest here as it aligns state and religion: in sum, the Pussy Riot member's actions gave the judge the impression of "a deliberately malevolent [...] event to debase the feelings and beliefs of

99 Thomas Grove, "Pussy Riot Reveals Rift in Russian Orthodox Church," *reuters.com*, August 15, 2012.

100 The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 110; the "Closing Courtroom Statement by Masha."

101 Daria Zagvizdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted for Licentious Dance and High Kicks," *gazeta.ru*, July 19, 2012, http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2012/07/19/a_4686637.shtml; see also Davidoff, "The Witch Hunt."

102 Zagvizdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted;" some of these are also quoted in Listengarten, "Profil: Pussy Riot's 'Punk Prayer'," 68.

103 Zagvizdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted."

104 Rumens, "Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer."

105 All quoted in Zagvizdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted."

the numerous believers of the Orthodox Christian faith, and diminishing the spiritual foundations of the state."¹⁰⁶

This wording is repeated in the July 2012 indictment against all three women by the public prosecutor, which, as mentioned, was published by *Novaya Gazeta*.¹⁰⁷ But the critical voice of 'Forum 18' has noted a curious change of these words in a later version of the verdict by Judge Marina Syrova of Moscow's Khamovnichesky District Court on August 17, 2012. In the revised version, rather than "disparaging the spiritual foundations of the state," the defendants are found to have "violated the constitutional foundations of the state" by inciting religious hatred.¹⁰⁸ This seems to suggest that the senior state authority "was not motivated to prosecute by moral outrage."¹⁰⁹ To the analysts of 'Forum 18', this inconsistency suggests that "state support for the Moscow patriarchate in [the Pussy Riot] case is tactical rather than principled," and it is emphasized that, under the 1993 constitution, "The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be established as a state or obligatory one."¹¹⁰

So, whereas the first official version of the indictment seems affected by the publicly expressed cries of blasphemy, the later version, which is hardly known to the public, seems after all, to downplay ties between state, religion or belief, and Church: it is no longer as visible that the hooliganism charge functioned as a synonym for blasphemy charges. Only the first version of the indictment might read "as if Pussy Riot were being charged with blasphemy," Russian writer Davidoff argues, characterizing the trial against Pussy Riot as a "witch hunt."¹¹¹ In this way, the trial and the first version of the verdict can be seen as a way for the court to satisfy the civil and clerical accusers, by making a spectacle out of it. Arguably a more important reason for letting the notion of "blasphemy" echo so widely in court, press and public space, might have been to drown the political value of the group's protest through an emotional appeal to the public's religious sentiment. If it ever was, blasphemy is no longer, limited to the religious sphere, rather, "blasphemy and its accusations are integrated into a new dimension of sacred entities: freedom of expression [...] and most prominently, the nation-state."¹¹² The religious notion of blasphemy is translated into the secular phrasing of insult against religious sentiment, but on a practical level, rather than being erased, the blasphemy prohibition is transported into the concern for believers' religious sentiment. As Patrick demonstrates, blasphemy and religious vilification or hatred is not the same thing: "the two offenses have different historical antecedents, ad-

106 Zagvzdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted."

107 'Forum 18', "Russia: Pussy Riot, Blasphemy, and Freedom of Religion or Belief," *portal-credo.ru*, October 25, 2012, <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=english&id=454>; for the *Gazeta*-reference, see Zagvzdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted." 'Forum 18' is a Norwegian (and Christian) human rights organization; their name is based on Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which addresses the freedom of thought, belief and religion.

108 'Forum 18', "Russia: Pussy Riot, Blasphemy, and Freedom of Religion or Belief."

109 'Forum 18', "Russia: Pussy Riot, Blasphemy, and Freedom of Religion or Belief."

110 'Forum 18', "Russia: Pussy Riot, Blasphemy, and Freedom of Religion or Belief," with reference to article 14.1 of the Constitution of The Russian Federation.

111 Davidoff, "The Witch Hunt."

112 Plate, *Blasphemy*, 57.

dress different perceived threats, and, most importantly, are distinguishable (theoretically) on the ground that blasphemy attacks beliefs, while religious vilification/hatred attacks believers."¹¹³

The maneuver of cuteifying, infantilizing, and sexualizing the women with the use of phrases like "punkettes," "girls,"¹¹⁴ and "a daring performance-artist with Angelina Jolie lips,"¹¹⁵ has been another strategy to neglect the political aspects of the "Punk Prayer" – just as the Russian state media coverage has "marginalized their critiques in order to drain them of their political value."¹¹⁶ Sexualized portrayals of women "are a way to 'manage' and 'contain' their power,"¹¹⁷ yet, in line with so-called "choice feminism,"¹¹⁸ and as part of their photogenic pussy-power image and media friendly brand, the female Pussy Riot bodies are themselves portrayed in a kind of sexualized rebel-fashion: slim fit dresses and tights, fashion style combat boots and naked shoulders.

The cathedral as a place of controversy

The question of topography and topology is crucial to understanding the "Punk Prayer"-controversy. As mentioned, the video postulates a single event that took place in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The final scene shows an outside view of the cathedral,¹¹⁹ as if making sure that nobody would miss the point. The sites chosen for Pussy Riot's earlier activist performances have all been "historical sites with a thorny past,"¹²⁰ a notion that certainly holds true for the cathedral. In her closing courtroom statement, Katya Samutsevitch emphasizes why the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was intentionally selected as a site for the protest:

That the Cathedral of Christ the Savior has become a significant symbol in the political strategy of authorities was clear to many [non-conformist] thinking people when Vladimir Putin's former [KGB] colleague Kirill Gundyayev took over as the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church. After this happened, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior began to be used openly as a flashy backdrop for the politics of the security forces, which are the main source of political power in Russia.¹²¹

113 Patrick, "The Curious Persistence of Blasphemy," 216.

114 Julia Ioffe, "How Three Young Punks Made Putin Blink," *New Republic*, August 17, 2012, <http://www.newrepublic.com/blog/plank/106281/how-three-young-punks-made-putin-blink>.

115 Vasilyeva, "Women Behind the Mask;" see also Sarah Kendzior, "Manic Pixie Dream Dissidents," *Registan*, August 18, 2012, <http://registan.net/2012/08/18/manic-pixie-dream-dissidents/> (visited May 29, 2013); or see *The Atlantic*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/manic-pixie-dream-dissidents-how-the-world-misunderstands-pussy-riot/261309/> (visited May 29, 2013).

116 Kendzior, "Manic Pixie Dream Dissidents."

117 Erin Hatton and Mary Nell Trautner, "Images of Powerful Women in the Age of 'Choice Feminism,'" *Journal of Gender Studies* 22/1 (2012): 66.

118 Hatton and Trautner, "Images of Powerful Women," 65.

119 See the video at [01:50-01:52].

120 Listengarten, "Profile: Pussy Riot's 'Punk Prayer'," 69.

121 The Feminist Press, *Pussy Riot!*, 87.

Though Pussy Riot stated their intentions *post factum*, these only strengthen readings of the "Punk Prayer" as a *political* protest, which by necessity was staged in the sacred space of the church in order to communicate its message.

The Epiphany Cathedral at Yelokhovo,¹²² where Pussy Riot shot the first footage for the video, is considered one of the most important cathedrals in Moscow together with the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the Kremlin Cathedrals, and the huge Dorogomilovo Cathedral. When these cathedrals were closed or destroyed under the Soviet regime, the chair of the Russian Orthodox Church moved to the Epiphany Cathedral at Yelokhovo until the consecration of the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Savior in 2000. The national television broadcast¹²³ from the Epiphany Cathedral of the first post-Soviet Christmas and Easter night services with President Yeltsin (1991-1999) has not diminished its prestigious position in the late history of Russian Orthodoxy.

Competing versions of Russia's Orthodox past can be illustrated by the controversy over the rebuilding of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. This was "an emblematic event in postcommunist Russia's effort to come to terms with its totalitarian past,"¹²⁴ while the decision to finally build the cathedral was made in 1832 to celebrate Russia's victory over Napoleon in 1812, it took half a century to complete it. The nineteenth-century construction was a glorification of the unity of the state, Christian Orthodoxy, and the Russian people, combining the idea of "Holy Russia" with that of the modern nation-state.¹²⁵ In 1931, it was spectacularly demolished by Stalin,¹²⁶ who envisioned a shrine to the victorious atheism, a shrine that was never built.¹²⁷

The late twentieth-century rebuilding of the cathedral was not only an official attempt at reconciliation and redemption, it became a strong symbol of "national spiritual renaissance."¹²⁸ However, it is also a symbol of shifting and diverging political agendas. Critical voices accused members of the church and Moscow officials involved in the reconstruction of "falsification of historical heritage." Satirical characterizations such as "vulgar imitation"¹²⁹ and "the cathedral of vanity" have pointed to the show

122 The original church was founded in the years 1722-31 in Yelokhovo, which at the time was a village near Moscow. The present shape of the cathedral dates to 1837-45. It is also known as Bogoyavlensky Cathedral, see McMichael, "Defining Pussy Riot Musically," 108.

123 Cathy Young (Young, "Putin Goes to Church") mentions the "millennial anniversary of Russia's conversion to Christianity in 1988" (under President Gorbachev) as the occasion for "the first-ever broadcast of church services on Soviet television."

124 Ekaterina V. Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past: The Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the Reimagining of National Identity," *History & Memory* 21/1 (2009), 26.

125 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 35.

126 Approximately 77.000 churches were destroyed in the period between 1918 and 1940, and tens of thousands of priests and laity repressed or executed; see Davis, "The Russian Orthodox Church," 659. After the failed attack of the Germans to conquer Russia in 1941, Stalin initiated a revival of the Russian Orthodox Church as a strategic means to foster renewed patriotic support for the war. The influence of the Church grew until 1959 when Khrushchev's started a new rally against the Church and reinserting priests with ties to the KGB.

127 Only later – under the rule of Khrushchev – the rubbles were moved away, and the largest heated public swimming pool seen on the planet was built on the foundation of the old cathedral.

128 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 27.

129 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 46.

business character of the reconstruction, suggesting that it constituted indulgence rather than redemption.¹³⁰ Not only was it "the biggest religious construction site of the end of the twentieth century," it is "an exact replica of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in reinforced concrete," and equipped with modern conveniences such as an underground parking lot and elevators, one of which would bring VIPs "from the parking lot directly to the altar."¹³¹

Clearly, the reconstruction is ambiguous. The imitation of the neo-Byzantine cathedral, "strives to obliterate Soviet history and restore the continuity between pre-revolutionary and Post-Soviet Russia. Inadvertently, it reveals a clear continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet times in terms of power structures and authoritarian fantasies."¹³² The government's choices regarding other symbolic negotiations of Soviet trauma manifested what Svetlana Boym calls "restorative nostalgia."¹³³ Hence the emergence of a new patriotic discourse: "The cathedral's neo-Byzantine architecture and décor imply a return to a mythical Russian past before the time of Peter the Great, a time of saints and warrior princes who had defended "mother Russia" from external enemies."¹³⁴ For the millennium celebration, Putin also had the old Soviet national anthem restored with new lyrics, emphasizing the restorative nostalgia lyrically. For example, the phrase: "the victory of communism's deathless ideas," gave way to "a land watched over by God."¹³⁵

Riot and relic: feminism and the belt of Bogoroditsa

The Mother of God (in Russian, *Bogoroditsa*) is called upon in the video to fight for women's or feminists' rights in Russia. This message is crucial in the "Punk Prayer," which draws on the historical and now reinvigorated importance of the Mother of God as the protector of the Russian people. A few months before Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer," and relating directly to Pussy Riot's protest, the devotion to the Mother of God, came to a climax. In her exhaustive study on Marian iconography in Byzantium, Bissera Pencheva asserts that Mary (the Mother of God) "emerges as an image of the protector of the imperial throne in the eighth century."¹³⁶ This Byzantine Marian devotion coupled with the notion of imperial power was imported into the Russian soteriological narrative, where Mary was placed at the heart of not only religious, but

130 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 47. The cost of the reconstruction project was officially estimated at over \$500 million, although, Haskins asserts, "the actual figure was likely to be significantly higher." But even the original cathedral built in neo-Byzantine fashion in the middle of the nineteenth century, was not perceived as ancient, rather, it was regarded as "nouveau riche," and "a vulgar but expensive brooch on the city's facade," see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 102.

131 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 106.

132 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 106-7.

133 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 40-41.

134 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 49.

135 Young, "Putin Goes to Church."

136 Bissera Pencheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 15-16; Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1072.

also national identity.¹³⁷ Skipping to the late 1970s and early 1980s, sporadic and not overly successful *Mariya* movements “urged [...] women to model themselves on the self-sacrificing Mary the Mother.”¹³⁸ Lately, the general invigoration of Orthodoxy in Russia has spawned a renewed interest in the veneration of icons,¹³⁹ and in saints and new martyrs,¹⁴⁰ as well as a monastic revival within Russia¹⁴¹ and abroad,¹⁴² most notably at the Holy Mountain of Athos in Northern Greece, where the Russian monastery of Agios Panteleimonos after decades of neglect is now being restored.¹⁴³ In line with this, a veritable Maria-mania has appeared, and this new appeal to the Mother of God – as it relates to Byzantine tradition and the early history of Russian Orthodox Christianity – is also aligned with “praising female altruism,”¹⁴⁴ and proclamations of the “return of women to the family.”¹⁴⁵ Putin’s reaction to the verdict is in striking accordance with this observation: “If they had not broken the law, they would now be at home, doing their housework.”¹⁴⁶

In 2011, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior hosted the Belt of the All-Holy Mother of God, believed to have been worn by the “historic protectress of the Russian people, who they believe intercedes for them before God’s throne.”¹⁴⁷ The belt (Belt) belongs to the Greek Orthodox monastery of Vatopedi, situated at the Holy Mountain in Northern Greece.¹⁴⁸ Over three million citizens and pilgrims were reported to have

137 Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2004), 244-246; see also Denysenko, “An Appeal to Mary,” 1074-5.

138 Fran Markovitz, “Striving for Femininity: (Post-) Soviet Un-Feminism,” *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme* 16/1 (1995), 40; see also Tatyana Mamonova, “Introduction: The Feminist Movement in the Soviet Union,” in *Women and Russia*, ed. Tatyana Mamonova (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

139 Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*.

140 Karin Hylddal Christensen, “Remembering the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.” In *Rethinking the Space for Religion: New Actors in Central and Southeast Europe on Religion, Authenticity and Belonging*, ed. Catharina Raudvere, Krzysztof Stala, and Trine Stauning Willert (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012), 193-234.

141 Stella Rock, “A Monastic Revival: The Russian Orthodox Church,” *History Today* 59/2 (2009); in 1988, the Russian Orthodox Church listed 21 monasteries, by 2005 this number had increased to 688; see Irina Papkova, “The Orthodox Church and Civil Society in Russia (Review Article),” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9/2 (2008), 481.

142 Sebentsov, “Religion in the System of State Power,” 37.

143 President Putin himself paid Greece an official visit in 2005 and “devoted time to this issue;” see Sebentsov 2012: 37. Based on my own observations from fieldwork at Mount Athos between 1997 and 2013, the number of Russian pilgrims to Mount Athos and new settlers in the villages Ouranoupolis near the Athonite border has increased dramatically over the last five or six years.

144 Suvi Salmenniemi, “Civic Activity – Feminine Activity?: Gender, Civil Society and Citizenship in Post-Soviet Russia,” *Sociology* 39/4 (2005), 746.

145 See discussion in Anna Temkina and Elena Zdravomyslova, “Gender Studies in Post-Soviet Society: Western Frames and Cultural Differences,” *Studies in Eastern European Thought* 55/1 (2003), 58-59.

146 United Press International (no author), “Pussy Riot Video Banned,” *upi.com*, November 29, 2012.

147 Denysenko, “An Appeal to Mary,” 1067.

148 In a recent publication about the monastery’s spiritual and communal achievements, four pages are devoted to photographic documentation of the event (Vatopedi, *Spiritual and Social Offering: 25 Years (1987-2012)*, in Greek, 2012: 150-153), for example, the abbot, Fr. Ephraim, is pictured leaving the airplane holding the shrine with the belt himself; another photograph pictures the now president Putin with Fr. Ephraim in front of the belt shrine at the Pulkovo airport of Saint Petersburg, where he welcomed the monastic delegation from Vatopedi.

venerated the belt – including the president and high-ranking politicians – between October 20 and November 28 when it was hosted by the cathedral. Many of those who came to venerate the belt waited in line for more than 17 hours.¹⁴⁹ No other single event has so clearly emphasized the importance of this cathedral to revitalized notions of Russian sacred space and power.

The last line of Pussy Riot's "Punk Prayer" is a response to this event: "the belt of the Virgin can't replace mass-meetings," which points to the official television coverage of the event, which totally overshadowed the pre-election political debate. As Denysenko points out: "Pussy Riot's punk prayer performance seriously undermined the Russian Church's strategy by subverting Kyrill's orchestration of grand events inviting the Russian people to return to Christianity under Mary's patronage."¹⁵⁰ While Kyrill I attempts to reconstitute a Russian society populated with devoted people, Pussy Riot asks Mary to become a feminist and protect the marginalized. This idea is not new to the history of Marian devotion, Denysenko argues, since "Russian Marian icons present the narratives of those who had little voice in the church establishment."¹⁵¹ Yet, in "Punk Prayer," Pussy Riot is revamping the traditional idea of the Mother of God, in order to tell their story, seeing her figure as a "powerful, feminine spiritual force"¹⁵² to further their fight for the rights of women, homosexuals and feminists. They aired their protest on the internet while "the memory of the veneration of the Marian relic and the Church's communication of its significance to the public was fresh."¹⁵³

The victims presented in court all agreed in their testimony that "feminism is not the fight for women's rights but the destruction of family."¹⁵⁴ The term feminism is a "contested terrain"¹⁵⁵ in Russian society. In the Soviet period, "socialist emancipation," and "equality" for women meant full-time work inside and outside the household, resulting in negative connotations associated with "state feminism."¹⁵⁶ Rather than being rooted in a communist version of Russian feminism, Pussy Riot's feminism is founded on women's and gender studies which arose in major cities in Russia at the beginning of the nineties, when scholarly theory imported from the west emerged as a new authority – a sign of "intellectual globalization and western colonization" of critical thinking.¹⁵⁷ Pussy Riot's protest is presented as secular feminism by the authori-

149 Vatopedi, *Spiritual and Social Offering*, 151.

150 Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1077.

151 Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1078, with reference to Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, 233.

152 Plate, *Blasphemy*, 122.

153 Denysenko, "An Appeal to Mary," 1070.

154 Zaghvzdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted."

155 Valerie Sperling et al., "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism," *Signs* 26/4 (2001), 1168, italics original; Melanie Tatur, "Why Is There No Women's Movement in Eastern Europe?," in *Democracy and Civil Society in Eastern Europe: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, Harrogate, 1990, ed. P.G. Lewis (London: MacMillan, 1992).

156 Temkina and Zdravomyslova "Gender Studies in Post-Soviet Society," 54.

157 Temkina and Zdravomyslova "Gender Studies in Post-Soviet Society," 51-2 and 56-57.

ties and “pitched directly against [...] established (patriarchal) order.”¹⁵⁸ Pussy Riot does not advocate literal aggression, rather they seem to aim at “complicating an assumed relationship between women and passivity and feminism and pacifism”¹⁵⁹ associated with the gender asymmetry characteristic of political space in post-Soviet Russia.¹⁶⁰ This amounts to breaking a taboo. A telling statement from the trial came from a lawyer, Yelena Pavlova, representing several of the victims: “All the defendants talked about being feminists and said that [this] is allowed in the Russian Orthodox Church. This does not correspond with reality. Feminism is a mortal sin.”¹⁶¹ The invocation to the Mother of God to become a feminist seems here to have been judged indirectly in terms of blasphemy, as the call for feminism in the sacred space of the church is seen as a violation against the sacred body of the Mother of God herself: as public cries of blasphemy entered the courtroom during the trial, feminism became coterminous with blasphemy.

Conclusion

The cries of blasphemy in the courts, in the press, and among the public about the Pussy Riot case have so far successfully and effectively drowned the critical political voice and message in Pussy Riot’s “Punk Prayer” video. On November 29, 2012 a Moscow court banned the video, declaring it extremist, along with three other videos of Pussy Riot.¹⁶² Soon after, Russian Internet providers were required to block the video after a three-day appeal period to avoid being “subject to criminal prosecution.”¹⁶³ The video is therefore officially sanctioned as offending *per se*, as the authorities deny access to it within Russia, spawning a new kind of iconoclasm in cyberspace against “art that offends.” Also, access to Pussy Riot’s Live Journal-blog and the support website www.freepussyriot.org has been denied. These are clear effects of political censorship. A Google-representative said that YouTube must receive a court order before it can make a decision on whether to remove the punk prayer video or other videos.¹⁶⁴ The criminalization of access to the videos on the internet is tantamount to iconoclasts demolishing an icon or a statue: the authorities would not commit such an act if the “Punk Prayer” images were not a challenge to power. It seems to be the case that “in a sense it is the iconoclasts themselves who believe the most strongly in the power of images. So strong was their belief that images have

158 Dawn Llewellyn and Marta Trzebiatowska, “Secular and Religious Feminisms: A Future of Disconnection?,” *Feminist Theology* 21/3 (2013): 254.

159 Halberstam, “Imagined Violence,” 263.

160 Salmenniemi, “Civic Activity – Feminist Activity?,” 748.

161 Ryan Cooper, “Pussy Riot Update – Prosecutors Call for Three-Year Sentence for Russian Punks, Declare That ‘Feminism Is a Mortal Sin’,” *Punk Music About.com*, August 8, 2012.

162 The anti-extremism legislation includes nazi-propaganda and Jehovah’s Witness’s material.

163 Reported by the Russian international news site RIA Norosti; United Press International, “Pussy Riot Video Banned.”

164 *The Australian* (no author), “Russian Court Issues Pussy Riot Ban,” 30 November, 2012, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/russian-court-issues-pussy-riot-video-ban/story-e6frg-6so-1226527589707>.

power, that in order to establish control, politically and religiously, they needed to destroy what challenged them."¹⁶⁵

In the wake of the Pussy Riot case, the Duma started preparing a blasphemy law, which was passed in late 2013. The three-page law text calls for legal penalties to be toughened in cases of "offending religious feelings of citizens." The newly proposed Criminal Code (article 243.1) would punish "public offense and belittlement of worship services or other religious rites and ceremonies," as well as "public offense to the religious convictions and feelings of citizens."¹⁶⁶ Moreover, damage, destruction or desecration of "objects and items of religious veneration, places designated for the holding of worship services [...] constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of Russia's peoples"¹⁶⁷ are included. Although nicknamed the "blasphemy law," 'Forum 18' notes, "the draft does not in fact contain the Russian term "blasphemy" (*koshchunstvo* or *bogokhulstvo*)."

Putin's attempt to turn Pussy Riot's protest into a religious question can be seen as a strategy aimed at protecting the politics of his administration from critique. It is also a way to consolidate and confirm conservative practices and virtues of Christian Orthodoxy, a way of claiming politically the sacred space of the Church. By placing their political protest in important Moscow cathedrals – mediated in the music video format and as part of a complex multimedia and art activist strategy – Pussy Riot is pointing to the politicized coalition between the clergy and the Putin administration. If sound is territory, Pussy Riot claims the space of the cathedral, not only for the minimal duration of a happening witnessed only by few, but for the duration of the video multiplied each time someone watches online. Haskins, in her study on the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, argues that state-sponsored monuments "are sites of memory that are capable of mobilizing public imagination beyond the ways envisioned by their sponsors and designers."¹⁶⁸ Pussy Riot's video performance is a reminder that the cathedral is more than an anchor for a specific hierotopy or ideology; it is a heterotopy, a dynamic site for historical and political negotiation (with a strong historical precedent), as they present their rival feminist interpretation of Orthodox identity precisely by staging their own courage to challenge the immanent violence of those authorities that remain in power. This challenge is acted out through Pussy Riot members' bodies in bright colored clothing, in the video dramatically opposed to the greyish uniforms of the church officials, whose presence is crucial as they come to embody the state-church coalition.

The imagined violent effects of the rioting actions in the video and the desire to control the available stream of images in the mass media, I suggest, have been the primary concerns of the Russian authorities. Unofficial, informal accusations of blasphemy, in addition to a vague notion of "religious sentiment," have in this respect func-

165 Plate, *Blasphemy*, 87.

166 "Offence to religious feelings of citizens" already exists in the Code of Administrative Offences (Article 5.26); see 'Forum 18' 2012; see also Brooke, "Russia Frees One Punk Rocker."

167 'Forum 18', "Russia: Pussy Riot, Blasphemy."

168 Haskins, "Russia's Postcommunist Past," 56n3.

tioned as rhetorical and emotional markers of persuasive power great enough to create public support for the prosecution while simultaneously avoiding the critique of the strengthened bond between state and church, which, one way or the other, inherently adds to the blurring of boundaries between profane and sacred domains.

The loud blasphemy cries uttered widely by the Patriarchate and in public over "Punk Prayer" arguably had an impact on the prosecution in court, turning the hooligan paragraph into something like an *ad hoc* or *de facto* anti-blasphemy paragraph. The trial even spawned further legal sanction possibilities against future punk art activism to offend patriarchs in power.

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Abstracts

Med udgangspunkt i en forståelse af blasfemi-begrebet som flydende, tilbyder artiklen en kritisk gennemgang af Pussy Riots "Punk Prayer"-video, som blev offentliggjort på internettet d.21. februar, 2012. Blasfemibeskyldningerne, som videoen har affødt, belyses i en politisk-religiøs sammenhæng, og i relation til multimediekunst-aktivisme, forestillet vold, samt til den voksende Maria-kult og rekonstruerede Moskva-katedral. Jeg argumenterer for, at Pussy Riot nødvendigvis har spillet på et performativt blasfemi-begreb for at fremme provokation, men fastholder samtidig at blasfemi ikke har været formålet i sig selv (formålet var politisk) og adskiller sig fra ortodoks blasfemi-forståelse. I mangel af en egentlig antiblasfemi-lov, blev hooliganisme-paragraffen anvendt i Pussy Riot-sagen, som også satte lighedstegn mellem blasfemi og feminisme. Fængslingen af tre Pussy Riot-medlemmer og kriminaliseringen af adgang til videoen i Rusland er klare tegn på politisk censur.

Based on a presentation of the fluid character of the blasphemy-concept, this article offers a critical discussion of Pussy Riot's video, "Punk Prayer," uploaded on the internet on 21 February, 2012, only a few hours after the famous/infamous incident in the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow. The article discusses the blasphemy accusations in a political/religious context, and in relation to media art activism, the concept of imagined violence, as well as the growing Mariology in Russia and the re-erected Moscow cathedral. I argue that Pussy Riot, in order to air their protest against president Putin's administration, made use of a notion of blasphemy which differs from Christian Orthodox understandings of blasphemy. The incarceration of three Pussy Riot members (for hooliganism) and the criminalization of access to the video in Russia are signs of outright political censorship.

THOMAS SOLOMON

Self-censorship as Critique: The Case of Turkish Rapper Sagopa Kajmer

Self-censorship can be practiced by various agents at different stages of the process of musical production and dissemination, including by individual performing artists, by the commercial entities such as the record companies that publish and market the artists' work, by media outlets such as radio and television stations, and by other actors or institutions. But the idea of self-censorship most commonly assumes an individual creative artist or musical group choosing, because of prior intimidation or coercion, to alter the form or content of their creative work in order to avoid future sanction. Looking through some of the recent literature on music censorship, it seems to me that the nature of self-censorship is largely taken for granted.¹ It seems to be generally assumed that self-censorship is from the start always a capitulation – even if a sometimes cagey one – to the powers that would censor. And it seems to be generally accepted that when an artist or institution engages in self-censorship, the battle has already been (at least partly) lost. In their introduction to the pioneering collection of essays *Policing Pop*, for example, Cloonan and Garofalo refer to “prior capitulation [...] which leads to that most pernicious of all forms of censorship – self-censorship.”² Self-censorship is thus assumed to involve a lack or loss of agency on the part of those who are doing it – a surrendering of their agency to the state, the market, religiously oriented pressure groups, or whatever other institution is requiring that the censorship be done. This set of assumptions can be characterized as a *victimology* approach to self-censorship.

But self-censorship is itself a social and cultural practice, also involving agency on the part of those engaging in it. I think that there is a need to more thoroughly theorize self-censorship in those terms. I suggest that, at least in cases where individual artists are involved in censoring their own work, the possibilities for artistic expression are not just limited by self-censorship. In contrast, I suggest that self-censorship can also actually open up new avenues for creative practice. Any social action contains within itself the possibility of both its own propagation or affirmation and its own negation or contestation. It may seem paradoxical, but I want to argue that self-censorship also

- 1 I have in mind here books such as Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo, eds., *Policing Pop* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan, eds., *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), Marie Korpe, ed., *Shoot the Singer! Music Censorship Today* (London: Zed Books, 2004) and John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012).
- 2 Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo, “Introduction,” in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 3.

potentially opens up possibilities for creative practice, for reflection on that practice, and even for critique of censorship itself. If, like hegemony, censorship always necessarily contains within itself the possibility of its own negation, one possible source of that negation might be in the creative exploration of the possibilities for artistic expression that self-censorship not only closes off, but that it also potentially enables.

As a way of exploring these ideas, I focus on the self-censorship practices of one particular artist, the Turkish rapper Sagopa Kajmer (Figure 1), one of the aliases of Yunus Özyavuz, also known as DJ Mic Check, and also known in the late 1990s as the "one-man group" Silahsız Kuvvet. When talking about him here in general as a musician and rapper apart from his specific incarnations or personas, I will refer to him as Mic Check. Mic Check also produces his own songs, making the beats for them by assembling tracks in his studio by combining various samples. Being his own producer as well as a rapper, Mic Check has at hand a particular set of resources and skills with which to approach self-censorship as cultural practice.

Mic Check first developed the rapper identity "Sagopa Kajmer" around the year 2001 as an alternative persona to his one-man group "Silahsız Kuvvet" ("Unarmed Forces"), under the name of which he released two albums in the commercial market in Turkey.³ As Silahsız Kuvvet he had cultivated a rapping style with literary pretensions through allusions to elite Turkish and Ottoman poetic traditions, drawing on his university study of Persian language and literature. In musical terms, many of Mic Check's songs released under the Silahsız Kuvvet name can be placed within the "oriental hip-hop" genre that characterized much Turkish rap during the 1990s, with songs built around melodic samples featuring very recognizable melodies from Turkish folk tunes, which complemented the somewhat elevated Turkish language used in the raps.⁴ But as Sagopa Kajmer (a name he says came to him in a dream) he began to explore in his raps a more earthy, colloquial Turkish, including extensive use of Turkish swear words as well as a deeper and more guttural voice from further back in the throat. The musical style of his first songs as Sagopa Kajmer was also distinct from his work as Silahsız Kuvvet. Instead of the thick textures and folk melodies of "oriental hip-hop," these songs were characterized by sparse textures in the rhythm section and by synthesized string (and occasionally piano) sounds, or samples from western classical music.

3 Silahsız Kuvvet, *Sözlerim Silahım*, Hammer Müzik HPNCD002, 2001; Silahsız Kuvvet, *İhtiyar Heyeti*, Hammer Müzik HPNCD005, 2002.

4 On "oriental hip-hop," see Caroline Diessel, "Bridging East and West on the 'Orient Express': Oriental Hip-Hop in the Turkish Diaspora of Berlin," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13 (2001): 165-187, Martin Greve and Ayhan Kaya, "Islamic Force, Takım 34 und andere Identitätsmixturen türkischer Rapper in Berlin und Istanbul," in *Rap: More Than Words*, ed. Eva Kimminich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 161-179, Ayhan Kaya, 'Sicher in Kreuzberg': *Constructing Diasporas: Turkish Hip-Hop Youth in Berlin* (Bielefeld: Transaction Publishers, 2001) and "Aesthetics of Diaspora: Contemporary Minstrels in Turkish Berlin," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28 (2002): 43-62, Dorit Klebe, "Kanak Attak in Germany: A Multiethnic Network of Youths Employing Musical Forms of Expression," in *Manifold Identities: Studies on Music and Minorities*, ed. Ursula Hemetek, Gerda Lechleitner, Inna Naroditskaya and Anna Czekanowska (London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2004), 162-179 and Thomas Solomon, "Whose Diaspora?: Hybrid Identities in 'Turkish Rap' in Germany," in *Music and Identity in Norway and Beyond: Essays Commemorating Edvard Grieg the Humanist*, ed. Thomas Solomon (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2011), 253-267.



Figure 1: Turkish rapper and DJ Yunus Özyavuz, aka DJ Mic Check, aka Sagopa Kajmer.



Figure 2: Cover of the self-titled first album of Sagopa Kajmer (2002).

At first, Mic Check kept his new persona as Sagopa Kajmer “underground”⁵ – and maintained the songs in their original uncensored form – by releasing the unexpurgated songs for free on the Internet. Eventually in 2002 Mic Check decided to make a commercial release as Sagopa Kajmer with the Istanbul-based record company Hammer Müzik (Figure 2), drawing on these same songs.⁶ In deciding to make a commercial release of these songs, Mic Check put himself in the position of coming up against the Turkish state’s censorship of recordings in the commercial market.

State censorship of commercial recordings in Turkey

There are various governmental bodies in Turkey empowered to censor journalistic, intellectual and artistic production, telecommunications and the Internet.⁷ I will mention here only one of these bodies, which in 2002 operated from within the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. All pre-recorded media products (CDs, cassettes, DVDs, VCDs, CD-ROMs etc.) sold in Turkey, both those domestically produced and those licensed from other companies outside of Turkey, must carry a *bandrol*, a holographic sticker issued by the *Telif Hakları ve Sinema Genel Müdürlüğü* (General Directorate of Copyrights and Cinema) within this ministry. A code number on the *bandrol* identifies the manufacturer and the specific product and indicates that the manufacturer has paid the required tax on the recorded physical units produced. The primary use of the *bandrol* system is thus to indirectly monitor sales by keeping track of production runs.⁸ Since the number of unique identifying *bandrols* issued for a particular title is supposed to be the same as the number of copies of that title actually manufactured, this should ensure that the required taxes are paid for each copy (potentially) sold.⁹ But the issuance of a *bandrol* for any specific new title that a publisher applies for is not guaranteed, and the system can also be used to censor material the ministry finds objectionable. The ministry may simply refuse to issue a *bandrol* for a particular recording, effectively banning it from the retail market within Turkey. Among the reasons for this censoring of recordings may be language objectionable to the government for its political content, such as song lyrics perceived to advocate violence, political views the government would rather not see expressed, such as advocating Kurdish

5 For a discussion of the meanings of the term “underground” within the Turkish hip-hop community in Istanbul, see Thomas Solomon, “Living Underground is Tough: Authenticity and Locality in the Hip-hop Community in Istanbul, Turkey,” *Popular Music* 24 (2005): 1-20.

6 Sagopa Kajmer, *Sagopa Kajmer*, Hammer Müzik HPNCD006, 2002.

7 A systematic overview of music censorship in Turkey remains to be written. For anecdotal accounts focusing mostly on the experiences of individual artists and performing groups, and largely from an activist perspective, see Şanar Yurdatapan, “Turkey: Censorship Past and Present,” in *Shoot the Singer! Music Censorship Today*, ed. Marie Korpe (London: Zed Books, 2004), 189-96, and Freemuse, “And the ‘Beat’ Goes On – Censorship in Turkey,” in *Music Will not Be Silenced: 3rd Freemuse World Conference on Music and Censorship, Istanbul 25-26 November 2006*, ed. Marie Korpe (Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2007), 36-43, accessed September 4, 2007, <http://freemuse.org/archives/1003>.

8 Eliot Bates, “Social Interactions, Musical Arrangement, and the Production of Digital Audio in Istanbul Recording Studios” (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2008), 77, 151.

9 As Bates notes, this system actually measures production, not final sales.

cultural or political rights, or simply the presence of swear words.¹⁰ For example, another Turkish rapper (not Mic Check) told me he would not even bother trying to have his album issued by a commercial record company since he knew that, because of the swearing in his songs, the album would never make it past the *bandrol*-issuing process. He thus chose instead to distribute the album himself as a so-called “underground” release, selling self-produced copies without a *bandrol* at his concerts and at hip-hop parties.¹¹

Knowing that the pervasive swearing in his songs as Sagopa Kajmer would never make it past the censors in the Ministry of Culture who had to approve all new recordings before they could be released on the commercial market, Mic Check had to address the question of what to do with the swearing in these songs. Rather than attempt to hide the presence of swear words by momentarily muting the vocal track (as was common in other Turkish popular music at this time), his solution on many of the songs was to cover up the objectionable language with obvious sound effects or samples which were audibly incongruous with the surrounding musical textures. The net effect of the use of these very obvious sound effects and samples was to blatantly call attention to the fact that the songs had been censored.

Strategies and tactics of self-censorship

In his early songs as Sagopa Kajmer, Mic Check drew on a wide repertoire of strategies for obscuring the Turkish swear words that he anticipated would need to be censored in order for the recordings to be commercially released in the Turkish market. In this section I summarize the musical gestures Mic Check used for covering up the Turkish swear words in some of his first songs commercially released as the persona Sagopa Kajmer, giving a few examples. In the song text excerpts transcribed here, I use the following format: First I present in Turkish the uncensored version that was distributed for free on the Internet, indicating with *italics and underlining* the language that would later be censored, but which remains intact in this first version. Parallel to this I present an English translation, indicating the equivalent strong language also with *italics and underlining*. Then I present a second transcription in Turkish of the censored version that appeared on the commercial CD release, substituting for the censored words a description in English, in [*brackets with italics and underlining*], of the technique or sampled material used to obscure them. Parallel to this I present a second translation in English, also deleting the equivalent censored words and indicating again in [*brackets with italics and underlining*] the technique or material used to obscure the language. These “before and after” transcrip-

10 In actual practice, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism cannot listen to every recording and watch every film before it is published and made available for purchase. Many things which the state might find objectionable are thus allowed to be published and circulate as media products, which then also become available for use by broadcasters. The state operates another, separate organ for censorship of broadcasting; this agency is able to ban material that has already been officially accepted for publication via the *bandrol* system.

11 See Solomon, “Living Underground,” 4-5, for further discussion.

tions should give the reader some sense of how these examples sound, but are of course no substitute for listening to the recordings themselves. See the links listed in the appendix at the end of this article for online locations where one may listen to the songs discussed here.

The simplest approach Mic Check used, following common practice in Turkish popular music as mentioned above, to obscure language that would not make it past the government censors, was to simply mute the vocal track momentarily during specific words or syllables, creating a blank space in the vocal line. If the rest of the musical texture – which is *not* muted – is particularly dense, listeners may not even notice the missing words, especially if they are not paying close attention to the song text. An example of this can be heard in the censored version of the song “Ölüm benim doğum günüm” (“My death is my birth”).

Excerpt from “Ölüm benim doğum günüm” (“My death is my birth”)

Original Turkish, uncensored version

Çepeçevre peşimdeler peşimdeler
Piçler ölmez

English translation

They’re chasing me, chasing me
Bastards never die

Original Turkish, censored version

Çepeçevre peşimdeler peşimdeler
[vocal track muted] ölmez

English translation

They’re chasing me, chasing me
[vocal track muted] never die

A second approach Mic Check used is what I call the “generic beep” – an electronic beep that sticks out from the surrounding musical texture and thus, in a way very different from simply temporarily muting the vocal track, calls attention to the fact that something is being obscured and that censorship is taking place. Because of the generic nature of such beeps, one can not be sure if the artist him or herself has introduced this mode of censorship during the initial recording process, or if it has been imposed on the recording after the fact by some other actor, such as a record company or radio station. This technique was used in the censored version of the song “Tımarlı hastane” (“Madhouse”).

Excerpt from “Tımarlı hastane” (“Madhouse”)

uncensored version

Sagopa’nın evi tımarlı hastane, yo!
Bok yeme
Otur aşağıya

Sagopa’s house is a madhouse, yo!
Don’t *fuck up* [lit.: “Don’t eat *shit*”]
Sit down there

censored version

Sagopa’nın evi tımarlı hastane, yo!
[beep] yeme
Otur aşağıya

Sagopa’s house is a madhouse, yo!
Don’t [beep]
Sit down there

A third approach was to use other fairly simple ways of obscuring the swear words that begin, I suggest, to show more artistic agency than the “generic beep.” For example, Mic Check frequently used a simple turntable scratch effect to cover up specific syllables or short words. This use of turntable scratching more specifically suggests the agency of Mic Check in the act of censorship, since he is also known as a DJ and turntablist, and it can be assumed that he himself added these effects to mask the words being censored. Mic Check used this technique in the censored version of “Yeraltındaki karanlık” (“The darkness underground”), a song about the 1990s wars in Bosnia and Chechnya and the civil war in the Kurdish region of southeast Turkey.¹²

Excerpt from “Yeraltındaki karanlık” (“The darkness underground”)

uncensored version

Öldürdük delicesine masum
bildiğimizi

Siktir et “gelir geçer” dediler

Siktir et “bu da biter” dediler

Dayanamadım, yıllardır
dayanamıyorum

We killed like mad those whom we
know are innocent

Fuck it, they said “this too will pass”

Fuck it, they said “it will be over soon”

I can’t stand it, for years I can’t stand it

censored version

Öldürdük delicesine masum
bildiğimizi

[*scratch*] “gelir geçer” dediler

[*scratch*] “bu da biter” dediler

Dayanamadım, yıllardır
dayanamıyorum

We killed like mad those whom we
know are innocent

[*scratch*] they said “this too will pass”

[*scratch*] they said “it will be over soon”

I can’t stand it, for years I can’t stand it

What I am particularly interested in, in this article, is a fourth technique of self-censorship which involves much more elaborate ways of obscuring swear words, which Mic Check used especially when the language to be masked involved longer phrases. In these cases, he frequently covered up the phrases with extensive collages of samples. These collages typically drew on a wide variety of source materials for samples, and their construction and deployment in specific songs showed a virtuosic skill in computer-based musical production involving the manipulation and combination of samples. I suggest that these sample collages not only call attention to the fact that Mic Check was engaging in self-censorship, but that in their form and content, the collages actually comment directly or indirectly on the very fact that censorship was taking place in the recording. In some cases, these sample collages seem to make a parody out of the act of censorship, and even to talk back to the powers that are requiring Mic Check to engage in self-censorship in the first place. To account for this, I

12 This song uses as its main musical motif a repeated sample from Mozart’s *Requiem*, and is thus an example of Mic Check’s use of samples from western classical music in his early songs as Sagopa Kajmer, as mentioned above.

need to briefly give some examples of the source material Mic Check sampled from to use in his songs.

One source Mic Check drew on for samples was other rap songs in English by African-American performers. One specific source he used was a fragment from the song "Public Enemy No. 1" by the well-known American rap group Public Enemy, from their first album *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*, released in 1987.¹³ The fragment consists of a descending melodic motif followed by the voice of the group's rapper Flavor Flav exclaiming "o ha!" While "o ha" is a rather generic exclamation in English, by coincidence, in Turkish "o ha" is a rather rude expression of surprise, dismay or disgust. It is not strong enough to be censored, but it is not an expression one uses in polite company either. Another example of an American rap track that Mic Check sampled from is the song "Pump Me Up" by Will Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff, from Will Smith's second album *Willennium*, released in 1999.¹⁴ The sample is from one of the appearances of a recurring vocal phrase from the mostly instrumental song – a vehicle to show off DJ Jazzy Jeff's scratching skills on the turntable – that appears at the end of sections, where a chorus of voices rhythmically chants "Pump, pump, pump, pump me up!" The Public Enemy and Will Smith samples are both exactly one measure in medium tempo 4/4 time, so they work well as short musical units that can be "dropped in" on top of complete measures in Mic Check's songs when he needed to obscure a longer sequence of Turkish swear words that filled an entire measure. Mic Check's use of samples taken from various recordings of African-American rap in English (including other examples not discussed here) is also a vehicle for displaying his extensive knowledge of American hip-hop music, as he drew on a variety of rap recordings, both canonical and obscure.

Another source Mic Check drew on for sample sources was sound effects and snippets of dialog from cartoons, TV shows and films both in Turkish and, especially, in English. Samples he used in this way included cartoonish screams and noises, gunshot sounds, and dialog from what sounds like gangster films. He was especially fond of using bits of sampled dialog from the American TV cartoon *South Park*, which had begun in 1997. With its ensemble of eight-year old characters who themselves frequently use strong English swear words, *South Park* had by the year 2000 become well-known for pushing the boundaries of what one can say and represent on television. The show had already by then become something of an icon of resistance against censorship. A running gag during the early years of the show was that in nearly every episode the character Kenny suffered a violent and gruesome death, after which the other characters always exclaimed "Oh my God, they killed Kenny. You bastards!" Kenny would of course return again in the following episode, only for the cycle to be repeated.¹⁵ Mic Check sampled this famous bit of dialog from one of the show's episodes and used the fragments "Oh my God" and "You bastards!" in several of his songs. Yet another

13 Public Enemy, "Public Enemy No. 1," *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*, Def Jam 527 357-2, 1987.

14 Will Smith, "Pump Me Up," *Willennium*, Columbia 494939 2, 1999.

15 A fan-made compilation of several of these sequences can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBoTEZxWkec>, accessed April 24, 2012.

very recognizable sample from film dialog that Mic Check used was comic actor Mike Myers' "Austin Powers" character's recurring exclamation "Yeah baby!" from the series of films beginning with *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* in 1997.

Mic Check drew on and combined samples from all of these different sources in collages of various lengths, from short individual samples used to obscure individual words or short phrases, up to quite long and complex combinations of samples that he used to cover up longer phrases or even complete lines of rap containing long sequences of Turkish swear words. In some cases the Turkish swear words were masked by sampled swear words in English, which, ironically enough, Turkish censors generally leave alone. All these sample collages, whether short or lengthy, also work musically, in the sense that they begin and end in places that not only serve to obscure the Turkish swear words, but that also maintain the accentuation and rhythmic flow of the music, while at the same time sticking out from the surrounding musical texture in terms of timbre. So the choices Mic Check made regarding which samples to use, how to combine them, and how to integrate them into the rhythmic flow of his songs, show a considerable amount of artistic judgement and musical sense, constituting in effect audible traces of his own agency as the studio producer of the songs.

An example of a song incorporating such complex collages of samples in order to censor extensive use of Turkish swear words is the track "Siktirin gidin," the title of which can be translated as "Fuck you all" or "All of you fuck off."¹⁶ The song targets what Mic Check considered to be superficial commercial Turkish pop music and the people who make and consume it, and asserts hip-hop and rap music as authentic cultural and musical expressions, with Sagopa Kajmer as hip-hop's true and authentic proponent. Parts of the song, not transcribed here, specifically quote from and parody various pop songs from around the years 1999-2000 by famous Turkish pop stars such as Tarkan (parodying his 1990s hits "Hepsi senin mi?," "Şımarık" and "Kır zincirlerini"), Ebru Yaşar (referencing her 1999 song "Seni anan benim için doğurmuş"), Murat Başaran (referring to his hit "Azıcık ucundan" from 1999) and Turkish actress turned pop singer Banu Alkan (parodying her hit "Neremi" from 1998). The chorus of "Siktirin gidin" consists of the repeated couplet "Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın askerleri / Siktirin gidin popun piçleri" ("My real name is hiphop, the soldiers of hiphop / Fuck off you bastards of pop!"). In the censored version of the song, the first statement of the second line of the couplet is covered up by the Public Enemy sample mentioned above, and the subsequent repetition of the same line is obscured by the Will Smith sample.

Mic Check's use of sampled film and cartoon dialog and sound effects in the different sample collages (with often very recognizable samples such as the *South Park* and "Austin Powers" dialog mentioned above) to censor the frequent and sometimes long sequences of Turkish swear words during the verses of this song results in an unsettling, disorienting listening experience, deconstructing the song from within, since so many parts of it have clearly been subject to censorship. The censored version of the song can

16 The title of the song, since it contains one of the strongest possible swear words in Turkish, is also censored on the back cover of the CD, where it is listed as "S.K.T.R.N.G.D.N."

thus be heard as a virtuosic display of sample-based studio production techniques that highlights Mic Check's fluency in hip-hop's often-commented on cut-up aesthetics, as in Paul Gilroy's characterization of "the deliberately fractured form" of hip-hop music.¹⁷

Excerpt 1 from "Siktirin gidin" ("Fuck you all")

uncensored version

[From first verse]

Burası Sagopanın mekânı

Laflarına dikkat et

Sikerler ananın amını

Pop kültürü sardı korkularımı eritti
rüyalarımı

Binlerce genç paçoza dinledi bu amına
koduklarını

Ne alaka var sözlerinde, ne de
ritimlerinde bir temel

Şerefsiz üçkağıtçı köpekler

Ticari işler sikmiş sizin götünüzü

İmaj makerlar uzatmış ömrünüzü

Mikrofona para diye bakan budala
aşık popçular

Etiler'de yumuşaklar, ticaretçiler,
listelerde topçular

Koy topa patlasın

Hiphop gerçek adım

Gerisini sikip atsin!

Senin gavatin menajerin

This is Sagopa's place

Pay attention to what he says

They fuck your mother's pussy

Pop culture enveloped my fears, it
destroyed my dreams

Thousands of young whores listened
to this fucking stuff

There is no relevance in its lyrics, no
basis in its rhythms

Dishonorable scammers, dogs

Commercial interests fucked you in the ass

The image makers make you younger

Imbecile pop stars in love who look at
a microphone and see money

The effeminate ones in Etiler,¹⁸ the
traders, the strikers¹⁹ in the pop charts

Put it on the ball and let it explode

My real name is hiphop

Fuck the rest and throw it away!

Your pimp is your manager

censored version

Burası Sagopanın mekânı

Laflarına dikkat et

[sample: Austin Powers: "Yeah baby!";
electronic beeps]

Pop kültürü sardı korkularımı eritti
rüyalarımı

This is Sagopa's place

Pay attention to what he says

[sample: Austin Powers: "Yeah baby!";
electronic beeps]

Pop culture enveloped my fears, it
destroyed my dreams

17 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 104. See also Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), Dick Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music* (London: Methuen, 1987), and Joseph G. Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

18 Etiler is an upscale district in Istanbul.

19 This is a reference to some famous Turkish football players who ventured into the pop music field and made CDs/cassettes around the year 2000.

Binlerce genç paçoş dinledi bu
[cartoonish scream]
 Ne alaka var sözlerinde, ne de
 ritimlerinde bir temel
 Şerefsiz üçkağıtçı köpekler
 Ticari işler [indistinct cartoonish
 dialogue fragment & sound effects]
 İmaj makerlar uzatmış ömrünüzü
 Mikrofona para diye bakan budala
 aşık popçular
 Etiler'de yumuşaklar, ticaretçiler,
 listelerde topçular
 Koy topa patlasın
 Hiphop gerçek adım
 Gerisini [cartoonish sound effects]
[Cartoonish sound]

Thousands of young whores listened
 to this [cartoonish scream]
 There is no relevance in its lyrics, no
 basis in its rhythms
 Dishonorable scammers, dogs
 Commercial interests [indistinct
 cartoonish dialogue fragment &
 sound effects]
 The image makers make you younger
 Imbecile pop stars in love who look at
 a microphone and see money
 The effeminate ones in Etiler, the
 traders, the strikers in the pop charts
 Put it on the ball and let it explode
 My real name is hiphop
[Cartoonish sound effects] the rest
[Cartoonish sound]

Excerpt 2 from "Siktirin gidin" ("Fuck you all")

uncensored version

[End of first verse]

Huyunu suyunu bilmediğim
pezevenklere Kajmerden darbe
Siktirin gidin orospunun döleri,
orospunun döleri
 Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın
 askerleri

From Kajmer a blow to the pimps who
 I-don't-know-what-they're-made-of
Fuck off you whore-spawn, whore-
spawn
 My real name is hiphop, the soldiers
 of hiphop

[Chorus]

Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın
 askerleri
Siktirin gidin popun piçleri
 Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın
 askerleri
Siktirin gidin popun piçleri

My real name is hiphop, the soldiers
 of hiphop
Fuck off you bastards of pop
 My real name is hiphop, the soldiers
 of hiphop
Fuck off you bastards of pop

censored version

Huyunu suyunu bilmediğim [scratch;
voice: "Muthafucka say what?"]
 Kajmerden darbe
[sound effects; South Park: "Oh my
God!"; scratch; film dialogue:
"Why don't you shut up!"]

From Kajmer a blow [scratch; voice:
"Muthafucka say what?"]
 who I-don't-know-what-they're-made-of
[sound effects; South Park: "Oh my
God!"; scratch; film dialogue:
"Why don't you shut up!"]

Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın
askerleri

My real name is hiphop, the soldiers
of hiphop

[Chorus]

Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın
askerleri

My real name is hiphop, the soldiers
of hiphop

[sample: Public Enemy: "O ha!"]

[sample: Public Enemy: "O ha!"]

Gerçek adım hiphop, hiphopın
askerleri

My real name is hiphop, the soldiers
of hiphop

[sample: Will Smith: "Pump pump
pump pump me up"]

[sample: Will Smith: "Pump pump
pump pump me up"]

While a lot more could be said about this song, I will just point to a couple of aspects. In the uncensored version of the second excerpt, Mic Check obscures the Turkish word *pezevenk*, a very strong Turkish word meaning "pimp" (the word is much stronger in Turkish than its closest English equivalent), with a sampled voice saying in English the phrase "Motherfucker say what?" with a stylized pronunciation suggesting street language or an African-American dialect; the pronunciation of the first word of the phrase can be roughly represented with the spelling *muthafucka*. This vocal sample comes from yet another American rap song, "Boyz-n-the-Hood" by Eazy-E, yet again showing Mic Check's knowledge of canonical American rap recordings.²⁰ As I have already mentioned, English swear words are typically not censored in recordings released in Turkey, so here Mic Check gets around the requirement to censor strong words in one language by substituting equally strong words in another language. The specific words spoken by the sampled voice are themselves a meta-commentary on the act of verbal communication, referring to someone else's speech – "Muthafucka say what?" – and asking what that person said while simultaneously insulting them – "Muthafucka say what?" This sampled phrase thus serves both to mask the Turkish swear word (*pezevenk*) with an English swear word (*motherfucker*) while also interrogating someone's speech, demanding a repetition or clarification – "Muthafucka say what?" When this sample is heard within the context of the song, the unclear speech referred to can be that of Sagopa Kajmer's own (censored) voice, asking him to repeat what he said because it was not clear, precisely because it was obscured by the very voice demanding the clarification. The intruding sampled voice can also be heard as a stand-in for the very authority that called for the censorship to take place, questioning the rapper's right to say what he wants to. Finally, the sampled voice can also be heard as a proxy voice for the rapper himself, aggressively backtalking the censoring authority and repudiating its demand that censorship take place. The interplay of these different hearings of this sampled voice signifies on the very act of self-censorship, as the

20 This song was first released on the 1987 compilation album *N.W.A. and the Posse* (Macola Records MRC-LP-1057), and then again in a remix on Eazy-E's solo debut album *Eazy-Duz-It* (Ruthless Records/Priority Records CDL57111) in 1988. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for DMO for pointing out the source of this sample, which I had missed.

sampled voice turns the act of self-censorship that it is a vehicle for into a meta-communicative act – in effect, through this sampled voice the self-censorship calls attention to and comments on itself.

As if to emphasize this point, a similar meta-commentary emerges from the very next line of the censored version of the song. This time, in what sounds like a bit of sampled film dialog, a voice exclaims in English “Why don’t you shut up?” This can again be heard as signifying on several levels simultaneously. It can be an ironic comment by Mic Check, through the proxy of a sample of someone else’s voice, on his own practice of self-censorship. It can represent the demands of the censoring authorities, embodying their voice as it intrudes into Sagopa Kajmer’s song and masks his rapping voice. Yet it can also be heard as Mic Check’s reply to those same censoring authorities, backtalking them yet again. And, within the context of the concept of the song as a whole, it can even be heard as a statement addressed to the pop artists whom he is criticizing. In “shutting himself up” by using this sampled line of film dialog to obscure the Turkish swear words in his rap, Mic Check can thus be heard as addressing various others, in effect telling them, “Not me, why don’t *you* shut up?” The sampled line, with its command that one not speak, works both within the context and concept of the song, and at a meta-level, commenting on the censorship practiced by the Turkish state, and on the self-censorship practiced by Mic Check himself.

As I think these examples show, Mic Check’s studio virtuosity in creating the censored versions of his songs also has the effect of displaying his skill as a studio producer in making sample-based music. Mic Check demonstrates in these songs his ability to select and deploy samples that not only serve to obscure the Turkish swear words, but that also “fit,” in musical terms, the songs they are used in, both in the practical aspect of being the right length, and in working structurally in the way they integrate with the rhythmic flow of the song they are embedded in, even as they call attention to themselves through the way they create ruptures in the musical texture as the different sampled voices intrude and cover up Mic Check’s rapping. And in at least some cases involving samples of other people’s speech, the samples also fit in textual terms, connecting with and commenting on the surrounding raps and even the very words they mask.

Mic Check would in subsequent albums under the name Sagopa Kajmer leave behind many aspects of the approach to lyrics used in the songs discussed here. And while he eventually abandoned for good the name of his first rapping persona Silahsız Kuvvet – since 2003 releasing albums only under the name Sagopa Kajmer – the rapping and musical style of his later albums as Sagopa Kajmer represent something of a synthesis of the two personas. There is almost no swearing in the raps (and thus no need to censor them), and the more literary style returns.²¹ The musical backing tracks draw on a variety of sources, in some cases including samples from Turkish popular music, such that some songs evoke again the “oriental hip-hop” genre he had culti-

21 Many of his raps include Persian words not commonly used in everyday spoken Turkish; the printed transcriptions of the lyrics in the booklet accompanying the 2005 Sagopa Kajmer CD *Romantizma* (İrem Records 012) include footnotes defining the foreign words.

vated with his earlier persona, though some tracks do retain the rougher edges characteristic of the early Sagopa Kajmer songs.

Conclusions: A poetics of (self-)censorship

In the literature on music censorship, there are many examples of so-called “camouflaged messages.” These most often refer to ways artists hide, through metaphor or ambiguity, certain messages (often of a political nature) in their music in order to get them past censors – what Cloonan refers to as “the use of double-meanings to hide political content.”²² Such self-censorship generally involves finding artistic solutions at the textual level to get the desired message to the target audience, using for example coded language that effectively hides the message from the censor, but which the listener who knows the “code” is able to interpret – what Drewett calls “singing about issues in a roundabout way rather than making outright statements (when that is what the artist really wants to do).”²³ Another way in which artists and their record companies or publishers have engaged with the power that censors is to make the music itself exactly as they wish to, but obfuscate the message in written material accompanying the music (for example by making changes in the printed lyrics included on the album cover or that are sent to the censor for approval), as in the Chinese case discussed by de Kloet.²⁴ Both of these techniques involve obfuscation in that they direct the attention of the censor away from the material which he/she may find objectionable. This kind of self-censorship works by deflecting attention, and potentially does not work if the censor “lifts the cover” to see what lies underneath. While such practices do involve creativity and artistic agency, it is in effect an agency that has to hide itself in order to get across its message.

In contrast to an agency that hides itself through obfuscation and deflection of attention, I have argued in this article that Mic Check’s use of obvious, cartoonish sound effects and sampled film and cartoon dialog in English to cover up Turkish swear words in some of his songs specifically calls attention to the fact that he is engaging in self-censorship, and even makes a parody out of the very act of self-censorship. The juxtaposition of particular words and sounds in the samples used to cover up the Turkish swear words constitutes an ironic approach to, and even a subversion of, the whole self-censorship process. In effect, Mic Check used his own practice of self-censorship as an opportunity to talk back to the censors. In this way his self-censorship becomes a kind of meta-commentary on the act itself of self-censorship and on the whole system that required censorship in the first place. The means Mic Check used to

22 Martin Cloonan, “Popular Music Censorship in Africa: An Overview,” in *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*, ed. Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 16.

23 Michael Drewett, “Music in the Struggle to End Apartheid: South Africa,” in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 158.

24 Jeroen de Kloet, *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 184-86 and “Confusing Confucius: Rock in Contemporary China,” in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 175-76.

obscure individual swear words in his raps do not just serve to hide the objectionable material. They also, in the way they stick out in the musical texture, explicitly call attention to the very fact that censorship is taking place. And Mic Check's own agency in undertaking the censorship is highlighted through the virtuosic display of his ability to choose, manipulate, combine and integrate into his music the samples that he used to cover up the swear words. This is not camouflage; this is self-censorship that calls attention to itself, self-censorship "in yo' face."

A cursory review of the literature on music censorship suggests that, at least in its conventional meaning, censorship most often has to do with political messages in songs, such as messages of resistance to oppressive regimes, etc. Bastian and Laing's review of twenty years of music censorship around the world, as reported in the regular listings included in the journal *Index on Censorship* between 1980 and 1999, found that roughly three quarters of the incidents listed involved what they classify as political motives.²⁵ In the case discussed here, for the most part the songs do not have a "political message" in the usual sense of the word. The issue is simply the use of what is conventionally regarded as swear words and "bad language" in Turkish. While the specific content of the censored material (the meaning of the swear words themselves) is not "political" in the conventional sense, Mic Check's use of swear words in these songs does, of course, have a political dimension, in that his insistence on his right to use them in his raps is in defiance of attempts by the Turkish state (through the *bandrol*-issuing process described above) to limit the use of these words in public artistic expression.

In their introduction to *Policing Pop*, Cloonan and Garofalo evoke what they call "the ways in which individual artists experience the prospect of censorship and *what happens to their music* as it becomes subject to broader social forces."²⁶ The use of this kind of language in relationship to censorship seems to assume that artists are relatively helpless in the face of such "broader social forces," and that once artists have produced finished musical texts and put them into public circulation, they can only watch as other more powerful agents "do things" to their music and compromise its artistic integrity. The case I have discussed here suggests that, rather than seeing self-censorship as simply a prior capitulation to the power that censors – and thus a loss of agency in the face that power – practices of self-censorship can themselves be exploited as creative sites for artistic agency and, paradoxically, for a critique of censorship itself, even, to a certain extent and in certain ways, pro-actively pre-empting censorship. My approach here is thus similar to that of de Kloet, who in discussing censorship and self-censorship in Chinese popular music finds that "the artist is neither fully a victim nor fully an accomplice"; de Kloet further argues that censorship can actually be productive for the proliferation of culture, and that in the Chinese case, "Censorship proves to be more of a playground than a political battlefield."²⁷ I further suggest that, when self-censorship is happening within the musical text itself (and I

25 Vanessa Bastian and Dave Laing, "Twenty Years of Music Censorship Around the World," in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 57.

26 Cloonan and Garofalo, "Introduction," 5, emphasis added.

27 de Kloet, *China with a Cut*, 181; see also de Kloet, "Confusing Confucius," 182.

don't mean only the lyrics), it is even possible to speak of a "poetics of (self-)censorship" in a positive sense, in that the artist's active engagement with the requirement to self-censor enables new creative musical practices for solving problems that are simultaneously aesthetic and political.

My approach here has been based on a reading of particular sound recordings as musical texts. But I would also suggest that, having recognized these issues, self-censorship as social and cultural practice should also be investigated ethnographically through research in the sites of cultural production, such as recording studios and rehearsal spaces, and through interviews with artists about the details and strategies of their self-censorship practices. Such research on the actual practices of self-censorship has the potential to go beyond the "victimology" approach that I mentioned above, with its assumptions that self-censorship involves a lack of agency, or at best a reduction of agency. In this way we can begin to recognize and explore further the ways in which the requirement to self-censor not only restricts, but potentially enables artistic practice.

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Appendix: Online resources

There are no official video clips (i.e., created and sanctioned by the artist or his record company) for any of the songs discussed in this article. There are, however, a number of “unofficial” clips for both the uncensored and censored versions of the songs, made by fans and uploaded to YouTube and similar sites. I list here some of these fan-made clips (and in one case where a clip was not available, an audio-only website), all accessed on December 3, 2013.

“Ölüm benim doğum günüm”

uncensored version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YroxenYNQKE>

censored version: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDFp_ib_w0w

“Siktirin gidin”

uncensored version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7fMNwT9eac>

censored version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqHv1CW9uz8>

“Tımarlı hastane”

uncensored version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqDkuRFY4E0>

censored version: <http://grooveshark.com/#!/s/TIMARLI+HASTANE+ORJ+NAL+VERS+YON/36y4mF/>

“Yeraltındaki karanlık”

uncensored version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70OrcDb1Sz8>

censored version: <http://www.zapkolik.com/video/sagopa-kajmer-yeraltindaki-karanlik-640959>

Abstracts

This article discusses the self-censorship practices of Istanbul rapper and DJ Mic Check, aka Sagopa Kajmer. After first releasing for free on the Internet a number of songs with extensive swearing in Turkish, Mic Check prepared new censored versions of the same songs for commercial release. Analysis of the censored versions of the songs reveals that Mic Check used the act of self-censorship itself as a vehicle for talking back to the Turkish state and its requirement that swear words be censored. The article argues that, in contrast to a “victimology” approach that assumes that self-censorship necessarily entails a loss of agency on the part of creative artists, practices of self-censorship can themselves become creative sites for artistic agency and, paradoxically, a critique of censorship itself.

Denne artikkelen diskuterer praksiser knyttet til selvsensur hos Istanbul-rapperen og DJ-en Mic Check, også kjent som Sagopa Kajmer. Etter først å ha utgitt en del sanger gratis på Internett, med omfattende banning på tyrkisk, presenterte Mic Check nye, sensurerte versjoner av sangene for komersiell utgivelse. Analyse av de sensurerte versjonene av sangene avslører at Mic Check brukte selve utøvelsen av selvsensuren som et redskap for å gi et tilsvarende svar til den tyrkiske statens krav om at banning skal sensureres. I artikkelen argumenteres det for at, i motsetning til et “offer”-perspektiv som antar at selvsensur nødvendigvis medfører redusert handlingsrom for kunstnere, kan selvsensurerende praksiser bli kreative utgangspunkt for kunstnerisk handling, og – paradoksalt nok – en kritikk av selve sensuren.

How Live Cuban Popular Dance Music Expresses Political Values in Today's Cuba

Introduction

Aristotle argued that a political citizen is a person “who partakes in the act of ruling and the act of being ruled”,¹ and that the *polis* is the space in which such political equality is practiced through the exchange of opinions, values and preferences. Jacques Rancière has elaborated on the aesthetic potential of this Aristotelian politics, claiming that aesthetic experiences shape the production of new opinions, values and preferences among the people and thereby increase the space of political subjectivities.² In this article I discuss how live performances of Cuban popular dance music create an aesthetic *polis* space, in which grooves and melodies shape politics-in-the-making by disseminating opinions, values and preferences that are strongly critical of the totalitarian Cuban state, thus increasing political equality. The following research question will serve as the focal point for my analysis: How does the aesthetics of live Cuban popular dance music express political values in today's Cuba?

By researching popular music's communicative power in Cuban culture, and in particular the extent to which popular music increases the space of political equality, I will shed light upon the ways in which music's aesthetic qualities enable political subjectivization and participatory democracy. I will draw on the notions of *action*, *polis* and *wooing* in Arendt's political theory, together with Rancière's distinction between *politics* and the *police* and his notion of “the politics of aesthetics”, in tandem with existing research in musicology. I will then apply these notions to an empirical analysis of Interactivo's live performances in Havana in 2010 and 2013, in combination with an analysis of related qualitative interviews addressing the politics of Cuban popular music, thus combining interview data and observation data.

I will begin by briefly reviewing existing research on the politics of Cuban music; then I will present the theoretical concepts and methodological considerations that are relevant to my analysis. Following the analysis itself, I will sum up the main findings and answer the proposed research question.

1 Aristotle in Thomas Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the "Politics"* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013), 63.

2 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2004).

Existing research on the politics of Cuban popular music

Ever since the nineteenth century, Cuban music and arts have represented powerful symbols of national identity;³ prominent Cuban intellectuals such as José Martí, Nicolás Guillén, and Alejo Carpentier have all theorized about the ways in which Cuban aesthetics expresses an inclusive, hybridized notion of Cuban culture that transcends racial distinctions.⁴ After 1959 the revolutionary government sought to strengthen this aspect of Cuban identity by investing heavily in the arts and introduced several music education programs and regular state-funded payments to qualified musicians.⁵ The government also initiated professional music ensembles (e.g., Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna) and supported weekly performances of Cuban popular music genres such as rumba guaguanco, nueva trova, son, son-related styles of Cuban dance music and various forms of Afro-Cuban music.⁶ Yvonne Daniel argues:

"In Cuba, dance and all forms of expressive culture are used to support socialist and egalitarian behavior [...] Cuban artists and expressive culture are exciting and powerful aids to political struggle and economic development [...] The ministry broadly organizes and outlines cultural activities toward the goals of the revolution [...] By means of financial, organizational, and ideological support, the ministry and arts administrators have been instrumental in the promotion of rumba".⁷

The music style that was most explicitly linked to the revolutionary project between 1960 and 1980, however, was nueva trova.⁸ Nueva trova artists wrote songs that glorified the revolution, such as Carlos Puebla's hymn to Ernesto "Che" Guevarra from 1965, "Hasta Siempre Comandante".

Yet the effort to incorporate music and the arts into the vision of the revolutionary project also produced political regulations and other constraints. When confronted with the question of artistic freedom within the revolution, Fidel Castro famously

3 Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998). Alejandro Madrid and Robin Moore, *Danzón: Circum-Caribbean Dialogues in Music and Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75-117.

4 Kjetil Klette Boehler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics in Salsa Cubana: The Musicality of Cuban Politics and the Politics of Salsa Cubana* (PhD Thesis, Oslo: University of Oslo, 2013), 125-140.

5 Robin Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Press, 2006), 56-107. James Robbins "Practical and abstract taxonomy in Cuban music" *Ethnomusicology* 33 (1989), 389. Lisandro Otero and Francisco Martínez Hinojosa, *Cultural policy in Cuba*. Unesco, (1972).

6 On rumba see Yvonne Daniel, *Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995). On nueva trova see Robin Moore, "Transformations in Cuban Nueva Trova, 1965-95." *Ethnomusicology* 47 (2003): 1-41. On son see Argeliers León, *Del canto y el tiempo* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1984). On Afro-Cuban music see Alejandro De la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 289. Katherine Hagedorn, *Divine utterances: the performance of Afro-Cuban Santería*. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001). Judith Bettelheim, "Negotiations of Power in Carnival Culture in Santiago de Cuba" *African Arts* 24 (1991), 66-92.

7 Yvonne Daniel, *Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 143-144.

8 Robin Moore, "Transformations in Cuban Nueva Trova, 1965-95." *Ethnomusicology* 47 (2003): 1-41.

responded to the Cuban artists: "Within the Revolution, complete freedom: outside the Revolution, none". Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Cuban authorities often censored Anglo-American pop, rock and jazz music, including the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, because they were thought to represent U.S.-led cultural imperialism.⁹

After Cuba's break with the Soviet Union in 1991 and the resulting ideological crisis, the space for political critique increased in Cuban popular music. Yet musicians clashed with the authorities nevertheless, following several controversial songs in the popular new timba style that described growing materialism, the increasing black market, prostitution and migration. Throughout the 1990s many songs were censored, and some musicians were sharply criticized for expressing counter-revolutionary values. One example of this is what Perna calls the "social scandal of *la Bruja*"¹⁰—this song, by the timba band NG la Banda,¹¹ was one of the first timba hits to allude to increased sex tourism on the island, something that Fidel Castro repeatedly denied. The Cuban government forced José Luis Cortés, the singer and composer of "*La Bruja*", to change his improvisational singing in the hit, because, officials claimed, the song was dismissive of proper female behavior. Instead of referring to "*la vida loca*", a term that is implicitly related to Cuban sex tourism, with the words, "You are a witch, a crazy, a sex addict" ("*Tu eres una bruja, loca, arrebatada*"), Cortés changed the lyrics to "You are a doctor, a teacher, an engineer," in order to please the government. However, as Cuban musicologist Olavo Alén Rodríguez points out, "Now the critique of the prostitution was even worse, because many prostitutes were in fact doctors, teachers and engineers".¹²

Furthermore, there emerged different degrees of censorship of Cuban music—sometimes artists even received judicial sanctions, if the counter-revolutionary content of the song was sufficiently pointed. The punk rock singer Gorki Águila (hence Gorki), of the band *Porno Para Ricardo*, was imprisoned several times between 2003 and 2010 and repeatedly harassed by the Cuban government for disturbing the social order through his music.¹³ The following excerpts, from Gorki's most popular song, "*El Comandante*", refer to Fidel Castro himself: "The commander wants me to work, paying me a miserable salary. The commander wants me to clap, after he has talked delusional bullshit [...] Commander makes an election that he himself invented to perpetuate the system".¹⁴

Other forms of political regulation of the Cuban music scene include the prohibiting of certain popular songs from the radio, TV or elsewhere. Based upon interviews

9 Vincenzo Perna, *Timba: The Sounds of the Cuban Crisis* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 28-36.

10 Vincenzo Perna, *Timba: The Sounds of the Cuban Crisis* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 192-217.

11 NG La banda, *Grandes Exitos*, (Reyes 2006.)

12 Personal conversation with Olavo Alén Rodríguez, Havana, October 17, 2010.

13 Laura G. Freyre, "Porno para Ricardo: Rock, Analchy and Transition" in *A Changing Cuba*, edited by Mauricio Font (New York: City University of New York University Press, 2008), 561-602. Geoff Baker, "Cuba Rebelión: Underground Music in Havana" *Latin American Music Review* 32 (2009), 1-38.

14 My translation. Original lyrics in Spanish: "El Comandante quiere que yo trabaje, pagándome un salario miserable. El Comandante quiere que yo lo aplauda, después de hablar su mierda delirante. No Comandante, no coma usted esa pinga Comandante. El Comandante, hace unas elecciones, que las invento el pa' perpetuarse. El Comandante quiere que vaya y vote para seguir jodiéndome". The song was recorded on the CD *A Mi No Me Gusta La Política Pero Yo Le Gusto A Ella Compañero*, (La Paja Recold, 2006.)

with musicians, Perna shows how this implicit form of censorship has led many musicians to avoid certain socio-political content that might attract the attention of the authorities.¹⁵ In summary, existing research on the politics of Cuban popular music has explored the ways in which the Cuban government has used music to strengthen national cultural identity and the ways in which popular music has served as a vehicle for socio-political critique. However, few studies have theorized a notion of politics in conjunction with the aesthetics of Cuban popular music or examined how musicians use the live scene in particular to address political issues. In what follows, I will engage with the potential relationships between politics and aesthetics by drawing on the work of Hanna Arendt and Jacques Rancière. Although Arendt's research is situated within the areas of political philosophy and social theory, and Rancière's within the philosophy of politics and aesthetics, their arguments are highly relevant as a conceptual apparatus for researching the politics of music. While Rancière¹⁶ tends to oppose his political theory to Arendt's theoretical arguments, several researchers¹⁷ underscore the strong similarities in their theoretical concepts. Here I will focus as well on the convergences in their writings on politics and aesthetics.

Theoretical framework: Understanding "politics" and the "politics of aesthetics"

Both Arendt and Rancière sought to develop a political theory of practice (*praxis*) that is not confined to governmental issues but is instead grounded in people's equality and the right to seek political emancipation through expressions in everyday life.¹⁸ Arendt theorizes the idea of participatory democracy (a politics of participation) specifically through her notions of *action*, *polis* and *woeing*.

Arendt's notion of action, polis and woeing

Arendt first stresses the necessity for people to *act* in the course of political discussion and thereby increase the plurality of political opinions and values.¹⁹ She notes, "The new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting".²⁰ For Arendt, *action* is a mode of human togetherness that recognizes each individual and allows for participatory democracy, in contrast to bureaucratized and elitist forms of politics such as representative democracies. As *action* is ultimately an individual pursuit, addressing the given person's potential to become a political citizen, Arendt turns to the Greek notion of *polis* to theorize how the plurality of *actions* might con-

15 Vincenzo Perna, *Timba: The Sounds of the Cuban Crisis* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005).

16 Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. (London, New York: Continuum, 2010).

17 Mustafa Dikeç, "Beginners and equals: political subjectivity in Arendt and Rancière" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38 (2012), 78-90. Andrew Schaap "Enacting the right to have rights: Jacques Rancière's critique of Hannah Arendt" *European Journal of Political Theory* 10 (2011), 22-45.

18 Andrew Schaap, "Enacting the right to have rights: Jacques Rancière's critique of Hannah Arendt" *European Journal of Political Theory* 10 (2011), 22-45.

19 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 9.

20 Ibid.

stitute a political space. Arendt theorizes a *polis* that transcends physical limitations to become a means of living together:

"The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be."²¹

Following Arendt, then, *polis* refers to a community in which people's actions are played out equally and in the plurality.

Applied to research on the politics of groove-based popular music, *actions* may be located in music experiences and made to serve as analytical lenses through which to analyze the extent to which music increases the space of political plurality and being together. John Miller Chernoff and John Blacking, for example, describe how rhythms and dance instigate, preserve and develop equal social relationships in African communities.²² Following Blacking, this notion of togetherness on equal terms arises from music's ability to generate friendships through communal dancing: "Venda develop their bodies, their friendship, and their sensitivity in communal dancing".²³ Translated into Arendt's terms, rhythms and dance might be considered musical *actions* in the construction of a possible *polis* of being together-in-the-making.

However, to understand the nature of how this *musical polis* is constructed through *musical actions*, we must also engage with Arendt's notion of *wooing*, which informs those processes of expressing *actions* and building communities of *polis*. Although aesthetics and music do not have a place in Arendt's political theory as such, she does observe that communication through *actions* in the making of the *polis* is not a rational enterprise but instead involves persuasion through the mechanism of *wooing*.²⁴ Her expression "wooing the consent"²⁵ emphasizes the relevance of feelings, persuasion, aesthetics and rhetoric to the exchange of political opinions and values via *actions*. David Gutterman describes the role of wooing in Arendt's political theory as follows: "The point is less about agreement and more about engagement [...] The best democratic storytelling enhances relationships and engenders appreciation of the shared world".²⁶ Arendt's notion of wooing draws attention to the aesthetic potential of expressing political actions and communities of *polis*, and it could serve as a stepping-stone in linking the aesthetic power of music to its political potential.

21 Ibid., 158.

22 John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000 [1973]). John Miller Chernoff, "The rhythmic medium in African music" *New Literary History* 22 (1991), 1093-1102.

23 John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000 [1973]), 44.

24 Arendt in Behabib, Seyla. "Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian moment" in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, edited by Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesh, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012), 54.

25 Ibid.

26 Guttermann, David. *Prophetic Politics: Christian Social Movements and American Democracy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 43.

Rancière's "politics of aesthetics" and "politics and the police"

In *Politics of Aesthetics* Rancière argues that aesthetics can instigate a political consciousness by defining the perceptual coordinates of what can be said, heard and felt about a subject.²⁷ He conceives aesthetic experiences as *a priori* to politics, because they define the preconditions of the ways in which the common is constituted within the community. According to Rancière, the production of "what is common within the community"²⁸ is the essence of politics, because it defines what is valuable, or not valuable, among the people. His definition of politics, then, encompasses common perceptions of what can be said, heard and felt about a subject matter:

"What really deserves the name of politics is the cluster of perceptions and practices that shape this common world. Politics is first of all a way of framing, among sensory data, a specific sphere of experience. It is partition of the sensible, of the visible and the sayable, which allows some specific data to appear [...] It is a specific intertwining of ways of being, ways of doing and ways of speaking."²⁹

Rancière argues that there is always aesthetics at play in politics and politics at play in aesthetics. The ways in which aesthetic perceptions arise (e.g., through moving to rhythms or reading a novel) further define what is common within a community and are thus the "essence of politics".³⁰ Rancière's main argument is that the distribution of aesthetic sensations shapes the production of politics by bringing people together in sensory communities and influences preferences, practices and value judgments:

"What is common is 'sensation'. Human beings are tied together by a certain sensory fabric, I would say a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together, and politics is about the transformation of the sensory fabric of the 'being together' [...] Aesthetic experience [...] is a common experience that changes the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible. As such, it allows for new modes of political construction of common objects and new possibilities of collective enunciation [...] Film, video art, photography, installation, [music], etc. rework the frame of our perceptions and the dynamism of our affects. As such they may open new passages toward new forms of political subjectivization."³¹

By defining politics in aesthetic terms, as the production of commonalities through shared values, feelings, opinions and preferences, Rancière enables the political to emerge in the aesthetic experience of music. In relation to groove-based music research, then, it is interesting to analyze how perceptions of rhythmic interplay, groove structures, melodic design and lyrics shape communities and the production of their

27 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2004).

28 Ibid., 14.

29 Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), 152.

30 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2004).

31 Jacques Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art", *Art and Research* 2 (2008), 4-14.

political values. Rancière's arguments call for a combination of musical analysis, aesthetic description and social analysis as means of understanding the politics of music.

A last theoretical concept from Rancière's political theory is his emphasis on *dissensus* via his distinction between *politics* and the *police*.³² Rancière views the political as played out in the battlefields between "politics" and "the politics of the police". The latter refers to the regulation of the space of opinions, values and preferences by larger institutions and corporations, while the former refers to the ways in which these regulated spaces are challenged and changed by the people through aesthetic expressions, demonstrations and the making of new political movements and actors. He argues:

"The police says that there is nothing to see on a road, that there is nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space of circulating is nothing other than the space of circulation. Politics, in contrast, consists in transforming this space of 'moving-along' into a space for the appearance of a subject: i.e., the people, the workers, the citizens: it consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein. It is the established litigation of the perceptible."³³

Applied to musicological research, this perspective enables readings of how the aesthetic power of music can shape people's socio-political critiques through their perceptions of interlocking grooves, melodies and lyrics. Through the aesthetic construction of a "politics", music can increase the number and variety of available opinions, values and preferences among the people and contribute to musical *actions* and the making of a musical *polis* (as underscored by Arendt). Within the field of musicology, Robert Walser makes a related argument in his analysis of the politics of Public Enemy, stating, "Only the musical aspects of rap can invest his [the rapper] words with their affective force"³⁴ and thereby enable his socio-political critique to reach millions of listeners. Paraphrasing Rancière, musical expressions of political critique may challenge the order of the police and create a real *politics* through aesthetic means.

Summarizing theoretical perspectives

These five concepts—actions, polis, wooing, political aesthetics and the "politics of the police" versus politics—will serve as theoretical touchstones throughout the analysis that follows. The Arendt-inspired notion of musical *actions* will inform a discussion of the ways in which musical performances increase the plurality of political subjects and give voice to the voiceless through the experience of interlocking grooves, melodies and lyrics. Arendt's notion of *wooing* underscores how these actions communicate aesthetically, and we will frame the groove experience as consisting of multiple acts

32 Jacques Rancière "Ten Thesis on Politics." *Theory & Event* 5 (2001), accessed June 27, 2014 <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jacques-Rancière/articles/ten-thesis-on-politics/>. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. (London, New York: Continuum, 2010).

33 Jacques Rancière "Ten Thesis on Politics" *Theory & Event* 5: (2001), §22. <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jacques-Rancière/articles/ten-thesis-on-politics/>,

34 Robert Walser, "Rhythm, Rhyme and Rhetoric in the Music of Public Enemy", *Ethnomusicology* 39 (1995), 193-194.

of wooing (e.g., through its rhythms, melodies, call-and-response sequences, and so on). Taken together, these musical actions and processes of wooing can create a new *polis* in which people come together as equal political subjects. Music's political potential is also described at the end of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, when he notes that while singing together does not require shared identities or ideologies as such, it is still "capable of constituting a sense of community that would otherwise not exist".³⁵ Rancière's notion of the politics of aesthetics expands Arendt's arguments and enables readings of the ways in which the aesthetic power of music shapes people's values, opinions and preferences in new political communities. Lastly, Rancière's distinction between politics and the politics of the police provides a theoretical framework with which to analyze how music enables the political critique of the existing order and expands the space of available political opinions and values.

Before I apply these theoretical concepts in my analysis, I will briefly sketch out my use of methodologies and data sources.

Methodologies and Data Sources

The following analyses draw on ethnographic interviews with a leading Cuban musician, one music aficionado and one musicologist, all conducted in Havana in 2010; field notes from Interactivo's concerts at Teatro Bertolt Brecht and El Sauce in Havana (November 2010); and media representations (documentary videos and articles) of Interactivo's concert at Plaza Anti-Imperialista in September 2013.

Interview data

All of the interview data stems from semi-structured qualitative interviews completed in Cuba in 2010.³⁶ These interviews were intended to address key issues related to aesthetics and politics in Cuban popular music, though the discussions also followed leads from the informants along the way. All of the interviews were based on an interview guide that centered upon two key questions: (1) How does Cuban popular music express Cuban identity and culture? (2) How are social and political values expressed in Cuban popular music? At times, interviewees spoke freely about these main issues and sometimes even anticipated my questions. At other times, the interviewees took the discussion in the direction of other topics of interest. Most of the interviews lasted between twenty minutes and an hour, and all were one-on-one discussions.

My informants included a musicologist, a music aficionado working elsewhere in the cultural sector and a leading musician. *Neris Gonzales Bello* is a prominent musicologist in Cuba who has done extensive research on Cuban popular dance music, especially timba and reggaeton. She works as a researcher and teacher at the Institu-

35 Robert Putnam, *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 411.

36 Here I refer to Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1996), 5-6.

to Superior Des Artes in Havana. *David* is a filmmaker and scholar of cultural studies who lives in Cuba and is an engaged music aficionado and consumer of Cuban music. *Roberto Carcasses* (born in 1972) is a key figure in contemporary Cuban popular dance music and the leader of the band *Interactivo*. My discussions with these informants enabled my culturally grounded analysis of the politics of Cuban music from within, and I selected them in order to guarantee relevant and various voices in this regard. All of them were educated about the project and signed up (with informed consent) to participate in it. To protect the anonymity of the music fan, I used the pseudonym "David", but I used real names for the well-known musicologist and musician. While my presence as a foreign interviewer introduced certain limits upon the informants' ability to openly criticize the political regime, their answers nevertheless raised interesting questions with regard to contemporary Cuban politics.

The analysis summarizes general findings both across and within my interviews via a process of "meaning condensation".³⁷ In the representation of this data, I refer to myself as K and to the informants by their surnames, except in the case of the pseudonym "David".

Interactivo as data material

Carcasses is the director, pianist and composer of the popular Cuban dance orchestra *Interactivo*, which mixes timba with several other Cuban and Afro-Latin music styles, together with elements from Western funk and jazz. Since the band won *Cubadisco* in 2006 with the album *Goza Pepillo*,³⁸ *Interactivo* has been one of Cuba's most popular performers of Cuban music, particularly among younger people. *Interactivo* features several leading figures within contemporary Cuban popular music, including the famous singers Yusa, Francis Del Río, William Vivanco and Telmary Diaz, all of whom also have solo careers. In recent years, other well-known musicians have joined the band, including trumpet player Julio Padrón, saxophonist Carlos Miyares and drummer Oliver Valdés, among others. *Interactivo* plays a groove-based, rich and physical style of music, and the instrumentation consists mainly of lead vocals, backing vocals, drums, percussion, bass, piano/rhodes, horn section (saxophone, trombones and trumpet) and guitar.

Field notes: Interactivo at Teatro Bertolt Brecht and El Sauce

During the autumn of 2010, *Interactivo* gave almost weekly concerts at the venues El Sauce and Teatro Bertolt Brecht in Havana, which were both excellent settings for interaction between musicians and audiences. The venues are both usually packed, and the entrance fee is relatively modest, allowing students and music aficionados to gather there and dance. Performance high points often included vamping montuno sections encompassing various improvisations and a busy, moving audience.

37 Ibid.

38 *Cubadisco* is a Cuban version of a Grammy, and it is the most prestigious annual award in Cuban popular music. See also: http://cubaabsolutely.com/Culture/article_music_Concerts.php?id=XVII-Cubadisco-2013-Festival.

At each of these concerts, I brought a notebook for field notes and usually a camera as well.³⁹ However, since my aim was to study the music through participation, I often put the notebook in my pocket and engaged with the music through dancing, all the while trying to commit to memory everything that was happening. I was particularly interested in how political values were expressed through the musical communication between performers and audiences. As a means of documenting these interactions, I transcribed and analyzed melodies, rhythms and rapped lyrics, and I also documented the modes of communication I witnessed. I noted things like the number of people, degree of repetition and participation, and overall aesthetic atmosphere.

Bodily engagement via dancing along with the grooves seemed to me to be a crucial means of understanding how the interplay between aesthetics and politics took place musically, and it allowed me to feel the bodily pleasures of specific grooves and rhythms just like the rest of the participating audience. Following James Clifford, the body can serve as a crucial medium for producing knowledge through participant observation, and dancing was practically a precondition for discussing the politics of Cuban grooves.⁴⁰ In my analysis I relied upon sets of field notes from those musical moments at the two concerts that best described the complex relationship between aesthetics and politics in practice. In the process of carrying out my analysis, as well, I refracted all of those field notes through the aforementioned theoretical lenses.

Analyzing the Politics of Interactivo's music

Singing politics: "Ay Obama come and get crazy in Havana"

As one Cuban academic said while discussing musical censorship in Cuba, "You have to be careful and play the game here. You can't voice too harsh of a critique, because then you will be censored by the authorities".⁴¹ Likewise, Carcasses, the bandleader in Interactivo, and his peers had all experienced songs being censored or criticized in the official newspaper (*Granma*). For one thing, all albums and songs released in Cuba have to pass through "The House of the Author" (*Casa del autor*), an institution supposedly dedicated to preserving copyright privileges for musicians. In practice, however, officials at *Casa del autor* decide whether the lyrics in question express potentially contra-revolutionary values. Many songs and recordings do not make it through this revolutionary filter, which in turn forces musicians to exercise a type of self-censorship. On the one hand, creating music featuring socio-political commentary has the potential of generating a big hit, because it can reflect a shared frustration about revolutionary control over all aspects of society. Socio-political critique, in other words, represents a narrative with which young people can identify. On the other hand, this content can also cause problems for the musicians with the authorities.

As a solution to the obstacles posed by revolutionary authorities through institutions such as *Casa del Autor*, many musicians use the live scene as a space for so-

39 Sometimes the doorman did not allow me to bring in the camera.

40 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 24.

41 Personal conversation in Havana, autumn 2010.

cio-political commentary, since this is harder to suppress. The following extract from my participant observation of Interactivo's concert at *Teatro Bertolt Brecht* in Havana, December 2010, can serve as an example:

"After an hour of intense grooves, dancing and enjoyment, the audience at Bertolt Brecht witnesses a guest artist entering the stage in the middle of a sweaty montuno groove. Hayla, the former lead singer of Bamboleo, enters the scene, grabs the microphone and start moving softly to the irresistible rhythms. After some vocal improvisations she elegantly interlocks with the 3-2 rumba clave that provides the rhythmic foundations, singing the words: "Ay-yyy Obam-a, get crazy and come to Havana!" [Ay-yyy Obam-a, vuelve te loco ven pa la Habana!] Everybody sings along and calls Obama to join the party. Although the place is packed, people are able to move along with the groove while singing together. The melody is catchy and easy to sing along with because of its melodic design and rhythmic structure. After starting on the fifth it moves diatonically downward, only interrupted by movements of a third between the first and the third scale degree in D major [see transcription below]. The alternation between syncopations and on-beats in its rhythmic structure induces a fitting ragged feeling to the melody and allows it to elegantly fit into its dense accompanying groove [...] After the concert ends, many people keep on singing the refrain, calling Obama while they walk around in Vedado and continue the party, myself included [...] In the following Interactivo concerts over the next few days, the Obama-phrase is sung several times during different montunos. The Obama-coro has become integrated in Interactivo's live performance, and their audiences remember it. Every time, everybody sings along".⁴²

The figure displays two systems of musical notation. The first system is for the phrase "A - a - - ay O - ba - ma". It features a voice line on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody begins on the fifth line (A5), moves down stepwise to the second line (D4), and then to the first line (C4). The rhythm is characterized by syncopation, with notes often starting on the off-beat. Below the voice line is a clavé line on a single-staff percussion clef, showing the 3-2 rumba clave pattern. The second system is for the phrase "Vuel - ve te lo - co ven pa la Haba - na", starting at measure 5. The voice melody continues the downward motion, with some intervals of a third. The clavé line continues the 3-2 pattern.

Figure 1. Transcription of the Obama melody sung at the concert with clave rhythm below.

Obama's arrival as U.S. president after years with a Bush administration had given Cubans hope that the relationship between the two countries could improve. In contrast to his predecessor, Obama was popular among the Cubans, being black, liberal and Democrat. Still, Cubans were not allowed to express their political interest in more collaboration with the Obama administration in the public media. A change of official

42 Field notes, Interactivo's concert at Teatro Bertolt Brecht, Havana, 8. December 2010.

enemy could weaken the legitimacy of the revolutionary project. This was probably why Fidel Castro started writing headline articles titled *Reflexiones del Fidel* in the official *Granma* newspaper in spring 2009, three years after leaving office. At a time when both Obama and Raul Castro were talking about re-establishing diplomatic relations,⁴³ Fidel Castro felt compelled to remind the Cuban people that the United States represented a tradition of evil imperialist capitalism. According to him, this was a threat to the Cuban nation, so the Obama administration should be kept at distance as well, though he did acknowledge that Obama was among the more likeable of the American presidents.⁴⁴ According to this view, the United States represented a necessary political antithesis to the revolutionary project that the Cuban government could not live without.

However, at 11 pm on 8 December 2010, a music-loving audience would express what were officially illegal political preferences by singing along to Hayla's melody at Interactivo's concert. Calling for Obama's presence during the montuno of a recorded song would probably not pass *la Casa del autor*. However, at the live concert, hundreds of Cubans did exactly that through acts of singing in unison, every fourth bar, for roughly twenty minutes. The Obama theme, which emerged out of an improvisation by a guest artist, then became part of Interactivo's concert repertoire and was sung at other times, by both band members and audiences, during late autumn 2010.

According to Arendt's theory, the call to Obama via an improvised melody situated in a dense groove is an example of how musical *actions* are expressed through techniques of *wooing*. The political argument for better U.S.–Cuban relations through the words "Obama, get crazy and come to Havana!" is made to *woo* people through catchy melodies and seductive grooves, allowing people to associate the text with aesthetic pleasure through the act of collective singing. The aesthetic experience of the political statement invests the words with communicative power, which in turn evokes Rancière's theoretical arguments as well. Calling for Obama's presence in today's Havana certainly increases the plurality of political opinion, thus shaping a musical *polis*.

During this same period, another political improvisation emerged as well, this time through rapping, during Interactivo's concerts at El Sauce, another thriving live scene in Havana.

Rapping for political change

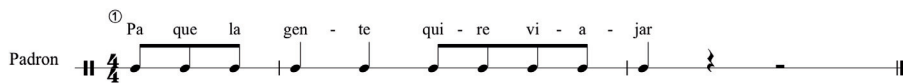
The following field notes from El Sauce can illustrate the power of musical critique through rapping:

"Interactivo gives their Wednesday concert at El Sauce, an outdoor concert venue in Havana. Between two and three hundred young people between 15 and 35 have filled the place. The audience dance and sing along to Interactivo's music [...] During one of the montuno vamps, trumpet player Julito Padrón suddenly puts down the trumpet and grabs the microphone. He starts rapping elegantly

43 Both Obama and Raul Castro repeatedly emphasized the need to sit down and talk and find a solution to the diplomatic problems between the two countries through various forms of media, including TV and the newspapers, in late 2008 and early 2009.

44 See *Reflexiones del Fidel* in *Granma*, pp. 1–3, between April and June 2009.

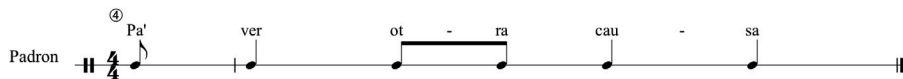
over the groove in an improvisational and syncopated manner, calling out the words: 'Why do the people want to travel?' (Pa'que la gente quiere viajar?)



The words are stretched over ten syllables in combinations of eighths and quarters spread over one bar. The phrase starts on the accents of the three last off-beats, 3&, 4 and 4&, and ends on a downbeat in the following bar. It is followed by a one-bar pause, allowing interlocking percussion, piano tumbaos and bass tumbaos to represent the audible center for the listeners, thus dragging the participants deeper into the groove experience. Just before the silent bar ends, Padrón continues his phrase by asking the two-syllable question 'For what?' (Pa' que?). The rapped question is followed by a related one, 'For what reason?' (Pa'que causa?), with the two last syllables on the beats:



Then suddenly the three questions are answered in the concluding phrase: 'To see something different!' (Pa' ver otra causa).



Through the end rhyme in Spanish—'Pa' que causa? Pa' ver otra causa!'—the rapped statement feels catchy, is easy to rap along with, and invites one to dance. Throughout the montuno Padrón continues to repeat these four phrases over a densely syncopated basic unit that makes up the repeating groove.

The audience reacts immediately to Padrón's rap with dance steps and enthusiasm. After some repetitions, the audience remembers the rap phrase as well and raps along over the groove. However, after the audience has rapped in unison with Padrón, he invites them into a call-and-response dialogue. First, Padrón starts the dialog by rapping: 'Why do the people want to travel?' He gives the microphone to the dancing audience. They respond in a rhetorical, almost ironic manner by rapping 'For what?', as if everybody knows why. Just one and a half beats later, Padrón takes back the microphone, responding 'For what reason?', returning attention to his initial question. Immediately the whole grooving crowd shouts back to Padrón: 'To see something else!' The call-and-response dialogue between the musicians and the audience keeps repeating throughout the concert, constantly fused by new syncopations and breaks in the rhythm section".⁴⁵

Through his improvised rapping, Padrón enables hundreds of Cubans to repeat a political call for the freedom to travel, which was forbidden by Cuban law at the time of the concert. In order to travel abroad, Cubans had to apply for a "permission to leave"

45 Field notes, Interactivo's concert at El Sauce, Havana, 23 November 2010.

(permiso de salida) issued by a state official and obtain an “invitation letter” (carta de invitación) from the country to be visited. Officially, this law was in place to prevent “brain-drain” (robo de cerebro), because many well-educated Cubans were extended economic incentives to travel abroad to work as doctors, engineers, and so forth. This is the shared cultural context that makes the rapped words so powerful.

Translated into Arendt’s political theory, this phrase can be considered an *action* through which people demand the right to travel. However, this musical action is not expressed through normal speech but through a process of *wooing*—that is, rapping in the context of an appealing groove that invites the audience to dance and interact socially. The wooing in this action invests the phrase with aesthetic power and encourages feelings of pleasure and engagement as it is repeated every fourth bar during the montuno. In a Rancierian sense, the rapped phrase is a critique of the police’s (that is, the Cuban government’s) restrictions on Cubans’ ability to travel; through an aesthetic act, the rapper calls for change in the political order of the police and expresses a real politics. However, since the described political action reaches the bodies of the listeners through techniques of *wooing*, it is important to look at exactly how the musical structures of the rapped text invest the phrase with its communicative power.

Wooing political actions through rhythmic structures

On a macro level the rhythmic structures that make up the wooing processes of the political action can be visualized as follows:

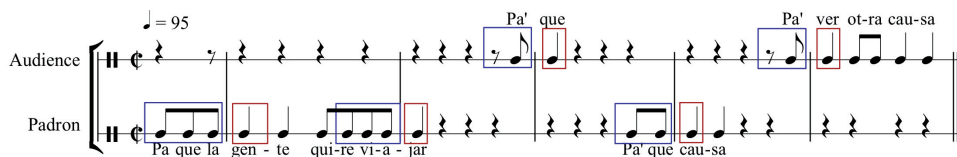


Figure 2. The repeating basic unit of the rap phrase over four bars.

Through this representation we see that the political statement consists of four related rapped motifs separated by smaller breaks. The added blue squares in each of the motifs illustrate how the articulation of the words starts on what Klette Boehler terms the accents of the ponches (Beat 3&, 4, 4&).⁴⁶ With this rhythmic design, the rapped words are firmly situated in a Cuban groove tradition that typically consists of accentuations on 3&, 4 and 4& in a la breve. More importantly, this rhythmic shaping places the rap perfectly within the syncopated, dense, polyrhythmic context in which it is performed, backed by percussion and piano and bass tumbaos, all of which are organized around ponches accentuations, and in particular the accentuations of beat 4 and 4&.

By also accentuating the first beat in the four motifs, as indicated by the red squares, the rap rhythm likewise evokes common phrasing patterns in hip-hop and funk, genres that also stress a combination of syncopations and heavy accents on the

46 Kjetil Klette Boehler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics in Salsa Cubana: The Musicality of Cuban Politics and the Politics of Salsa Cubana* (PhD Thesis, Oslo: University of Oslo, 2013), 43-44.

beats.⁴⁷ Another aspect that adds catchiness to the rapped words and makes them enjoyable is the call-and-response dialogue between the four motifs, as numbered here:

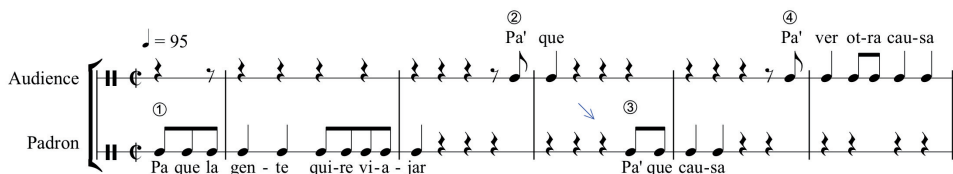


Figure 3. Representations of the rap through numbered motifs.

From this angle, motif 1 is the longest one, consisting of ten syllables stretching over roughly three bars. Motif 2 is a short, snappy phrase of only two syllables that can be considered a musical call, the response to which is the four-syllable motif 3, as illustrated by the blue arrow. The structural relationship between these two motifs, and the musical coherence this establishes, can be more clearly illustrated in a vertical representation that juxtaposes the two motifs:

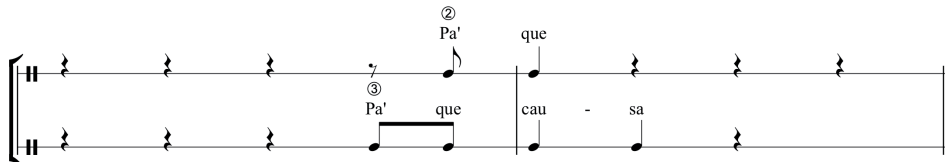


Figure 4. Vertical juxtaposition of motifs 3 and 4 to illustrate rhythmic similarities.

The vertical juxtaposition of these motifs illustrates their structural resemblance by showing how motif 3 is in fact a doubling of the tone duration in motif 1, both to the left and to the right. Then, in motif 4, the rhythmic syntax in motifs 1 and 3 is synthesized into a longer statement

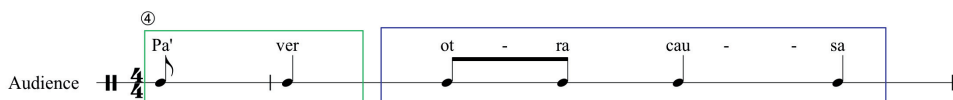


Figure 5. Motif 4, compared with motifs 2 and 3, identified by colored squares.

The green square shows that the first two syllables in motif 4 consist of the content of motif 2, while the blue square shows that the last four syllables in motif 4 resemble motif 3, although they start on a different beat. Through these rhythmic relationships, Padrón's rap communicates a sense of coherence. Referring back to Arendt's theory, the political statement's aesthetic configuration through rhythms is a musical example of "wooing the consent" through the groove.⁴⁸ These rhythmic features hint at how

47 Anne Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure: The funk grooves of James Brown and Parliament* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2006). Anne Danielsen Danielsen, *Musical Rhythm in the Age of Digital Reproduction* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010). Such combinations of on-beats and off-beats are also common in Cuban conga-songs such as the phrase "Aé, Ae, Aé" from the classic Conga song "La Chambelona".

48 Arendt in Behabib, Seyla. "Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian moment" in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, edited by Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesh, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012), 54.

Interactivo communicates with its audience and shares political statements with hundreds of dancing Cubans as they rap with the band in unison.

In order to fully grasp the political potential of Cuban popular dance music in light of Arendt and Rancière's perspectives, it is also important to discuss how people perceive this music as representative of the being-together of the Cuban people—that is, music's relationship to a common Cuban cultural identity.

Musical constructions of *cubanía*

"Cuban idiosyncrasy is everywhere in the music: in the social fabric of the music, in the specific rhythms, the ways in which we interpret it. It's like a general mode of musical perception that contributes to *cubanía*, the ways in which the audience in a split second interprets a piano tumbao by moving their hips [...] It's in every aspect".⁴⁹

Cuban musicologist Neris Gonzales Bello's response to the question "How is Cuban identity expressed in Cuban popular dance music?" encapsulates key features of how the music embodies *cubanía*, or a shared Cuban identity. Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz describes *cubanía*/cubanidad as the product of the multiple cultural influences that have shaped local practices on the island through ethnic intermingling.⁵⁰ Musically, *cubanía* comes to life in specific rhythms, dance steps, aesthetic flourishes and the overall collective experience of the music. As Gonzales Bello underscores, music is also closely tied to her conception of "la idiosincracia de Cuba", and she places Cuban music at the heart of the discourses, customs, preferences, practices and values that make up Cuban culture. Bello Gonzales thus evokes Rancière's theoretical arguments about the politics of aesthetics, by showing how Cuban popular music shapes values, communities, identities and ways of being together in Cuban culture. Her description also paraphrases Arendt's notion of the polis as the being-together of equal political citizens, in that Cuban music can bring forth participatory democracy by expressing shared Cuban culture.

David, an intellectual in Havana, elaborates on the relationship between Cuban cultural identity and music by defining *el Cubano* as musical by nature:

K: Here in Cuba people consume a lot of music. They spend a lot of time and money on music, going to concerts, buying music stereos and CDs, and listening to a lot of music, sometimes very loud, mainly Cuban music. Can you explain to me why that is so?⁵¹

49 Informal conversation with Bello, Vedado, Havana, 13 November 2010. **Bello:** "*la idiosincrasia de Cuba es omnipresente en la música: en el ámbito social de la música, los propios ritmos, la manera en que lo interpretamos. Es como una forma general de percibir la música que contribuye a la cubanía, la manera en que el público en un mini segundo interpreta un tumbao en el piano moviendo la cintura [...] esta en todo los aspectos*"

50 Ortiz, Fernando, *Los factores humanos de la cubanidad*. (Habana: Impreso por Molina y cia, 1991) first published in 1940.

51 **K:** *Aquí en Cuba, la gente consume mucha música. La gente usa mucho tiempo y dinero en música, ir a conciertos, comprando equipos de música y discos, y escuchando mucha música, a veces muy alto, principalmente música cubana. Podría explicarme porque es así?*

David: Because basically Cuba is the island of music. El Cubano is very musical [...] The internal harmony of el Cubano es "rítmica". Remember (*Fíjate*) that you can even see this in the way people are walking. They walk with rhythm. And for whatever reason, people here love music.⁵²

David, a connoisseur of Cuban culture and music, reproduces existing (tropical) stereotypes of Cuba as the island of music and of the importance of rhythms in everyday Cuban life. However, he does not mean this to sound reductive in a negative manner. David's notion of "el Cubano" simply personifies the aforementioned Cuban cultural characteristics as an imaginary ideal type. As descriptions of how Cuban music signifies within Cuban cultural practice, the notions of *cubanía*, *la idiosincracia de Cuba* and *el Cubano* reveal the linguistic tropes that allow people to map cultural identity onto musical sounds, thus implicitly locating political communities through music. More importantly, they demonstrate everyday Cubans' understanding of their own music as a source of cultural pride.

"In our music we want to define the big questions"

When discussing how contemporary Cuban dance music expresses Cuban identity, Interactivo bandleader and pianist Robertico Carcasses emphasizes that music should both express the beautiful parts of Cuban identity but also address the problems:

K: Can you talk about the lyrics in the songs of Interactivo? What are you communicating? What do they say?⁵³

Carcasses: A lot of social commentary [*cronica social*]. We want to describe the good as well as the bad things about Cuba. We want to participate in the bigger debates about Cuba in our time. And we express it with our music, which is a very strong medium of communication. In our music we want to define the big questions, like the concepts of being revolucionario, la revolución, socialista, capitalista, as well as criticizing stupid laws [...] such as the law that makes it difficult for many Cubans to travel [...] As artists we both have the possibility and the duty to shape the meanings for the young Cubans. We have to constantly define *cubanía* and our idiosyncrasy.⁵⁴

52 Informal conversation with David, Vedado, Havana, 24 February 2010. **David:** "Porque, básicamente, Cuba es la isla de la música. El Cubano es muy musical, [...] la armonía interna de el Cubano es 'rítmica'. Fíjate, que se puede ver eso hasta en la manera en que la gente caminan. La gente camina con ritmo. Y por cualquier razón, la gente aquí ama a la música."

53 **K:** "Podrías hablar sobre las letras de las canciones de Interactivo? Que están transmitiendo? Que quieren expresar?"

54 **Carcasses:** "Mucha crónica social. Queremos describir lo bueno y lo malo de Cuba. Queremos participar en los debates importantes sobre Cuba en nuestra época. Y lo expresamos con nuestra música, que es un medio de comunicación muy, muy fuerte. En nuestra música queremos definir preguntas importantes como el concepto de ser revolucionario, la revolución, socialista, capitalista, y también criticar las leyes que son absurdas [...] como la ley que dificulta que los Cubanos viajen [...] Como artistas tenemos la posibilidad y la responsabilidad de fomentar las ideas de los jóvenes cubanos. Tenemos que constantemente definir la *cubanía* y nuestra idiosincrasia."

K: Why is it so important for Cuban musicians to constantly define la Cubanía and Cuban idiosyncrasy?⁵⁵

Carcasses: Probably because it is still not done. Three million Cubans are living in all sorts of different countries [there are approximately 11 million people in Cuba]. They also belong to our idiosyncrasy. And we have big social problems. Still, cubanía, la Patria and our nation are yet to be defined. And now we are living in a crucial time, trying to find our own identity. We have to define what is Cuba, who we are, and mark the future. So in our music we communicate messages to shape meaning for the people.⁵⁶

As an artist Carcasses wants to participate in discussions about central revolutionary values. In light of Arendt's concept of *action*, his goals represent an example of how musical actions increase the space of political equality by allowing new voices into the debate. In a Rancierian sense, Carcasses musical actions contest the framework of political discussion set by the *police* (revolutionary authorities) and articulate real *politics* through aesthetic means, addressing "the good as well as the bad things about Cuba" (Carcasses). Through his music Carcasses thus seeks to create a new Cuban *polis* of "acting and speaking together"⁵⁷ by nuancing the notions of cubanía and patria to encompass the *actions* of the nearly three million Cubans who have migrated because of political or economic problems. Redefining the practices, preferences and values that make up cubanía, Carcasses aimed to expand the boundaries of the "the politics of the police"⁵⁸ and increasing political plurality.

From David's prior statement that Cuban popular dance music was indispensable to the Cuban people, it is also reasonable to believe that the music of Carcasses had some impact on the values and ideas of the Cuban people, and especially the younger ones. Art forms such as music, film, poetry and theater do play a role in shaping popular culture via socio-political critique—fed up with dogmatic, paternalistic revolutionary rhetoric, many younger Cubans dismiss the highly censored traditional media apparatus in favor of live performance scenes and direct and interactive communities like Teatro Bertold Brecht. As a former employee within the Cuban foreign ministry said: "If you write 10 percent of what they sing in *la música* in the newspaper or one of these media, they put you straight in jail. Here it's all very well controlled."⁵⁹ Though

55 **K:** "Porque es tan importante para los músicos Cubanos constantemente definir la Cubanía y la idiosincrasia de Cuba?"

56 Interview with Carcasses, Mariano, Havana, 20 November 2010. **Carcasses:** "Probablemente es porque todavía no esta hecho. 3 millones de Cubanos están viviendo en cualquier tipo de países (approximately 11 millions in Cuba). Ellos también pertenecen a nuestra idiosincrasia. Y tenemos grandes problemas sociales. Todavía, Cubanía, la Patria y nuestro país no están definido. Y ahora estamos viviendo en una época importante, tratando de buscar nuestra identidad. Tenemos que definir lo que es Cuba, quienes somos, y marcar el futuro. Entonces, en nuestra música comunicamos mensajes para fomentar los conceptos del pueblo."

57 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 158.

58 Jacques Rancière "Ten Thesis on Politics." *Theory & Event* 5 (2001), accessed June 27, 2014 <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jacques-Rancière/articles/ten-thesis-on-politics/>.

59 "Si escribes en el periódico u otros medios públicos 10 % de lo que cantan en la música, te meten directamente preso. Aquí todo es muy bien controlado"

this is an exaggeration, it is true that Cuban music and the arts are freer to voice socio-political commentary and can be considered aesthetic expressions of "politics" paraphrasing Rancière.

Improvising political critique on live TV

In September 2013 Interactivo was invited to perform during a big concert at Plaza Anti-Imperialista in honor of the five Cubans (Los Cinco Heroes) imprisoned in the United States.⁶⁰ The Plaza Anti-Imperialista is Cuba's biggest outdoor concert venue, and it is strategically placed in front of the U.S interest section⁶¹ as a political symbol for the revolutionary struggle and Cuban independence. This concert featured several popular Cuban bands and had thousands of people in the audience; it was also broadcast live on state-run Cuban TV. During Interactivo's performance, Carcasses started improvising melodic vocal lines (guías) in response to the main coro during the song "Cubanos Por el Mundo", which is among the most popular songs on Interactivo's recent album of the same name. The call-and-response sequence between the backing vocalists and Carcasses went like this:

(1) **Carcasses:** We want our brothers to come back home, and we want much more.

Coro: I want, remember that I always want . . .

(2) **Carcasses:** Free access to information, so that I can make up my own opinion.

Coro: I want, remember that I always want . . .

(3) **Carcasses:** I want to elect the president, through voting and not another way.

Coro: I want, remember that I always want . . .

(4) **Carcasses:** No military people, nor dissidents. All Cubans with the same rights.

Coro: I want, remember that I always want . . .

(5) **Carcasses:** That the blockade will end, and the auto-blockade also.⁶²

This improvisation disseminated a strong critique of the Cuban government to hundreds of thousands of people watching the concert live and on TV. Immediately after the concert, the state-run Instituto Cubano de la Musica suspended Roberto Carcasses from all musical and artistic activities in Cuba. As Interactivo wrote on its Facebook page:

60 According to the Cuban government are the five Cubans illegally imprisoned in the U.S, while the U.S convicted the Cubans on the basis of espionage and conspiracy.

61 After the break down of diplomatic relationships between Cuba and the U.S both countries are not allowed to have embassies in each others country both only interest section, which function as de facto embassies.

62 My translation. Original lyrics in Spanish are: "Carcasses: Queremos que regresen nuestros hermanos (los cuatro agentes) y queremos muchas cosas más. Coro: Quiero, recuerda que siempre quiero. Carcasses: Libre acceso al información, para tener yo mi propio opinión. Coro: Quiero, recuerda que siempre quiero. Carcasses: Yo quiero elegir al presidente, por voto directo y no por otra vía. Coro: Quiero, recuerda que siempre quiero. Carcasses: Ni militantes, ni disidentes, cubanos todos con los mismos derechos. Coro: Quiero, recuerda que siempre quiero. Carcasses: Que se acabe el bloqueo, y el autobloqueo".

"They invited us all to a reunion at Instituto Cubano de la Musica, where we were informed that Roberto will be 'separated from the sector.' In other words, he cannot play, alone or with Interactivo or any other state-affiliated group".⁶³

The Cuban cultural ministry argued that Carcasses had dishonored the revolution by expressing his harsh critique on live Cuban television at an event in honor of Los Cinco Heroes. Carcasses was called into a meeting with a cultural official to discuss these charges and refused to admit that he had dishonored the revolution. He then wrote an article that he posted online to announce that he was drawing upon the revolutionary spirit to address critical matters but was not arguing against the revolution:

"As much as I see the video and reread what I said, I do not see why my ideas do not conform to the line of the Cuban revolution, if we are trying to improve our system and if it takes courage to harm yourself by saying what you think [...] Perhaps I was wrong to expect that my words would provide an image of tolerance and evolution in the current Cuban government [...] I don't think that electing the president through voting would much affect our system—instead, it could give the people the chance to feel represented by the state on a higher level".⁶⁴

Two days after the publication of the article, one of Cuba's most famous musicians, Silvio Rodriguez, who is now a member of Cuba's national assembly and an important spokesman within Cuban cultural politics, openly criticized the way in which the Cuban government had banned Carcasses from all cultural activities. He also, however, criticized the singer's use of a patriotic event to perform a political critique.⁶⁵ Several other artists, both in Cuba and abroad, also demanded that the Cuban government lift the ban on Carcasses.

A few days later, on 18 September, Cuban cultural ministry officials and Silvio Rodriguez met with Roberto Carcasses to discuss everything, and the government decided to lift the ban on the artist. In the words of Silvio Rodriguez: "Authorities from the Cultural Ministry had a reunion today with Roberto Carcasses and the conversations were so positive that they decided to lift the sanction".⁶⁶ Interactivo and Carcasses promptly returned to giving concerts in Havana, as well as abroad.

From an Arendtian perspective, this incident includes several examples of *actions* disseminated musically through techniques of *wooing* that aim to increase the space of political debate in Cuba. In light of Rancière's theoretical arguments, the sung political critique contests "the politics of the police" and addresses "politics" through aesthetic means. The political improvisation illustrates how the aesthetic power of

63 My translation. Original text in Spanish is: "Nos citaron ayer a todos a una reunión al Instituto Cubano de la Música, donde se nos informó que Roberto queda "separado del sector" por tiempo indefinido. Quiere decir que no se puede presentar solo, ni con Interactivo, en ningún lugar estatal."

64 <http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=98832>

65 See, for example, http://www.diariodecuba.com/derechos-humanos/1379424616_5110.html?page=1, and Silvio Rodriguez's blog, http://www.diariodecuba.com/derechos-humanos/1379424616_5110.html?page=1

66 My translation. Original text in Spanish: "Autoridades del Ministerio de Cultura se reunieron hoy (martes) con Roberto Carcassés y las conversaciones fueron tan positivas que han decidido dejar sin efecto la sanción."

music can disseminate a political critique of a totalitarian one-party state to hundreds of thousands of people, thus playing out the participatory democracy that highlights Arendt and Rancière's arguments.

Taken together, the presented analyses illustrate the political potential of Cuban popular dance music as a medium to bring forth participatory democracy and increase the space of political discussion in a totalitarian regime. I will now summarize the findings of this article and respond to the questions presented in the introduction.

Conclusion:

In this article I have discussed how live performances of Cuban popular dance music create an aesthetic *polis* space, in which grooves and melodies increase participatory democracy by disseminating a plurality of opinions, values and preferences that are potentially critical of the totalitarian Cuban state. Inspired by Arendt's theoretical concepts of action, polis and wooing, and Rancière's notion of police versus politics and theory of the "politics of aesthetics", I showed how the aesthetic experience of Interactivo's live performances gives voice to the voiceless in a totalitarian state. I suggested that this musical politics is played out through the interplay of grooves, melodies and lyrics, which invites dancing and collective singing among the participating audience members. My findings expand upon Arendt's argument that political actions are expressed through acts of wooing in a musical context. In this way Interactivo's live concerts shape political consciousness through music. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with the leader of Interactivo, Robertico Carcasses, I showed how the musicians thought of their music as an important political expression; Carcasses notes, "As artists we have both the possibility and the duty to shape meanings for young Cubans". Drawing upon Rancière's broad notion of how the politics of aesthetics is played out through the making of communities and value production in aesthetic experience, I also showed how many informants conceived of Cuban music as an embodied representation of a shared Cuban culture; for my informants, Cuban music expressed practices, values and ways of being-together related to *cubanía*, or a common Cuban identity. Inspired by Rancière's distinction between politics and the politics of the police, I showed how Interactivo's music increased the space of opinions otherwise restricted by the Cuban state.

As one of the most powerful forms of communication within the arts, popular music has a political potential to bring people together in new ways and change the political order constructed by the police. More research on how popular music shapes participatory democracy in the making through songs, concerts, and its role in revolutionary movements and in the making of new socio-political groups would shed further light on the politics of popular music.

Abstracts

Drawing on ethnomusicological fieldwork and music analysis, this article discusses the ways in which live performances of contemporary Cuban popular dance music create an aesthetic *polis* space and increase participatory democracy by disseminating opinions, values and preferences critical to the Cuban state. Inspired by Arendt's theoretical concepts of *action*, *polis* and *wooing*, and Rancière's theory of the *politics of aesthetics*, the study shows how Interactivo's live concerts give a political voice to people commonly excluded from political discussions in the one-party state. The analysis suggests that this musical politics is played out through an interplay of grooves, melodies and lyrics that invites dancing and collective singing among members of the participating audience; it therefore illuminates how music can increase political plurality in today's Cuba.

Med utgangspunkt i teoretiske perspektiver fra Hanna Arendt og Jacques Rancière, og en kombinasjon av etnografisk og musikalsk analyse, diskuterer denne artikkelen hvordan live cubansk populærmusikk utvider rommet for politisk kritikk i dagens Cuba. Inspirert av Arendts teoretiske begreper *action*, *polis* og *wooing*, og Rancière's forståelse av the politics of aesthetics, viser jeg hvordan improvisasjon under konserter gir en politisk stemme til personer som er ekskludert fra offisielle politiske diskusjoner i den cubanske ett-parti staten. Analysen viser hvordan dette er uttrykt via samspillet mellom rytme, melodi og tekst i musikkerfaringer, og hvordan dette inviterer til dans og kollektiv allsang blant et deltagende publikum.

Political Music Censorship: Some Remarks on Nazi Music Regulations 1933-1945

How music is treated in a society is a relevant marker of how the space of individual freedom is defined. Texts dealing with what has been seen as the dangerous potential of music for society can be traced back a long time, with prominent examples since as early as Plato's *Republic*.¹ The imagination of the existence of "good" and "right" music in contrast to "bad" and "false" music has been used to construct a dichotomy between the *Self* and the *Other* in different historical periods.² This is particularly evident within the framework of dictatorships like National Socialism. In order to secure and affirm "the moral, spiritual and cultural superiority of the German nation", music and musicians were extensively exposed to control and censorship measures in the years 1933-1945.³

The present article focuses on political music censorship, which, historically, has often been linked to the institutionalisation of ideological, social, religious and aesthetic principles.⁴ More specifically, the present article deals with the Reich Department for Music Arrangements (*Reichsstelle für Musikbearbeitungen; RfM*), the music censorship institution established by the National Socialists after the beginning of World War II in 1940. The aim is to shed light on how political music censorship was discursively constructed and by which means music censorship was envisioned to support the Pan-German vision of the after-war future.

Political music censorship

Political music censorship is intertwined with various aspects of a systematized assertion of governmental or majority interests. The focus and reasons for censorship change

1 Plato (428-348 BC). *The Republic*, cf.: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm>

2 Theories of Otherness and Constructiveness provide relevant perspectives when dealing with questions of music and censorship. Cf. Annette Kreutziger-Herr (ed.), *Das Andere. Eine Spurensuche in der Musikgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 1998).

3 Erik Levi, "Music and National Socialism: The politicisation of criticism, composition and performance," in Brandon Taylor, and Wilfried van der Will (ed.), *The Nazification of Art* (Winchester, Hampshire: The Winchester Press, 1990), 159.

4 When taking a closer look at which songs, labels or concerts that have been censored, and the reasons for this censorship, since the 1960s, this linkage could even apply to contemporary music censorship, cf.: www.zensur-archiv.de/index.php?title=Musik.

over time and space, as does the music it is opposed to. However, as Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan point out, “censorship is a form of cultural protection and intended mass behavioral [sic] control”.⁵ Such attempts to control the masses by regulatory music measures have been made throughout history in many countries worldwide. If music is censored by means of institutionalisation within a legal framework, the censorship implementation is suitable for describing the cultural construction of the society’s legitimacy. It can therefore be relevant to focus on specific historical periods known for totalitarian structures that affected individuals’ possibilities of choice in everyday life to an extreme degree. As a politically extremist government that built on mythological and racial discourses of culturally superiority, the Nazi regime, which held power from 1933 to 1945, put specific focus on establishing ways to control artists and the arts in general.

Nazi music censorship

As Friedrich Geiger has shown in his comparative work on the persecution of composers, both the Nazi and the Stalinist regime were rooted in an aesthetic concept of dominion. The different art forms – music, poetry, literature, architecture and film – were referred to by Geiger as “assistant arts” in the construction of a political *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Music, with its potential to organise people into a collective mass, was seen as especially suitable for achieving this target,⁶ making this art form an especially important element in the political discourse and preservation of power. To support their attempt to establish an aestheticized political order, the National Socialists sought to build on historic references and to continue the 19th century’s functionalization of music. The intense debates on the political and societal tasks of music from the 1920s onwards also laid the groundwork for an expanded positioning of music at all levels for the period 1933–1945.⁷ On the one hand, music life – of a highly controlled and specific type – flourished under direct support from the Nazi regime, and expanded into many areas. Examples include the Hitler Youth music ceremonies, classical and choral music education and the Wagnerfestivals in Bayreuth. On the other hand, certain music and musicians were banned and discriminated against on ideological grounds. The construction of racial dichotomies was combined with aesthetic and cultural values, as well as stereotypes regarding artistic potential. The political propaganda constructed Jews and Jewishness as the utmost Other to be defeated. The examples presented in the present article of the implementation of political music censorship

5 Marie Korpe, Ole Reitov, and Martin Cloonan, “Music Censorship from Plato to the Present,” in Steven Brown, and Ulrik Volgsten (ed.), *Music and Manipulation. On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 240.

6 Friedrich Geiger, *Musik in zwei Diktaturen. Verfolgung von Komponisten unter Hitler und Stalin* (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004), 199.

7 Cf. Erik Levi, “The Censorship of Musical Modernism in Germany, 1918–1945,” in Beate Müller (ed.), *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 63–86; Ursula Geisler, “Med sången in i framtiden. Den tyska ungdomsmusikrörelsen och kris på 1920–1930-talen,” in Mats Arvidson, Ursula Geisler, and Kristofer Hansson (eds.), *Kris och kultur. Kulturvetenskapliga perspektiv på kunskap, estetik och historia* (Lund: Sekel, 2013), 69–86.

measures, which were undertaken in the context of *Gleichschaltung* ("enforced conformity") illuminate the dual strategies of cultural concessions and prohibitions. Special attention will be given to the elements of institutionalisation and language.

Institutionalisation

Although much has been written about the overall function of music in the racist ideology and propaganda of the National Socialists, little has been written about the concrete execution of the music censorship laws and principles that were enforced by specialized institutions under the leadership of the Reich Propaganda Ministry (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*; RMVP).⁸

Nazi music censorship laws and orders were implemented both by the culture division (*Kulturabteilung*) and the music division (*Musikabteilung*) of the RMVP, as well as by the Reich Music Chamber (*Reichsmusikkammer*; RMK).⁹ Established in 1933, the RMK was conceptualized as a superior organisational structure for professional music life in Germany. From a structural standpoint, the RMK established specific offices for composers, musicians, concert life, music education, choir and folk music, music publishing, instrument makers and so on. These offices were placed at the centre of music control, and were connected as partners to working commissions, ministries, music organisations, and other associations within the Reich. However, although ambitious, the RMK could not keep up with this ambition in practice. The overall importance of the RMK as a tool for the control of musical life in Germany after 1933 was thus in-

- 8 To mention just a small number of influential references: Joseph Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Gütersloh, 1963); Fred K. Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt a.M., 1982); Hanns-Werner Heister, and Hans-Günther Klein, *Musik und Musikpolitik im faschistischen Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer), 1984; Pamela M. Potter, *Trends in German musicology 1918–1945: The effects of methodological, ideological, and institutional change on the writing of music history* (Yale University, 1991); Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the arts: Musicology and society from the Weimar Republic to the end of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven, 1998); Brunhilde Sonntag, Hans-Werner Boresch, and Detlef Gojowy (eds.), *Die dunkle Last. Musik und Nationalsozialismus* (Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft und Musiktheorie; 3) (Köln, 1999); Hans Grüss, Kolja Lessing, Marion Demuth, Frank Geissler, and Eckhard John (eds.), *Musik–Macht–Missbrauch* (Altenburg, 1999); Isolde von Foerster, Christoph Hust, and Christoph-Hellmut Mahling (eds.), *Musikforschung–Faschismus–Nationalsozialismus – Referate der Tagung Schloss Engers vom 8. bis 11. März 2000* (Mainz, 2001).
- 9 There are several scientific publications on National Socialism and the music of recent decades that focus on the RMK and other organisations that worked to institutionalise music: Günter Berghaus (ed.), *Fascism and theatre: Comparative studies on the aesthetics and politics of performance in Europe, 1925–1945* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1996). Hinrich Bergmeier, and Günter Katzenberger (ed.), *Kulturaustreibung. Die Einflußnahme des Nationalsozialismus auf Kunst und Kultur in Niedersachsen. Eine Dokumentation zur gleichnamigen Ausstellung* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1993); Hubert Kolland, "Trösterin – in Gleichschritt gebracht. Die Faschisierung des Musiklebens," in Staatliche Kunsthalle Berlin (ed.), *1933 – Wege zur Diktatur. Ergänzungsband* (Berlin, 1983), 137–167; Hanspeter Krellmann (ed.), *Wer war Richard Strauss? Neunzehn Antworten* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1999); Gert Holtmeyer (ed.), *Musikalische Erwachsenenbildung: Grundzüge–Entwicklungen–Perspektiven* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1989); Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Nina Okrassa, *Peter Raabe. Dirigent, Musikschriftsteller und Präsident der Reichsmusikkammer (1872–1945)* (Köln–Weimar–Berlin: Böhlau, 2004); Horst Weber (ed.), *Musik in der Emigration 1933–1945: Verfolgung–Vertreibung–Rückwirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1994).

tended, but not entirely achieved.¹⁰ Membership in the *RMK* was compulsory for all music professionals, and the organisation was headed by certain famous people who were highly regarded in the music industry, such as the composer Richard Strauss and the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler.

Along with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*) of 1933 and the Nuremberg laws (*Nürnberger Gesetze*) of 1935, this *RMK* membership requirement was used as a tool to discriminate against Jewish participation in musical life.

Music censorship legislation

In December 1937, Peter Raabe, the second director of the *RMK* after Richard Strauss, gave a new, very specific order on how to treat foreign music in Germany:

All foreign music that shall be distributed in Germany by music publishers must be submitted to the Music Inspecting Authority of the Reich Propaganda Ministry. It is prohibited to distribute sheet music that has been declared as unwanted by the Music Inspecting Authority.¹¹

This was the starting point for the establishment of the Reich Music Inspecting Authority (*Reichsmusikprüfstelle*; *RMP*) as a sub-division of the *RMK*. The *RMP* was charged with the task of 'not only studying foreign music, but also supervising German production and taking action against unwanted and harmful music'.¹²

The distribution of so-called 'unwanted' foreign musical scores was forbidden. The main task of the *RMP* was to keep an eye on performances and on the publication of music. For this purpose the *RMP* registered and examined all concert programs, and also required the examination of all planned publications – such as documents pertaining to musical education, biography, aesthetics, or theory. Additionally, the *RMP* was tasked with inspecting the scores that were to be distributed through German music publishers and dealers. As Alan Steinweis shows, this order was difficult to carry out, since the number of scores voluntarily submitted exceeded the authority's inspecting capacities. Since it was not possible to review all incoming material, the directive was subsequently modified to state that music publishers were only required to send in works that had been specifically requested by the Inspecting Authority.¹³

10 Cf. Martin Thrun, "Die Errichtung der Reichsmusikkammer," in Hanns-Werner Heister, and Hans-Günther Klein, *Musik und Musikpolitik im faschistischen Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1984), s. 81.

11 Original quote from Fred K. Prieberg, *Handbuch deutsche Musiker 1933-1945* (Auprès des Zombry, 2004), 5626: 'Alle ausländische Musik, die in Deutschland durch Musikalien-Verleger oder -Händler vertrieben werden soll, ist der Musikprüfstelle des Reichsministeriums für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda vorzulegen. Der Vertrieb von Noten, deren Verbreitung durch die Musikprüfstelle als unerwünscht erklärt wird, ist verboten'.

12 Original quote from Prieberg, 2219: 'die nicht nur ausländische Musik sichten wird, sondern auch die deutsche Produktion beobachtet und gegen unerwünschte und schädliche Musik einschreitet'.

13 Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: the Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 141.

In 1939 a new and more detailed decree was issued; this ruling gave particular attention to foreign music, which had become more and more popular, and which the authorities had difficulties controlling:

Generally prohibited is any music whose composers, lyricists, arrangers, or publishers are Jews or members of enemy states (England, Poland, Russia, France; Bizet-Carmen and Chopin are exceptions). American refrainsong is forbidden, since it sounds identical to English. Prohibited is hot- and swing music, both original and adaptations. Also prohibited is alien (*artfremd*) music in so far as it originates from Jews or Negroes, or tries to imitate negro music, as well as music with quotations from Jewish composers. All music that has been declared as unwanted by the Music Inspecting Authority (*Reichsmusikprüfstelle*) is included in the performance ban.¹⁴

In addition, one year before this 1939 decree, Joseph Goebbels had made a speech at the cultural-political demonstration in connection with the exhibition of so-called 'degenerate music' in 1938. In this speech, Goebbels had underlined that 'the German musical life has been definitely cleaned of the last traces of Jewish arrogance and domination' and that 'our classical masters again appear before the public in a pure and unadulterated form'. Bearing these two statements in mind, one might ask why it was so important to establish another censorship institution: the Reich Department for Music Arrangements (*Reichsstelle für Musikbearbeitungen*; *RfM*) in 1940.¹⁵

The Reich Department for Music Arrangements

The *RfM* was established for at least two reasons: to control the field of operetta and opera by adjusting older texts to current political demands, and to place orders for new dramatic works. As Pamela Potter and others have shown, the staff for implementing and executing the different demands of the *RfM*'s departments and divisions were often recruited from the former musicology departments of German universities. One main task was to legitimise the execution of music censorship.¹⁶ Music institu-

14 "Verfügung des Herrn Ministers für die Programmgestaltung des deutschen Musiklebens vom 2. September 1939". Original quote in Prieberg 2004, 2322: 'Grundsätzlich verboten sind Musiken, deren Komponisten, Textdichter, Bearbeiter und Verleger Juden oder Angehörige der Feindstaaten (England, Polen, Rußland, Frankreich. Ausnahmen: Bizet-Carmen, Chopin) sind. Amerikanischer Re-fraingesang ist, weil er mit dem Englischen gleichlautet, untersagt. Verboten sind hot- und swing-Musik im Original und in Nachahmungen. Verboten ist artfremde Musik soweit sie von Juden oder Negeren stammt oder Negermusik nachzuahmen versucht, desgleichen Musik mit Zitaten jüdischer Komponisten. Alle Musiken, die von der Reichsmusikprüfstelle für unerwünscht erklärt worden sind, fallen ebenfalls unter das Spielverbot'.

15 <http://www.nrw2000.de/ns/entartetemusik.htm#>, original: 'das deutsche musikalische Leben ist von den letzten Spuren jüdischer Anmaßung und Vorherrschaft endgültig gesäubert' and 'unsere klassischen Meister erscheinen vor der Öffentlichkeit wieder in reiner und unverfälschter Form'.

16 Pamela M. Potter, *Die deutsche der Künste. Musikwissenschaft und Gesellschaft von der Weimarer Republik bis zum Ende des Dritten Reichs* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2000); Erik Levi, "Music and National Socialism. The Politicisation of Criticism, Composition and Performance," in Brandon Taylor, and Wilfried van der Will (ed.), *The Nazification of Art* (Winchester, Hampshire: The Winchester Press, 1990), 158–182, 167.

tions established after 1933 provided different possibilities for making a career in the various music-controlling institutions of the regime. One prominent example is Hans Joachim Moser (1889-1967) who until 1933 served as the director of the Academy for Church and School Music (*Akademie für Kirchen- und Schulmusik*) in Berlin, during the time of the Weimar Republic. After being the target of much hostility from several supporters of the Nazi party he retired around 1933, and then later tried to regain entry into the regime's music-related organisations.¹⁷ He succeeded in 1940, when he was appointed the *Generalsekretär* ("General Secretary") for the *RfM*, which was under the direct control and authority of Joseph Goebbels and the *RMVP*. When Goebbels established the *RfM* in April 1940, World War II had already been going on for seven months and Norway was on the point of being occupied by the German *Wehrmacht* (the armed forces of the Third Reich). The *RfM* was commissioned—like the *Musikprüfstelle*—to ensure that the music repertoire upheld Nazi ideals regarding racial and social purity along with the National Socialist ideology.

The *RfM*'s main tasks were to commission new musical scores and productions and to adjust existing musical scores and textbooks to the ideological regulations of the Nazi regime. The revision of music, along with the revision of the lyrics of older operettas and operas, were important concrete working areas of the *RfM*, along with supporting the production of new music. Anselm Gerhard explains that Moser's task as General Secretary of the *RfM* was "systematically to 'de-Jewify' [*entjuden*] the texts of several Handel oratorios, as well as of all of Schumann's Heine Lieder, and thereby to contribute to the destruction of Jewish traditions [...]"¹⁸ Potter gives another example of the *RfM*'s modification specifications, referring to studies by Katja Roters and Werner Rackwitz¹⁹: "The most radical changes made to the Old Testament oratorios generally consisted of transforming biblical characters into anonymous heroes or completely transferring the setting of the action to a historical event that demonstrated Germanic heroism."²⁰

Another censorship measure concerned composers from the 19th Century, such as George Bizet (1838-1875). In November 1940 Ernst Hartmann wrote to Goebbels regarding his reported discovery of an unknown opera by the French composer Georges Bizet. The *RfM* took over the correspondence with Hartmann and requested more information about "Iwan le Terrible", which had been deposited at the Conservatoire Nationale in Paris by a friend of Bizet's. As late as April 1942, a contract was signed with Hartmann, for musical editing, and with Josef Wenter in Wien, for editing of the

17 Cf. Christine Fischer-Defoy, *Kunst Macht Politik: Die Nazifizierung der Kunst- und Musikhochschulen in Berlin* [Berlin, 1987].

18 Anselm Gerhard, "Musicology in the 'Third Reich': A Preliminary Report," *The Journal of Musicology* 18 (2001) 4: 517-543, 530.

19 Katja Roters, *Bearbeitungen von Händel-Oratorien im Dritten Reich* (Schriften des Händel-Hauses in Halle; 16) (Halle: Altenburg, 1999), 33-42; Werner Rackwitz, *Geschichte und Gegenwart der Hallischen Händel-Renaissance* (Schriften des Händelhauses in Halle; 1-2) (Halle: [Händel-Haus], 1977, 1979), 7-10.

20 Pamela M. Potter, "The Politicization of Handel and His Oratorios in the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the Early Years of the German Democratic Republic," *Musical Quarterly* 85 (2001) 2: 311-341, 334.

text. Excerpts from this correspondence provide many details about the censorship methods in use by the *RfM*.

In January 1943, Moser wrote to Wenter about how to adjust the opera libretto to the current political agenda:

Taking place in Kiev, with the 'Tsar of the Tartars', is politically not at all appropriate [...] For all of these reasons we propose to move the plot [...] to a very early but already Christian France; this would fit the kidnapping of woman, the procession, and the local musical colour. This could be, say, the western Franco-nian Merovingian Empire, or a legendary Aquitania in the 6th to 9th century. The Zircassians in Caucasia could be replaced by the Basques in the Pyrenees; instead of Moscow it could be 'Tours', or another 'appropriate' city; the Visigoths could be mentioned—the main focus would be on the renaming of the main characters; Olga could be transformed into the holy Oda, 'Renat' or 'Turpin' or something like that instead of Iwan, Marie could be replaced by an old-fashioned name [...] This operation would have some charm and advantages because of the fresh milieu, and it would – as I see it – at the moment even be politically desirable to show the, so to speak, 'Germanic-Romanian music culture' of what would later be Burgundian soil.²¹

This quotation gives a detailed demonstration of the methods of aesthetic-political music censorship used by the *RfM*. The main ways that music could be scrutinized and altered were spatially, temporally, nationally, and religiously. The naming and titles of key actors and objects could also be changed.

War utopias and realities

Due to the increasing pressure by the realities of the war, this project to re-cast the Bizet opera—which was to include a performance in German—was not completed before 1945.²²

The work of the *RfM* was seen as the last step in shaping the German music repertoire—although mainly its operas and oratorios—in line with a National Socialist im-

21 Moser to Wenter 29.1.1943, BA R55/20572, original: '[E]ine Verlegung nur nach Kiew als "Zar der Tartaren" ist politisch in keiner Weise hinlänglich [...] Aus all diesen Gründen schlagen wir vor, die Handlung [...] in ein sehr frühes (wegen Frauenraub), aber schon christliches (wegen der Prozession) Frankreich (wegen des musikalischen Lokalkolorits), also in das westfränkische Merowingerreich oder ein etwas sagenhaftes Aquitanien des 5.–8. Jahrhunderts zu verlegen. Statt der Zirkassier im Kaukasus könnten die Basken in den Pyrenäen stehen, statt Moskau "Tours" oder eine andere "einschlägige" Stadt, die Westgoten könnten erwähnt werden—hauptsächlich käme es auf die Umtaufung der Hauptpersonen an; Olga könnte die heilige Oda werden, statt Iwan "Renat", "Turpin" oder dergl., für Marie vielleicht auch einen als altertümlich empfundenen Namen [...] Reiz und Vorteil dieser Operation wäre zugleich die Unabgebrachtheit dieses Milieus, und es würde meines Erachtens sogar z. Zt. politisch ganz erwünscht sein, die sozusagen "germanisch-romanische Musikkultur" des später burgundischen Bodens zu zeigen'.

22 There is, however, evidence that Bizet's opera "Iwan der Schreckliche" was performed at a castle in Tübingen as early as 1946. *Kulturnachrichten* in the *Zeit-online* archive: <http://www.zeit.de/1946/33/kulturnachrichten> [20131205]. It would be interesting to know which version was performed at the Mühlingen castle and if there was any information on how exactly the work had come to Germany.

age of the future European musical landscape. Through a detailed editing process, the German musical repertoire was bowdlerized and adjusted to the newly formulated Pan-Germanic cultural needs. As the National Socialists foresaw an expansion of German borders through the conquest of new territories, there was an increasing demand to expand the future musical repertoire, in accordance with National Socialist ideals. In envisioning these future scenarios there was a more or less concrete definition of what kind of music should be at the core. Moser's (and through him, the Nazi regime's) musical ideals and visions were concretised in the first "yearbook of German music" which came into being under on-going war conditions, ten years after the 1933 *Machtergreifung*. The realities of the war at this time shine through Moser's report, not only in his indirect mention of on-going air bombardments by the Allies on German territory ("heute luftbedrohte Bezirke des Altreichs"), but also in his mentions of the new borders of the postponed so-called *Dritte Reich*, which was to have taken place after Germany won the war and was in the phase of recovering and restoring territory (*Aufbauzeit*). The work of the RfM was posited as being a decisive ingredient in what Moser called "caring peace planning" ("fürsorgliche Friedensplanung").²³ What was formulated as a pan-Germanic utopian narrative was betrayed by the harsh reality. By 1944 it became obvious that the preparation and material requirements for "total war" were so vast, and the concrete cultural production so limited, that all raw materials had to be dedicated to armament production. Moser was called to serve as a member on the *Orgelbeirat* ("Organ commission"), which decided which organs were least worthy and could therefore be melted down for war needs. Restrictions were also put in place for other materials and natural resources, such as paper for sheet music production.²⁴

Censorship and language

Language has obviously played a crucial role in the legislation and discourse of National Socialism. The Nazi regime's official language usage has also been characterised as a disturbed communication situation,²⁵ which gave rise to a National Socialistic language usage built on historical contexts and sources. In reality, there was no genuinely new Nazi language system, but rather strong linguistic references to former patterns, movements and trends, such as nationalism, *völkisch* socialism, Anti-Semitism, cultural pessimism (*Kulturpessimismus*) and racism.

The linguistic effects on music censorship were diverse, and incorporated the concrete establishment and usage of certain dichotomies outlining and defining the limits of accepted and desired versus condemned and forbidden music.

In Joseph Goebbels' speech on the "Reich Music Festival" (*Reichsmusiktage*) in Düsseldorf in 1938 he once again pointed to the regime's musical-political principles,

23 Moser 1943, 78.

24 Peters to Moser 10 July 1944, BA R55/20572.

25 Birgitta Almgren, *Germanistik und Nationalsozialismus: Affirmation, Konflikt und Protest. Traditionsfelder und zeitgebundene Wertung in Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft am Beispiel der Germanisch-Romanischen Monatsschrift 1929–1943* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1997), 34, 44f.

which were later enforced by subordinate authorities like the *RfM*. One of the ten principles sums up what was at the centre of music censorship:

Like any other art, music is derived from mysterious and profound forces, which are rooted in ethnic belonging [*Volkstum*] [...] Jewishness and German music are opposites, which by their nature stand in the starkest contradiction to each other. The fight against Jewishness in German music is therefore still today our major task, never to be revealed [...] ²⁶

This racially grounded argumentation was imbedded in a framework of aesthetical and national values. As Sponheuer points out "National Socialist ideas are not contained within individual concepts and ideological elements that can almost without exception be traced back to other sources, but within their specific arrangement and receptive embedding". ²⁷

In the quote above Goebbels states that there is a natural division between Jewishness and German music. Here "Jewishness" and the "German" are set in direct opposition, with the Other to be defeated and the Self to be protected. This racially grounded dividing principle was the central Nazi argument for the exclusion of Jewish musical life from German contemporary musical development. It had a profound negative effect on the possibilities for so-called "unwanted" persons to maintain their participation in everyday music culture. ²⁸

As shown above, musicologists like Moser were important for the formulation of the ideological goals of Nazi music regulation. In Moser's description of the starting point for the *RfM*, the main focus was the desire "to broaden the program of both serious and light German music scenes-in accordance with *Reich* interests [...] in order to encourage the valuable and to protect against commercialised productions and poor taste". ²⁹ In 1943 Moser summarized the preceding years of work in the field of music, with one of his articles in the *Jahrbuch der deutschen Musik* 1943 ("Yearbook of German Music 1943") entitled "Von der Steuerung des deutschen Musiklebens" ("About

26 Joseph Goebbels, "Zehn Grundsätze deutschen Musikschaffens," *Amtliche Mitteilungen der Reichsmusikkammer* 5 (1938) 11: 3, original: "Wie jede andere Kunst, so entspringt die Musik geheimnisvollen und tiefen Kräften, die im Volkstum verwurzelt sind [...] Judentum und deutsche Musik, das sind Gegensätze, die ihrer Natur nach in schroffstem Widerspruch zueinander stehen. Der Kampf gegen das Judentum in der deutschen Musik [...] ist deshalb heute noch unsere große, niemals preiszugebende Zeitaufgabe [...]"

27 Bernd Sponheuer, "The National Socialist Discussion on the 'German Quality' in Music," in Michael H. Kater, and Albrecht Riethmüller (ed.), *Music and Nazism. Art under Tyranny, 1933–1945* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003), 36.

28 Erik Levi, "Music and National Socialism. The Politicisation of Criticism, Composition and Performance," in Brandon Taylor, and Wilfried van der Will (ed.), *The Nazification of Art* (Winchester, Hampshire: The Winchester Press, 1990), 158–182, 167.

29 Hans Joachim Moser, "Von der Tätigkeit der Reichsstelle für Musikbearbeitungen," in Hellmuth von Hase (ed.), *Jahrbuch der deutschen Musik. Im Auftrage der Abteilung Musik des Reichsministeriums für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Leipzig and Berlin: Breitkopf and Härtel and Max Hesse Verlag, 1943), 78–82, 78, original: "den Spielplan der deutschen ernsten wie heiteren Musikbühnen in einer Richtung erweitert und bereichert zu sehen, die [...] treuhänderisch von Reichs wegen Wertvolles fördert und n u r Händlerisches, geschmacklich Anfechtbares verhindert."

the regulation of German musical life"). Moser's use of National Socialist language in describing the necessity of regulating music is evident in such statements as "the tasks of the totalitarian state are [...] largely determined: here, what is needed is less impulse, but more protection of the weak and guidance of the strong, so that the lurking subversive seeds will not gain any power".³⁰ Moser's use of the dichotomy of weak and strong to justify the necessity of regulating music exemplifies the use of language as a tool for discrimination; his combination of protection of the weak with guidance of the strong is completed by an organicist assertion about subversive seeds (*Zersetzung-skeime*) who lie in wait at every turn, ready to take advantage of any sustenance given to them. This kind of argumentation and language use had not been invented by the Nazis, but was sharpened and put into practice in the Nazi era. The Nazi use of language as a strong tool of discrimination was exemplified in music censorship, where language was mainly used to include and exclude specific music.

Nazi cultural revolution

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they envisioned a "cultural revolution" that would implement a national-racist ideal of German art and music on all societal levels. This message was disseminated through public channels such as the school and the broader education system; the Nazi party was also adept at manipulating public opinion through media such as radio and film, mainly through the cinemas and weekly news films. Art exhibitions were also conceived in order to guide public opinion and to emphasize the necessity and value of cultural-political censorship measures.

In July 1937 the exhibition "Degenerate Art" (*Entartete Kunst*) opened in Munich, showing 650 confiscated artworks from 32 museums³¹ and one year later the exhibition "Degenerate Music" (*Entartete Musik*) followed in connection with the regime's first "Reich Music Festival" (*Reichsmusiktag*) in Düsseldorf. This exhibition was shown in Weimar, Munich and Vienna that same year, and plans were made to schedule further exhibitions in the coming years. Ultimately, these plans were not carried out due to the outbreak of World War II.³²

The exhibition "Degenerate Music" was supplemented by sound examples that attendees could listen to on demand. This multimedia exhibition is one more example of the technical modernisation that accompanied the Nazi regime's striving for total control of the population through aesthetic means.

30 Hans Joachim Moser, "Von der Steuerung des deutschen Musiklebens," in Hellmuth von Hase (ed.), *Jahrbuch der deutschen Musik 1943. Im Auftrag der Abteilung Musik des Reichsministeriums für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Leipzig and Berlin: Breitkopf and Härtel and Max Hesse Verlag, 1943), 22, original: "Die Aufgaben des totalitären Staates sind [...] weitgehend bestimmt: hier tut weniger Impuls not als Schutz der Schwachen und Lenkung der Starken, damit die hier wie in allem Leben lauenden Zersetzungsskeime nirgends Macht gewinnen."

31 <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/nazi/kunst/entartet/>

32 Albrecht Dümmling, and Peter Girth, *Entartete Musik. Dokumentation und Kommentar* (Düsseldorf, 1988).

The auditory and visual conceptualisations of the public sphere were also intended to extend into people's private spaces. Radio for instance, which could be used as a direct propaganda channel to people's living rooms, was a platform for the distribution of both permitted and favoured music. Thus, radio music was the audible media counterpart to silenced and censored music.

What is the opposite of music censorship?

Political music censorship is a question of power relations and a consequence of the construction of music as powerful. Musical objects, subjects and expressions are defined and reinterpreted in the process of the establishment of music censorship in order to make them controllable and separable from accepted fields of music making and expression. Through the process of censorship, music becomes subordinate to laws and regulations unrelated to aesthetics. Although the tools for political music censorship vary, one common feature is the assumption of an almost fixed and absolute Self from which music is defined and censorship of the Other can be constructed as meaningful. This positioning of Self and Other often provides music censorship with a legal framework within which to operate, although this framework can vary greatly depending on location and historical period. Music censorship is seldom a sudden implementation of a totally new agenda, but rather, is dependent on a number of known and established criteria, which serve as the conditions on which the regulations and the concrete design of censorship legislation rest. Those criteria are themselves culturally constructed. For instance, general views on music and its function in a given society will affect attitudes towards music taboos, as well as a society's treatment of individual access to music production and reception. Relevant questions relating to this issue are: Who is allowed to be a musician, a composer, a musical actor, etc.? Which instruments and sound sources are accessible to whom? Who is commissioned with representing social interests, and are they politically motivated or independent? What narratives exist about the function of music in that society?

The Nazi construction of German music, which was drawn mostly from the classical repertoire, as well as from traditional folk music (*Volksmusik*), was considered desirable and given strong support by Nazi officials; it was hardly surprising that these two genres therefore dominated the radio repertoire. At the same time, programmes that included Nordic music ("Nordische Musik") also increased. The integration of Nordic music not only broadened the invisible borders of the imagined pan-German cultural nation, but also facilitated a concretisation of the racist and imaginary German affinity to Nordic culture.³³

33 Ursula Geisler, "...was an Musik des Nordens nur nordisch maskiert ist." Konstruktion und Rezeption 'nordischer' Musik im deutschsprachigen Musikdiskurs," in Frank-Michael Kirsch, and Birgitta Almgren (ed.), *Sprache und Politik im skandinavischen und deutschen Kontext 1933-1945* (Aalborg, 2003), 223-238; Ursula Geisler, "Herders 'Volksgeist' och Götiska förbundet," in Greger Andersson, and Ursula Geisler, *Myt och propaganda. Musiken i nazismens tjänst* (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2007), 25-45.

The question "What is the opposite of music censorship?" may at first glance sound somewhat naive or provocative; however, focusing on a question like this facilitates an understanding of the complexity of topics concerning censorship. It is not only a question of the music, musicians and other musical expressions that are not censored, but also of musical freedom and of what music is actively promoted and supported. Governmental support can influence the development of musical life in certain directions, and, together with censorship measures, can have a crucial effect on wide-ranging areas of the cultural landscape.

Researching music censorship

In order to study the topic of music censorship in the Nazi era, a broad range of secondary reference literature still needs to be supplemented with in-depth archival and library research. Relevant documents can be found in the German *Bundesarchiv* ("National Archive") in Berlin.³⁴ Some of the most relevant sources have also been collected and compiled by individual researchers; Fred K. Prieberg's *Handbuch deutscher Musiker 1933-1945*, for example, is one of the most extensive compilations of original sources on music and the Third Reich. Over more than 9000 pages Prieberg compiles an enormous number of original text excerpts and pieces of information on relevant persons, institutions, journals, etc.; this contribution represents an exceptional individual effort to shed light on what is often a consciously obscured period of music and politics. Prieberg's handbook has been published only in a digital format, making it easily searchable and therefore a valuable resource for research on both individual musicians and composers, as well as on larger topics like censorship.³⁵ Prieberg's private archive, "The Prieberg Archive", which totals about 50 metres of shelf space, was handed over to the Institute of Musical Science at the Christian Albrechts University in Kiel, where it can be consulted by researchers. Since 2005 the *Lexikon verfolgter Musiker und Musikerinnen der NS-Zeit* has collected and systematically published the bibliographical information of musicians, musicologists and others involved in the national music life who were discriminated against or forced to emigrate from Germany after 1933 (or from Austria after 1938). This ambitious reference project contains more than 4000 names, of which several hundred have already been supplemented with more detailed information regarding their biography, music production and publications. An outstanding bibliography completes this resource, providing a helpful introduction to searchable archives, reference literature and other relevant sources concerning persecuted musicians in Nazi Germany.³⁶ This kind of publication on music censorship, from the perspective of the personal consequences, is an important research contribution, complementing research that focuses on cultural violations by the perpetrators of censorship.

34 <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/benutzung/zeitbezug/nationalsozialismus/index.html.de>

35 Fred K. Prieberg, *Handbuch deutsche Musiker 1933-1945* (Auprès des Zombry, 2004).

36 www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de

Summary

Between 1933 and 1945, political music censorship in Germany was based on racial principles; so-called atonality and Jewishness were therefore the main targets of censorship activities. These censorship principles were built on music discourses from before 1933, using existing terminology such as Musical bolshevism, German music, and atonal music. Political music censorship carried out by specific institutions like the Reich Department of Music Arrangements (*RfM*) and the Reich Music Inspecting Authority (*RMP*) was thus not only limited to the sphere of musical scores or textbooks, but to all musical activities from “unwanted” (*unerwünscht*) persons.

For a better understanding of the systematically enforced music censorship in the Nazi era, one must remain aware of the embedding of music into the hierarchical political structures and institutions. Music underwent a crucial change during this time period, towards both an objectification and a symbolic transformation. This was paralleled by strategies of defining music and musicians in terms of Otherness as opposed to Germanness, in a racially and thus politically useful sense. Concrete music censorship activities were part of a racially grounded policy, which resulted in systematically enacted regulations. While Germany's reputation as a *Kulturnation* since the 19th century had been based on the use of music mainly as a representation of nationalised universalism, the National Socialist construction of cultural meaning employed music as a metaphor for genetic purity and superiority.

Abstracts

While Germany's reputation as a *Kulturnation* since the 19th century had been based on music as a representation of nationalised universalism, Nazism constructed music as a metaphor for genetic purity and superiority. Nazi music censorship was implemented both by the culture division (*Kulturabteilung*) and the music division (*Musikabteilung*) of the Reich Propaganda Ministry (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*; RMVP), as well as by the Reich Music Chamber (*Reichsmusikkammer*; RMK). The censorship examples presented here illuminate the dual Nazi strategy of cultural concessions and prohibitions.

Medan Tysklands reputation som *kulturnation* sedan 1800-talet byggde på musik som en representation för en nationaliserad universalism, konstruerade nazismen musik som en metafor för genetisk renhet och överlägsenhet. Det var både kulturavdelningen och musikavdelningen inom Riksministeriet för folkupplysning och propaganda samt Riksmusikkammaren som implementerade nationalsocialistisk musikkensur. De här presenterade censurexemplen belyser den dubbla strategin av nationalsocialistiskt medgivande och förbud.

Cultural Politics of Music Censorship in 'Post-Soviet' Finland

It has been argued that the existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from 1917 to 1991 was an extremely significant factor with respect to freedom of expression in Finland. This is allegedly so primarily because, especially in journalism, issues possibly not favourable to USSR were subjected to deliberate control or 'self-censorship'. In the 1970s, this state of affairs, as well as the more general situation where both foreign and internal policies of Finland were adjusted to either perceived or real Soviet interests, became known as Finlandisation. In later years, the term has in fact come to signify the "result of becoming obliged for economic reasons to favour (or refrain from opposing) the interests of [a neighbouring state] despite not being formally allied to it politically".¹

According to the topmost political authorities of 1970s Finland, however, to talk about any form of censorship was misleading to say the least. In the words of the longest-standing President of Finland, Urho Kaleva Kekkonen (1900–1986; in office 1956–1981):

discussion on 'self-censorship' is based on a poor knowledge of the position of our country [...]. In our country, freedom of speech prevails, and thus the State does not or cannot aim at restricting the printed word. [...] When the interests of the nation are at issue, this can be called political wisdom.²

Regardless of the choice of terminology, the abolition of the USSR on 26 December 1991 constitutes an important transitory moment, as the cultural regulation based on interpretations of foreign policy inevitably changed. In the words of sociologist Pasi Saukkonen, the collapse of the socialist system "erased the foreign-policy-related conditions of Finnish internal affairs."³ It should be remembered, however, that in the realm of non-verbal cultural expression the implications of foreign policy are more contested. Also, while Finland's geopolitical position has changed, in the early 2010s the country is still situated in the liminal and politically highly charged space between

1 *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed 12 February 2014. <http://www.oed.com>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 Quoted in Erkki Laatikainen, "Sananvapaus 1970-luvun Suomessa", in *Sensuuri ja sananvapaus Suomessa*, ed. Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomen sanomalehdistön historia -projekti, 1980), 170; my translation.

3 Pasi Saukkonen, *Erilaisuuksien Suomi. Vähemmistö- ja kotouttamispolitiikan vaihtoehdot*, (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2013), 27.

'east' and 'west', not least because the European Union has been demarked from Russia by Finland's eastern border since 1995. Thus the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of Finlandisation may not have disappeared entirely. Hence the provocative use of 'post-Soviet' in my title, albeit without any intention to downplay the actual post-Soviet circumstances or to arrogate the term for mere sensational purposes.

The obliteration of the Soviet Union coincides further with another major societal transition, namely the shift from 'monocultural' to 'multicultural' Finland.⁴ To begin with, as the Iron Curtain was demolished, the amount of Russian immigrants in Finland increased roughly tenfold, from five hundred annual arrivals in the late 1980s to 5515 in the year 1991. Since 1992, the annual amount of Russian migrants into Finland has been two thousand on average. The year 1991 represents a peak also with respect to the annual increase in the number of foreign citizens in Finland, and immigration from Somalia in particular.⁵ The latter number is significant in that it signals an unprecedented change in the national 'ethnic palette', which in turn has brought forth re-evaluations about xenophobia and outright racism in Finland. Closely associated with this is the debate over 'hate speech' and its implications for freedom of expression.⁶

Questions about 'hate speech' and its criminalisation as a form of ethnic agitation and incitement to violence demonstrate clearly that freedom of expression is not an absolute right. It may be stated in the *Constitution* of Finland that "[e]veryone has the freedom of expression" that "entails the right to express, disseminate and receive information, opinions and other communications without prior prevention by anyone",⁷ yet even this constitutional freedom is subjected to possible restrictions on the basis of child welfare in particular. Also, while the current legislation of Finland does not include the term 'censorship',⁸ thus implying there is no such thing in the country, there are several articles in the Criminal Code in particular that condition and restrict public enunciations. Moreover, it is precisely child welfare that forms the justification for the *Act on Audiovisual Programmes*, which in fact may be taken as the only instance of legal censorship in Finland, in the sense of official supervision and control of art and the press.⁹ One should note however that the Act, entered into force in its initial form on the first of January 2001, represented a shift from previewing to classification.¹⁰

Yet what is of particular significance here is that on the basis of the Act, it appears that music may constitute a major alleviating factor when considering possible censo-

4 Ibid., 27–30.

5 *Statistics Finland*, accessed 12 February 2014. http://www.stat.fi/tup/tilastotietokannat/index_en.html.

6 cf. Reeta Pöyhkäri, Paula Haara and Pentti Raittila, *Vihapuhe sananvapautta kaventamassa* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2013).

7 *The Constitution of Finland*, 11 June 1999, 12 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990731.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice.

8 *Finlex Data Bank*, accessed 12 February 2014. <http://www.finlex.fi>. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice & Edita, 2014.

9 cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

10 *Act on the Classification of Audiovisual Programmes*, 775/2000. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2000/en20000775.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

rial activities and mechanisms in twenty-first century Finland. The Act certainly carries the potential to subject certain musically unique audiovisual products to restrictions and even prohibition on the grounds of child welfare, but there is a pivotal music-related loophole in it. It is stipulated in the Act that if an audiovisual programme contains only music it is exempted from classification and labelling.¹¹ In the Act itself the types of programmes in question are not identified, but in the associated Government Bill, it is explicated that "for instance music videos as well as [...] movies that contain solely musical performances" belong to this category.¹² Thus the implication is that audiovisual programmes focussing solely on music are rarely if ever harmful for minors. Much has changed since the early 1970s, until which musical output on public service airwaves was subject to official inspection and possible bans on the basis of aesthetic quality and commercial, moral and political grounds.¹³

On the basis of these societal changes, then, it is my aim to investigate the ways in which the notion of censorship has changed in Finland in the context of music after the abolition of the Soviet Union. By emphasising the importance of the *notion* of censorship, rather than any normative definition of it, it is my intention to foreground the consequences of the usage of the notion as well as the meanings assigned to it – in other words, the *cultural politics of censorship*. An approach based on a normative definition would also be problematic since it would involve measuring any alleged act of censorship against the absence of the notion from the current legislation of the state, which does not recognise the term.¹⁴

Furthermore, censorship, as an activity inextricably embedded with power relations, is a form of political activity by definition. Thus it would make little sense to talk about politics of censorship. Yet this is what I aim at, in the most general of apprehensions, as the objective is to emphasise the power relations involved in the most mundane everyday practices. To be more precise, by incorporating the denominator 'cultural' here, I propose that alongside the official and otherwise authoritative definitions of censorship, it is also instructive to consider the "unsophisticated, or popular, apprehension of censorship"¹⁵ in all its variety of ways to make the notion meaningful. Simply put: all enunciations of censorship are real, and sometimes even correct in their own right; it is the usage of the notion, instead, that is more intriguing. In other words, what are we driving at when we are labelling something as censorship?

11 *Act on Audiovisual Programmes*, 17 June, 2011, 9 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2011/en20110710.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

12 *Eduskunta – valtiopäiväasiakirjat*, "Hallituksen esitys Eduskunnalle kuvaohjelmalainsäädännön uudistamiseksi," accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/vex3000.sh?TUN-NISTE=HE+190/2010>.

13 Raimo Salokangas, *Aikansa oloinen. Yleisradion historia, 2. osa, 1949–1996* (Helsinki: YLE, 1996), 98–103, 235–238.

14 *Finlex Data Bank*.

15 Helen Freshwater, "Towards a redefinition of censorship," in *Censorship & Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, ed. Beate Müller (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2004), 228.

Material and methodology

Certainly, the popular or unsophisticated apprehensions of censorship take myriad forms, as the notion can be operationalised in public and private discussions alike. It should also be noted that these discussions are not equal with each other in institutional terms. Here, the importance of journalism is paramount, for two reasons in particular: first, because in legal terms censorship is non-existent, it is the fourth estate that provides an institutional authority over the subject matter; and second, due to its role as a mass media practice by definition, journalism has the potential to reach and affect vast quantities of people. As the proverb goes, when it is in black and white, it is also true – or at least important. The mass media collection also accentuates the institutional dimensions of cultural politics involved here, both because of explicit aims to communicate with a large audience, and the self-regulatory practices and mechanisms that have been established to ensure the neutrality of the press. In Finland, a major organ in this respect is the Council for Mass Media, whose task “is to cultivate responsible freedom in regard to the mass media as well as provide support for good journalistic practice”.¹⁶

Therefore, I have produced my research material by probing into the digital archive of *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading newspaper in the country in terms of circulation, from 27 December 1991 (the day after the abolition of USSR) until 3 June 2013 (the day my subscription to the archive ended). The probe is based on a permutation of the following keywords (with their associated linguistic forms):

sensuur/sensur*/sensor*/ennakkosens*/itisesens**: covering all instances of (self-) censorship; and

musi/muusik**: covering all instances of music(ianship).

Certainly, a certain amount of relevant material has fallen through the cracks, because of exclusion of search terms such as ‘freedom of expression’ or ‘denial of performance’. But, as at the heart of the issue is the cultural politics of *censorship*, this is an obvious caveat.

As the result of the probe, a total number of 431 newspaper articles emerged. In many of these, however, the notion of censorship was not intimately connected to music. For instance, one might have an account of the UFA film production, with separate references to 1930s musical films and to the GDR censorship in the 1960s,¹⁷ a review of a theatrical play composed from Portuguese censors’ documents from the Facist era,¹⁸ or merely a listing of radio programmes that happen to include “musical memories from past years” and a feature on “The decades of the Finnish Broadcasting Company: From the shackles of censorship to a developing sound radio”.¹⁹ It should

16 *Julkisen sanan neuvosto*, “The Council for Mass Media – Basic Agreement”, accessed 15 September 2104. http://www.jsn.fi/en/Council_for_Mass_Media/basic-agreement/.

17 Matti Virtanen, “Metropoliksen, Dietrichin ja propaganda-filmien alkukoti,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 10, 1998.

18 Lauri Meri, “Kilpajuoksu saksien kanssa,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 23, 2012.

19 “ylen ykkönen...,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 5, 2001.

be also noted that due to the existence of only one sibilant, namely *s*, in the Finnish language in its written form, there was recurrent confusion between technological sensors and human censors. I have excluded the former from my material.

While it would be easy and maybe even tempting to discard the articles that deal with film-, theatre- and radio-related censorship as non-pertinent, such accounts point to the peculiarity of music as an object of censorship. Music censorship experts and activists Marie Korpe, Ole Reitov and Martin Cloonan remind us, on one hand, of antiquated ideas of music as a devilish cause for "sensual feelings of pleasure" that "lead unerringly to debauchery and thoughtlessness" which in turn creates a need of censorial control. On the other hand, they point to attacks against jazz, rock'n'roll, pop and rap where religious thought has been linked to racism and political agendas.²⁰ In both cases, significantly, ideological constructs were given an acoustic and thus a material existence through the aesthetics of music. It was the sound, rather than lyrics or demeanor, that constituted the grounds for censorship. In the contemporary situation, it appears that the only reason why a song could be banned because of aesthetic qualities, pertains to its volume – which of course means that the decision has to be made after the performance has begun.

As my material takes its physical form in written language and my aim is to unearth conceptualisations and contexts of usage of the notion of censorship, my analysis is based on approaches that are lumped together under the rubric 'discourse analysis'. While there is nowadays a multitude of strands of discourse analysis, I take my impetus from the foundational work in the field by philosopher Michel Foucault, who stresses the importance of 'a statement' as "[t]he atom of discourse", with its "distinct enunciative characteristics", that forms the basis for a particular "modality of existence". What is crucial here is that statements should not be conflated with sentences or any other strictly linguistic units, but instead considered as utterly relational, ideological and therefore irrevocably political occurrences; as a modality, a statement "allows [a group of signs] to be in relation with a domain of objects" and "to prescribe a definite position to any possible subject".²¹ In other words, statements are never neutral but always implicated in power relations that condition the formation of knowledge about a topic. And, as discourses are "made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined",²² they too are always already political constructs.

In terms of the actual analysis of the 431 *Helsingin Sanomat* articles, then, every printed occurrence of 'censorship', in all its variants, constitutes a statement. Next, these statements need to be collated with each other in order to be grouped together as expressions of a discourse. According to Foucault, this entails the description and study of "systems of dispersion", or, the regularities that interconnect "various strate-

20 Marie Korpe, Ole Reitov and Martin Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," in *Music and Manipulation. On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 242, 245–246.

21 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 80–81, 107.

22 Ibid., 117.

gic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes".²³ This again brings forth the political undertows of discourses.

Institutionalised discourses

In order to situate the *Helsingin Sanomat* material into the broader discursive field surrounding the notion of censorship, however, it is necessary also to juxtapose the material with more top-down, institutionalised discourses. There are three such domains in particular: legislation, activism and research. Regarding the first of these, one may note that the *Criminal Code of Finland* has a bearing on freedom of expression for instance in terms of ethnic agitation, incitement to war, public incitement to an offence, breach of the sanctity of religion, distribution of depictions of violence or sexual obscenity, public obscenity, dissemination of information violating personal privacy, and defamation.²⁴ In the words of the late professor of criminal justice Eero Backman, the pressure imposed by the Criminal Code on freedom of expression may be thought of as a form of "punitive censorship" that is conditioned by the broader societal context and therefore always subject to modification and manipulation.²⁵ Professor emeritus of public law Teuvo Pohjolainen, also emphasises the importance of criminalisation and penalties for freedom of expression. He further maintains that through retrospective supervision it is possible to restrict freedom of expression quite severely. Thus freedom of communication is not dependent on the system of supervision as such.²⁶

Activism that is related to issues of censorship is anti-censorship activism by default. In these circles, the crucial question may not concern the existence of censorship but instead the forms in which it manifests itself in different societal, cultural and historical contexts. Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan in fact emphasise the dynamics involved, between mass manipulation and humanitarian protection, and especially in relation to recent discussion over freedom of expression as opposed to various forms of hate speech.²⁷ There is however a curious tension in much of these activists' writing, as simultaneously with the idea of ever-present censorship there exists a drive towards defining what censorship 'really' is.

Definitions are a concern of scholarly research as well. According to Cloonan, who in fact is an academic by occupation, censorship should be understood as "the process by which an agent (or agents) attempts to, and/or succeeds in, significantly altering, and/or curtailing, the freedom of expression of another agent with a view to limit-

23 Ibid., 37.

24 *The Criminal Code of Finland*, 39/1889, ch. 11, 10 §; ch. 12, 2 §; ch. 17, 1, 10, 17–18 §; ch. 24, 8–10 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice.

25 Eero Backman, "Sensuuri ja painovapaus oikeudellisinä ilmiöinä," in *Suomen sanomalehdistön historia projektin julkaisuja n:o 17. Sensuuri ja sananvapaus Suomessa*, ed. Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomen sanomalehdistön historia -projekti, 1980), 107–108, 110.

26 Teuvo Pohjolainen, "Viestinnän oikeudellinen sääntely," in *Suomen mediamaisema*, ed. Kaarle Nordenstreng and Osmo A. Wiio (Helsinki: WSOY, 2001), 230.

27 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 258–259.

ing the likely audience for that expression.”²⁸ The definition is flexible enough, but that is also where the risks reside. To begin with, to define is to exert authority over conceptualisation and categorisations, immediately leading to questions over not only the justifications of the authority itself but also the relationship to other definitions and conceptualisations of censorship. Cloonan in fact explicitly writes that the above definition is *for him* – which inevitably raises questions about his purposes and why should his definition be considered as better or more correct than any other definition of censorship. Furthermore, flexibility opens the door for the possibility of conflation between censorship and virtually any form of regulation. Here, all qualitative and speculative criteria only increase ambiguity; in relation to Cloonan’s definition, one may ask for instance what constitutes a ‘significant’ alteration, or how can one ascertain who comprise the ‘likely’ audience for an expression in question. In the name of fairness, though, it should be noted that Cloonan does recognise the problematic nature of “a transhistorical definition of censorship”.²⁹ And, to complicate things further, one may note the emergence of so-called new censorship studies, whose proponents nurture a distinction between ‘regulatory’ and ‘constitutive’ or ‘structural’ censorship. One, if not the, central aspect of the former is what has become labelled ‘market censorship’ in the western, neo-liberal societies; at issue here is how state policies are under lobbying driven by commercial interests.³⁰

As a result of the juxtaposition, one can distinguish between at least four different discourses. I have decided to refer to these, in no particular order of importance and for reasons explained in more detail below, as discourses of distantiation, red rag, IPR censorship, and self-censorship. All the quotations from the research material are translated by me. Regarding the citations, in addition, as my aim is to point to general tendencies, I will not refer to every article in detail.

Distantiation

First, as evidenced by the non-existence of the whole notion of censorship in the current legislation of Finland, one can argue for a *temporal distantiation* in relation to the topic. In other words, censorship is constructed as something that does not exist anymore. While this particular form of distantiation is highly national in nature, a counterpoint is provided by a *spatial distantiation* – for example on the basis of accounts in which censorship of music is associated predominantly if not exclusively in more remote, and by implication, less civilised parts of the world. For instance, in the anthology *Shoot the Singer!*, translated also into Finnish,³¹ music censorship is associated primarily with Asia, Africa, the Middle-East and the Americas. There are two essays

28 Martin Cloonan, “Call That Censorship? Problems of Definition,” in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 15.

29 Ibid.

30 Müller 2004, 5; Martin Cloonan, “Popular Music Censorship in Africa: An Overview,” in *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*, ed. Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan (Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 6.

31 Marie Korpe, ed., *Ampukaa artisti! Musiikkisensuuri nykypäivänä* (Helsinki: Like, 2006).

focussing on Europe, though, one on Turkey³² and the other on France.³³ Yet in both cases, spatial distantiation is present implicitly, through issues pertaining to ethnic minorities, immigrants and multiculturalism. Thus censorship becomes conceptualised, however inadvertently, as a regulative mechanism that is directed to and maybe even needed in situations where a nations' 'own' cultural repository is supposedly challenged by 'foreign' peculiarities.

In my material, the discourses of both temporal and spatial distantiation are prevalent, and overwhelmingly so. Regarding the former, there are recurrent references for instance to Finland of the 1960s, with a particular emphasis on the bans dictated by YLE, the Finnish public service broadcasting company. Here, the notion of censorship is frequently conceived as a Finlandised form of self-censorship, as is the case also with coverage on the opera *Kaivos* ('The Mine'), composed by Einojuhani Rautavaara between 1957 and 1963, and 'finally' performed in live concert for the first time in 2010. The opera is based on the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, which according to the coverage caused the then Director of National Opera to suggest some changes to the libretto.³⁴ Also in a review of two rereleases of Finnish wartime propaganda songs, the post-war foreign relations with the Soviet Union are brought forth as the cause for original censorship and discrimination against their makers. Interestingly enough, there are passages in the review that imply that by post-Soviet standards too, anti-Soviet refrains such as 'aiming at the Russkies between the eyes' are "too rough".³⁵ Temporal distantiation goes sometimes hand in hand with the spatial dimension. For example in an obituary for country'n'western singer Kitty Wells it is mentioned that there were attempts to ban her song *It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels* in 1952 in the USA.³⁶ The same goes for a couple of accounts on Soviet rock, as well as for the total of nine articles where Giuseppe Verdi's works, most notably *Un ballo in maschera*, are at issue. Furthermore, in relation to more recent events, in one particular commentary on the political significance of popular music, the fate of the Russian activist group Pussy Riot is juxtaposed with explicit reference to censorship of punk rock in its early days. The writer also highlights the promotional value of turmoil by quoting the lyrics of a song by a nationally well-known rock band, Eppu Normaali ('Abe Normal'): "The more you raise hoo-ha, the more your children love me."³⁷

With respect to spatial distantiation in a more contemporary sense in general, there are recurrent references to countries such as Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia. On the basis of this, then, the implication is that censorship is an activity conducted predominantly by various 'Oriental' populations and especially within Mus-

32 Şanar Yurdatapan, "Turkki: sensuuri eilen ja tänään," in *Ampukaa artisti! Musiikkisensuuri nykypäivänä*, ed. Marie Korpe (Helsinki: Like, 2006), 233–241.

33 Daniel Brown, "Rap ja sensuuri Ranskassa," in *Ampukaa artisti! Musiikkisensuuri nykypäivänä*, ed. Marie Korpe (Helsinki: Like, 2006), 242–255.

34 Samuli Tiikkaja, "Einojuhani Rautavaaran epäonninen esikoisoppera esitetään vihdoin," *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 24, 2010.

35 Vesa Karonen, "Kenttäpostia. Sota-ajan aarteet," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 16, 2003.

36 Pertti Avola, "Kitty Wells säväytti esifeministisellä hitillä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 20, 2012.

37 Jyrki 'Njassa' Jantunen, "Rääväsuuta ei haluta Venäjälle," *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 20, 2012.

lim societies. There is however one curious incident over an interactive classical music radio show, where the absence of preselecting phone operators supposedly resulted in Swedish journalists becoming cautious about dealing with classical music in a humorous fashion in a live show: "In a meeting of Nordic radio people, the Danish and the Norwegians were excited about the programme, the Swedes disapproved. To embark upon a live broadcast without precensoring respondents feels, for some reason, too daring for classical music journalists."³⁸ Thus Finland emerges a less censorial country than Sweden.

Furthermore, as an extreme form of distantiation one may separate those instances where the argument is made, or the implication is, that censorship does not exist, or is not needed, in Finland. Regarding a non-profit, leftist radio channel operating on voluntary labour, it is maintained that:

Anarchy works. The channel has operated without disruption since 1988, and there has not been a need to censor anything. Not once has [the channel] got processed by the Council for Mass Media. Most discussion was raised by a feature on White Power music, broadcast in years past.³⁹

Likewise, in a reportage on a social-work-related rap project for pupils in a special school, rapper Steen1 who worked as an educator in the project, is quoted remarking that "[w]hen I originally heard of the project, I was worried that the fellas' texts will be censored. Luckily this has not happened". In the article, Steen1's own encounters with mass media regulation are mentioned too, not only in relation to the topics of his output but also due to his original stage name Steen Christensen, which is the real name of a Danish convict who killed two Finnish policemen in 1997.⁴⁰

In an article on a composing competition of new political songs in 1996, in turn, the instigator of the competition ponders his role especially in relation to the definition of a 'political song' and is quoted saying that he "decided not to become a censor of any kind." While this suggests a general anti-censorial stance with respect to contemporary Finland, in the article the competition is contrasted with the "Finnish governmental practice of an institution ordering critique from its subservients", thus suggesting that some form of censorial mechanisms do exist in the country. By that token, it might be also noted that the competition was not open but based on invitations sent by the instigator.⁴¹

Red rag

The quote emphasising the love for hoo-ha suggests that, in addition to various forms of spatiotemporal distantiation, it is possible to consider censorship as a kind of *red*

38 Milla von Konow, "Pajatso nauraa vakavalle musiikille," *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 26, 1995.

39 Sampsa Oinaala, "Lähiradiossa vallitsee vapaus," *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 26, 2011.

40 Panu Hietaneva, "Naulakallion pojat räppäävät elämästään," *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 27, 2006.

41 Miska Rantanen, "Työttömyys, läänien lakkauttamishanke ja harmaa talous uusien poliittisten laulujen aiheina," *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 31, 1996.

rag discourse. In this sense the C-word, as it were, incites a strong reaction and a pull towards the phenomenon. In other words, at issue is the ways in which the activity and the notion of censorship are connected to creating publicity, either intentionally or involuntarily. Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan for instance point to difficulties in analysing the financial effects of censorship in this respect, as some artists might even benefit from the curiosity stimulated by the media coverage of bans.⁴² The red rag discourse is intimately tied into the idea that there has been a gradual shift from first religious and then state censorship to something that may be called market censorship.⁴³ Here, however, the distinction between official 'censorial' intervention and commercial decision-making becomes blurred. On the other hand, the interrelations between business and the legal system, with respect to controlling freedom of expression, have long been recognised. According to Backman, freedom of press for instance, and in particular, needs to be understood as a combination of economic and democratic interests. In addition, by juxtaposing democratic parliamentarism with socialist regimes, he maintains that the former relies on economic power structures whereas the latter is grounded on state ownership.⁴⁴

Following German studies scholar Beate Müller, the notion of market censorship may be conceived as one dimension of a broader field of 'new censorship', constituted by different regulative and constitutive, or structural, manifestations as they are for instance inscribed in legislation or put to practice in different professional fields, such as mass communication. Müller, however, warns against over-employing the term in order to avoid confusion as well as "over-accentuating the similarities between professionalism and censorship".⁴⁵ This stance is echoed in my material in an interview, from 2001, of a major radio executive as he notes, first of all, that the music broadcast on one of the major public service radio channels is "accommodated to the average adult, domestic taste". Later, in relation to accusations of his censorial decisions especially in the 1980s, he juxtaposes censorship with "the application of a medium's decision-making procedures". Actual censorship, according to him, emerges only if a state official bans something.⁴⁶ This corresponds with Müller's definition of censorship proper as "an authoritarian control over what reaches the public sphere by someone other than the sender and the intended receiver of a message"; a control that "operates on the basis of official regulation (if not legislation), institutionalization, and administration of the control procedures in place".⁴⁷

In my material, however, the links between market forces and the notion of censorship are recurrent, while not very dominant. The links in question receive their most

42 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 247.

43 Sue Curry Jansen, *Censorship. The Knot That Binds Power and Knowledge*. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Cloonan, "Popular Music Censorship in Africa."

44 Eero Backman, "Sensuuri ja painovapaus oikeudellisina ilmiöinä," 109, 111.

45 Beate Müller, "Censorship and cultural regulation: mapping the territory," in *Censorship & Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, ed. Beate Müller (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2004), 5, 9–10.

46 Tapio Siikala quoted in Timo Hämäläinen, "Radio ei enää tuo yhteisiä elämyksiä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 23, 2001.

47 Müller, "Censorship and cultural regulation," 12.

explicit form in a reportage on a theatre festival in 1995 where a group of playwrights and directors discussed the future of the art form. In the text, the drive towards producing stage comedies and musical plays are equated with "economic censorship".⁴⁸ A momentous sidetrack here nevertheless is that music as an aesthetic practice accrues censorial potential itself, as it hinders the production of allegedly proper theatre.

The promotional value of restricted access, in turn, is openly acknowledged in accounts on the "raunchy music videos" by rapper Petri Nygård that were removed from YouTube. Because of this, the artist is mentioned being "the most sought-after domestic public figure in [...] Google."⁴⁹ In a follow-up feature to this, he himself is quoted saying thus:

The Internet has always been my medium, 'cos there's no other channel for my music [. . .] Radios complain that this is too obscene and horrible to be played, and there ain't even a decent music channel on television in Finland [;] music is there mostly at a time of day when nobody is watching. Otherwise it's just reality and whatever shit they're broadcasting. This situation partly forces you there, into the net. [...] Sure it's always more interesting, like what the fuck they have in there, if a video has been censored [.]⁵⁰

A somewhat different take on the issue is provided by two articles on rock music, one dealing with the ways in which rock journalism is dependent on topics that are allegedly forbidden by record companies' marketing departments, and the other how the idea of censorship is utilised in the construction of romantic rock values especially in terms of authenticity. In the former, the constraints and prohibitions posed by the record companies are associated with attempts to build "a rock star cult", supported by an anecdote from an interview session with Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders: "the PR person listed forbidden topics to us, divorce and some others. In the interview, before we had time to say anything, Hynde started to talk about her divorce".⁵¹ In the latter, in turn, it is maintained that "[a]ccording to the orthodox rock myth, one must live on the edge, be decadent and an outsider – and preferably misunderstood and censored by the establishment".⁵²

A peculiar case implicated in the red rag discourse with its intimate association with the mass communication context, is constituted by a debate over one particular music video, namely *Mikan faijan BMW* ('Mike's Father's BMW') by artist Anssi Kela. On 9 February 2001 it was reported that the Telecommunications Administration Centre of Finland had suggested that the video be removed from the rotation of a music matinee on television, because of a visible suicide note and on the grounds of child welfare. The very next day, however, a TAC official denied all involvement and interest in the case – and it was revealed the same day that the decision not to air

48 Hannu Harju, "Pöytälaatikoiden helmet ja markkinavoimien möröt," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 24, 1995.

49 Jyrki Räikkä, "Petri Nygård nousi rivoiksilla Google-kärkeen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 8, 2010.

50 Jarkko Jokelainen, "Suomen etsityin mies," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 11, 2010.

51 Noora Mattila, "Sitten kun levy on kaupoissa," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 13, 2010.

52 Vesa Sirén, "Kurt Weil on rocktähtien suosikki," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 25, 1996.

the video had in fact been made by the editorial team of the television programme in question.⁵³

IPR issues

Closely linked to the notion of market censorship, and fuelled by the discussion over the so-called digital revolution in particular, is the debate over the impact of digital technology and the challenges it has posed to the management of intellectual property rights (IPR). Here, a pivotal point of reference is constituted by the *Copyright Act*, most recently revised in Finland in 2010 to meet the technological changes. Regardless of technology, however, but within certain limitations, "copyright shall provide the exclusive right to control a work by reproducing it and by making it available to the public, in the original form or in an altered form, in translation or in adaptation, in another literary or artistic form, or by any other technique."⁵⁴ It has been nevertheless pointed out by numerous scholars and cultural commentators that copyright legislation in general serves the interests of music publishing industry rather than individual artists. Swedish scholars Ulrik Volgsten and Yngve Åkerberg for instance maintain that copyright may in fact be interpreted as "an infringement on the democratic right to use one's symbolic environment in free expression", especially if, and when, it "is used to prohibit musical reuse on economic, rather than moral, grounds".⁵⁵ Therefore, it is possible to talk about a discourse that centres on the notion of *IPR censorship*.

It probably comes as a surprise to no-one that the number of accounts pertaining to IPR censorship is highly biased, in quantitative terms, towards the last couple of years of the survey period; against six articles published between 2009 and 2012 there is only one other, from 1997. A distinctive feature in all the six more recent articles is, undoubtedly equally unsurprisingly, that they are in some way or another associated with cultural piracy and what is often explicitly labelled as 'internet censorship'. In other words, there is a rather constant juxtaposition of opinions originating from within various strands of cultural industries, against arguments centring on freedom of expression from the end-user's stance. Another peculiar characteristic in these six articles is that while music as a specific form of cultural expression was not always, if not very often at all, at the heart of the matter, there was always a reference made to downloading music. Also, when there were proponents of cultural industries interviewed, they represented the music industry.

A telling example is constituted by an account on the demand posed by the music producers' association to one telephone operator to block access to the Pirate Bay website in 2011. In the article, Vice President of the Pirate Party is mentioned saying

53 "Jyrki poisti itsemurhasta viestivän videon televisiosta," *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 9, 2001; "Telehallintokeskus ei sensuroinut videoita," *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 10, 2001.

54 *Copyright Act*, 404/1961, 2 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1961/en19610404.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

55 Ulrik Volgsten and Yngve Åkerberg, "Copyright, Music, and Morals. Artistic Expression and the Public Sphere," in *Music and Manipulation. On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 350.

that to block Pirate Bay would constitute censorship; as a response to this, a representative of the music producers is quoted deeming such arguments naïve and maintaining that "[t]his has nothing to do with censorship; instead at issue is an intention to prevent an egregious infringement of copyrights".⁵⁶ Another example, although with somewhat broader cultural and societal implications, concerns the introduction of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement for the European Union to ratify in 2012. In the article, it is mentioned that Finland is less suspicious towards the agreement, whereas in comparison Germany, Poland and Holland are dubious towards it. Thus the implication is that Finland is more strongly governed and manipulated by copyright associations than some other European countries.⁵⁷

Self-censorship

The notion of self-censorship is a particularly delicate topic to touch upon in the context of Finland, due to the alleged period of Finlandisation during the Cold War. This adds a new layer to Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan's remark that self-censorship can take the form of a "voluntary ban" in some situations and, at times, for "purely emotional (and perhaps even irrational) reasons".⁵⁸ It should be noted though that the importance of socio-political surroundings with respect to self-censorship has been recognised. In the words of Mike Jones, at issue is in fact "perhaps the most disturbing and pernicious" form of censorship.⁵⁹ Yet for instance in Jones's case, self-censorship takes place because of local or domestic disturbances, whereas the notion of Finlandisation rests on foreign relations – which is probably why it apparently is so troublesome for many a Finn, as it at least potentially poses a challenge to the integrity of national identity.

In my material the notion of self-censorship is not very often directly linked to the national past burdened by Finlandisation. In an album review from 1999, one particular and ostensibly eccentric musician is characterised as "at best [...] a verbalist, but this is seldom understood in this country of novelists, self-censorship and police".⁶⁰ The notion of self-censorship is linked to the cultural climate of the mid-1960s also in an interview of a leading member of the so-called new song movement of those days, though with a reference to the restrictions concerning covert advertising in public service radio at the time.⁶¹ Here, then, self-censorship is equated with conscious market-oriented decisions over what to include in the lyrics. The implication also is that restrictions of covert advertising would be a phenomenon of the past. It may be that these kinds of restrictions are not so central within the public radio service anymore,

56 Teemu Luukka, "Musiikkituottajat vaatii Elisaa estämään pääsyn piraattisivustolle," *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 27, 2011.

57 Virve Kähkönen, "Miljoonat vastustavat piraattisopimusta," *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 29, 2012.

58 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 260.

59 Mike Jones, "Marxists in the Marketplace", in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 110.

60 Jukka Hauru, "Dave Lindholm: Valkoinen &. Ranka," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 18, 1999.

61 Jukka Yli-Lassila, "Vielä kerran 'Vessa, vesiposti ja Mononen...'," *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 19, 2003.

but they are enforced by the Council of Mass Media in Finland. Thus one might argue that it would be entirely possible to claim that similar pressures towards self-censorship in this sense exist even today. Yet through an explicit connection to the 1960s the Finlandised past is evoked.

As a counter-tendency of sorts, one may note that the emotional and possibly irrational aspects of self-censorship are present in many of the articles, especially as a hindrance for high-quality artistic expression. For instance, the work of conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen is reviewed as dismantling "modernistic self-censorship", which is also to distantiate censorial activities in temporal terms.⁶² The temporal dimension is also present in a review of a musical stage play, assessed as "the theatre event of the year 2010", in which "un-censored" expression "revives the faith in socially conscious theatre".⁶³ In a similar vein, there are references in the material to several music-oriented stage plays and musicals proper that include, according to the reviews in question, un-censored dance movements either in childlike or straightforward manner, or are unaffected by such (meta)physical constraints as "the censoring cortex"⁶⁴ or "censorship of feelings".⁶⁵ Moreover, in a feature on contemporary folk vocalist Anna-Kaisa Lienes, she is quoted saying in relation to her artistic doctoral studies that "I let my body work and I stopped self-censorship".⁶⁶ Furthermore, in an account of the television entertainment of the early 1990s, one particular comedy group is characterised as working "like a band. [...] People who know each other can throw jokes and ideas without censorship".⁶⁷ While the prefix 'self' is missing here, the connection to mental processes is explicit.

In all these cases, then, the stance towards self-censorship is one that emphasises the lack of any emotional or psychological, even subconscious, restrictions as the prerequisite of top-notch art. While there are no direct references to the Finlandised variant of self-censorship, one may wonder to what extent this 'artistic discourse' at hand constitutes an extension and continuation of the psychosocial trauma of Finlandisation, as it were.

Conclusion

While the different variations of the discourse of distantiation are clearly dominant in my material, the existence of other discourses on censorship suggest two things in particular. First, that various dimensions of censorship are continuously present, albeit possibly only dormant. This is also to recognise that censorship is a discursive formation in the widest sense of the term, or a *dispositif*, referring to the ways in which the discursive and the material are intimately interrelated and intertwined. In other

62 Jukka Isopuro, "Stokowskin jalanjäljissä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 3, 2007.

63 Maria Säkö, "Arvaamattomasta väkivallasta muodostuu teatteritapaus," *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 24, 2010.

64 Jussi Tossavainen, "Suuntana luova hulluus," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 17, 1998.

65 Hannu Harju, "Kun tunteiden sensuuri murtuu," *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 10, 1998.

66 Pirkko Kotirinta, "Lauluääni on kiinni luissa ja ytimissä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 17, 2005.

67 "Viihde lepää vanhan varassa, televisio varoo riskejä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 17, 1992.

words, at issue are, on one hand, concrete regulative mechanisms and practices with their equally concrete consequences, and, on the other, different ways to conceptualise, critique and justify the practices in question. The fact remains that the *Act of Audio-visual Programmes* does entail an element of pre-examination that corresponds to conventional notions of censorship to a considerable degree, yet there is not a single reference to the Act in my material. Instead, the instances worthy of the label 'censorship' are more contested in nature.

This leads directly to the second concluding point, namely that there is a constant struggle over who has the authority to define and use the notion of censorship. At this point in time in Finland at least, and maybe more widely in the so-called Western world, those who argue for its 'new' forms especially in relation to commercial and copyright-related forms tend to be dismissed as naïve and even being incorrect. Thus the circle is completed, as in this manner one returns to the confines of the discourse of distantiation. But, even in its most conventional and strictest comprehensions, censorship is not rendered obsolete or impossible in legal terms. Coming back to the *Constitution* of Finland, all "basic rights and liberties" are subject to restrictions under situations that "pose a serious threat to the nation", although within the limits of "international human rights obligations".⁶⁸ This, echoing Backman's words once more, suggests that "pre-censorship can be established in exceptional circumstances" and that in an societal crisis, "the face of pluralism accrues a different form".⁶⁹

While the *Constitution* is unabashedly nationalist in its formulation, the implication is that there always exists the possibility of circumstances in which to restrict freedom of expression is desirable and even necessary, in order to protect children and other groups. This leads back to the dynamics of censorship in terms of juxtaposing mass manipulation and humanitarian protection.⁷⁰ While wartime censorship has not been exercised in Finland for seven decades or so, one might speculate to what extent the financial crisis of the late noughties and early 2010s carries a similar potential of 'exceptional circumstances', due to the amplified stratification of societies in economic terms in particular. Add to this debates over multiculturalism, and one may argue that current circumstances are in fact acknowledged as exceptional to a certain level. While the Finnish legislation does not recognise the term 'hate speech', there have been incidents in which some prominent populist right-wing politicians have been sentenced to fines on the basis of ethnic agitation. Related to this is the emergent concern over literal threats expressed towards people who work with migrants or study multiculturalism and racism; reportedly, some of these people have become more cautious about their public performances, which in turn inevitably leads to less diversity in the public debate over the issue.⁷¹

With respect to music, the two very prominent topics in relation to multiculturalism, namely Islam and rap, are largely absent from the discussion on censorship that

68 *The Constitution of Finland*, 23 §.

69 Eero Backman, "Sensuuri ja painovapaus oikeudellisina ilmiöinä," 119.

70 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 258.

71 Pöyhtäri, Haara and Raittila, *Vihapuhe sananvapautta kaventamassa*, 133–142.

actually takes place in 'post-Soviet' Finland. Certainly, various Islamic regimes are condemned because of their censorial activities against music, also in its acoustic form; yet this is but another reiteration about the prevalence of the discourse of distantiation. In comparison, one might note that while not explicitly linked to the notion of censorship but rather to the idea of banning music, the most vocal proponents for exclusion of music from schools have been converts to fundamentalist Islam with non-migrant backgrounds.

Regarding rap, in turn, it might be noted that while it is not a frequent topic in my material, as a specific genre of music it is accrued with a distinct potential of containing features that, in conventional terms, may be censored. It would be equally easy to write about the tendency or even requirement to equate 'immigrant rap' with English rather than Finnish language, but this does not happen too often; instead, it is the Finnish-language obscenities by 'white' Finnish rappers that yield commentary on possible censorial mechanisms in action. But here again, one is faced with the apparent and quite reasonable juxtaposition of censorship proper and socio-cultural conventions as a form of regulation. The point is, however, and despite different interest groups, that both, or all, of these forms can, and more importantly, most certainly *will* be labelled as censorship in a suitable context. In this way, and in this sense, censorship can always be enacted and operationalised, even if in its most obscure and inhuman ways:

If the Wonderful Mandarin suite by Bartók [...] in Tampere-talo was, in its violence, X-rated, [a day later] at the Helsinki Music Centre the same was only PG. The reason being the move from unsophisticated acoustics to censoring acoustics.⁷²

As if, in the end, there is no human agency involved in the most fundamental ways of censorship – save for the minor detail of constructing the acoustic spaces in the first instance, and also that somebody really *needs* to put the notion of censorship to work.

72 Jukka Isopuro, "Tampere filharmonian näytön paikat," *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 8, 2012.

Abstracts

The article focusses on the use of the notion of censorship in the leading Finnish newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, after the abolition of the Soviet Union. Thus the intention is to foreground the cultural politics of censorship, ie. consequences of the usage of the notion as well as the meanings assigned to it. As a result of the analysis, four discourses emerge: distantiation, according to which censorship is something that is either temporally or spatially elsewhere; 'red rag', referring to the ways in which censorship is used to incite a strong reaction and a pull towards the phenomenon in question; IPR censorship that pertains to copyright-related regulative mechanisms; and self-censorship, especially with respect to artistic freedom of expression.

Artikeln fokuserar på användningen av termen censur i den ledande Finska dagbladet, *Helsingin Sanomat*, efter Sovjetunionens upplösning. Därigenom intentionen är att framhäva kulturpolitiska aspekter av censur: konsekvenser av termens användning och dess meningar. I analysen fyra diskurser kommer fram: distansering, enligt vilken censur händer någonstans annat antingen temporalt eller spatialt; 'rött skynke' som pekar på användningen av och tal om censur för att väcka intresse och dragning mot ett viss fenomen; IPR censur, dvs. upphovsrättliga regleringmekanismer; och självcensur, i synnerhet med anknytning till konstnärlig yttrandefrihet.

KRISTINE RINGSAGER

“It Ain’t Shit About the Music!”

Discussions on Freedom of Expression in Relation to Rap Music
in Social Work

Vignette: a bullet for Messerschmidt

In the summer of 2009 a social youth project working with production of rap music in a suburban socioeconomically disadvantaged area in Denmark was closed and a rap coach was fired, because of a song called “Messerschmidt Diss”, written by one of the under-age participants. When the lyrics of the song were printed as part of a newspaper article about the project, it ignited a debate in the Danish media, where the young rapper was accused of expressing death threats against the right-wing nationalist politician Morten Messerschmidt, a member of The Danish People’s Party. The lyrics causing the controversy were: “I’ve got a single bullet for Morten Messerschmidt / ‘cause he talks a lot of shit / he should come and suck my dick.”¹

The public debate regarding “Messerschmidt Diss” raised a series of critical questions regarding the widespread use of rap music as a resource in social work with youngsters, primarily ethnic minority boys – a creative, process-oriented form of social work, which had gained increasing support from the Danish Ministry of Integration, local municipalities and councils as well as various private organizations and foundations since the mid-2000s. The critical questions came from different positions and had various approaches to rap music as a social resource. Some voices asked whether rap music was an appropriate means to an end, when working with young people on the margins of society, describing rap as an “extreme” kind of music that “glorified violence and sexism”: No matter whether the death threat against Morten Messerschmidt was literal or an example of a violent metaphor, would it at least not be the rap coaches’ job to remove such expressions from the young rappers’ repertoire? Other voices interpreted the closing of the project and the dismissal of the rap coach – as well as the accusations against the young rapper (and later against the rap coach)² – as a moral panic: Couldn’t the young boy’s musical expression actually be understood as a means to process frustrations that he might otherwise have expressed in other – perhaps more physical – directions? Others again asked whether there was a point in taking such amateur-rap seriously at all.

1 My translation of the original Danish lyrics: “Jeg har en enkelt patron for Morten Messerschmidt / for han snakker masser shit / han sku’ kom’ og sut min pik” (“Messerschmidt Diss”).

2 During the debate the dismissed rap coach took responsibility for the lyrics. He recorded the rap song “Messerschmidt Diss” himself, and uploaded it on YouTube as a call out for freedom of expression (cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HANdZRGVneg>).

Introduction: contextualising "Messerschmidt Diss"

The case of "Messerschmidt Diss" and the closing of the rap school is an isolated incident. However, it echoed among the many project managers and rap coaches using rap music in social work all over Denmark, and led to a heightened awareness of the balance between the controlling and regulating aspects of an enlightening education on the one hand – and the act of giving the young rappers a free voice on the other. The case was also discussed at the social project, where I happened to be engaged as a vocal coach at the time. It was my work there, the meetings with the participants and the rap coaches, and the inside knowledge of the social work that initially stirred my interest for this topic, and eventually led to several years of field research in and around various projects using rap music production as a social resource.³

Social activism and education have been key components of hip hop since it was placed on the map as a vibrant subculture in New York in the 1970s. Focusing on overcoming the negative with the positive, one of the most famous of the hip hop pioneers, Afrika Bambaataa, founded the global organization Zulu Nation in order to empower kids and youngsters of the Bronx by use of aesthetic skills, political knowledge and awareness, thus mobilizing hip hop as a social movement and a tool for oppressed social groups.⁴ Since then hip hop – and rap music not least – has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identities all over the world.⁵

Because of the commodification of hip hop, critics have noted that hip hop and rap music have become sites of contestation with a corporate music industry, incredibly adept at redirecting hip hop's social energies away from critical expressions of struggle, protest, and resistance – and towards messages of materialism, greed, individualism and the depiction of stereotypical racial and sexual identities, tacitly accepting misogyny and male sexism as well as masculine aggression and violence. However, beyond such characterizations there is an emergent hip hop culture driven by socially engaged people who find that the music industry has sold hip hop out, and who struggle to hold on to and maintain the social transformative powers and political agencies of the cultural form.⁶ For these people rap and hip hop are not just artistic

3 Between 2010-2014 I have conducted participant observation among rap artists with ethnic minority background, primarily those with Middle Eastern background, focusing on the role that rap music has in the tension between inclusion and exclusion of ethnic minorities in Denmark. Among other things I have participated in social projects involving rap music production (some of which are now closed) and interviewed rap coaches, project managers and participants affiliated these. All the interviews were conducted in Danish, and the quoted statements in this article are my translations. Due to confidentiality of the under-age rappers participating in the projects, these – as well as the names of the projects – are rendered anonymous.

4 Jeff Chang, *Can't stop won't stop. A history of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin, 2005); David Toop, *Rap attack, No. 3. African rap to global hip hop* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000).

5 Tony Mitchell, "Introduction. Another Root – Hip-Hop outside the USA," in *Global Noice. Rap and Hip-Hop outside the USA*, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

6 Murray Forman, "'Hood Work: Hip-Hop, Youth Advocacy, and Model Citizenry," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 6 (2013), 252-253; Michael Viola and Brad J. Porfilio, "Hip-Hop(e): The Cultural Practice and Critical Pedagogy of International Hip-Hop," in *Hip-Hop(e): The Cultural Practice and Critical Pedagogy of International Hip-Hop*, ed. Brad J. Porfilio and Michael J. Viola (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2012), 5-6.

and creative expressions, but also practices that inform the articulation of collective political agency as well as the performance and communication of politicized subjectivities.⁷ The use of rap music as a social means in what Murray Forman refers to as "'Hood work'"⁸ evolving around educational and pro-social messaging for marginalized youths, is an example of this mobilized activism and community organizing.⁹

In Denmark, the institutionalized use of rap music as an after-school activity, locally based in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas with a high percentage of people with ethnic and religious minority backgrounds, has been increasing since the mid-2000s.¹⁰ Managed by well-educated and socioeconomically advantaged rappers or producers – or sometimes by people working with multicultural issues – in their 20s, 30s or 40s, this social work varies between one-man work in small studios, sometimes connected to local youth clubs, and greater associations with their own facilities and many employees. Generally speaking, empowerment emerges as the dominant discourse. But where some projects link empowerment to issues of self-esteem and individualized optimism, others align empowerment with more established practices of political communication and principles of community organizing, sometimes adopting the term "raptivism".

Despite various differences between the projects in terms of management and the approaches they apply, the fact that they receive public funding suggests that the production of rap music is thought of as an useful resource for creating powerful projects of inclusion and multiplicity. Both mission statements of the projects and the various internal documents that I have been granted access to during my research seem to reflect this official discourse on rap's usefulness, adapting language that highlights the personal, social and societal benefits of keeping the youth off the streets and empowering them through acknowledgement by means of cultural education within a subculture that they are already part of or related to. Moreover, it is emphasized how the participants are enabled, through the projects, to act as role models in and mouthpieces for their neighborhoods.

The increased public economic support for the use of rap music in social work can be understood within the context of Danish integration policy strategies during the recent decades. In this period – and not least after 9/11 and the Danish cartoon crisis

7 Andreana Clay, *The hip-hop generation fights back: Youth, activism, and post-civil rights politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

8 Forman, "'Hood Work: Hip-Hop, Youth Advocacy, and Model Citizenry," 245.

9 The present article focuses on the use of rap music in social after-school activities – and not rap music as part of school curricula. At the moment, however, there is a growing body of initiatives of so-called hip hop based education (HHBE) in Danish Schools. For further reading on HHBE in an American context, see Marc Lamount Hill, *Beats, rhymes, and classroom life: Hip-hop pedagogy and the politics of identity* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009) and Emery Petchauer, "Framing and reviewing hip-hop educational research," *Review of Educational Research* 79:2 (2009).

10 For an early sociological study on the use of rap music in social work in Denmark, see Sune Qvotrup Jensen and Kirsten Hviid, "Perkerrap, ghetstøj og socialt arbejde. Om gadekulturen og rapmusikens potentialer i socialt arbejde med 'vilde' unge," *Social Kritik* 89 (2003). For an ongoing socio-pedagogical practice study of the rap project Livsbanen, see for instance Lea Eckert Elkjær and Gry Tybjerg Holm, "I LIVSBANEN lever unge deres drømme ud," *Social Kritik* 134 (2013).

in 2005¹¹ – various notions of identity, belonging and everyday relations between the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities have marked the public debate.

Among other things, a “semantic density”¹² has been constructed around the category “immigrant” (as well as “foreigner”, “second-generation immigrant” and other entry-appellations), which has become almost synonymous with people of Muslim faith.¹³ At the same time, public representation of Middle Eastern people in Denmark has increasingly been linked to orientalist, stereotypical images of Muslims as personified symbols of terror, enemies or “radical others”.¹⁴ This link has created a symbolic and stereotypical polarity between “us”, the Danes, and “them”, the others, indicating that Muslim identity is inconsistent with a Danish identity.

Furthermore, it has induced a political relation between migration, integration and national security questions.¹⁵ One of the effects has been an ongoing process of securitization, where, among other things, a security dimension has been layered onto pre-existing concerns about integration, melding parallel concerns about immigration, crime and associations between Muslims and violence.¹⁶ The Danish state’s so-called “security/integration response”¹⁷ to the internationally significant events of 9/11 has led to several policies and legislations – e.g. administrative expulsion, temporarily legalizing body search without probable cause within certain urban areas, the abolishment of compulsory mother tongue education in schools, the introduction of a new citizenship examination etc.¹⁸ Furthermore, various pre-emptive measures and plans of action have been implemented. These include anti-radicalization programs, in which for instance so-called “front-line personnel of the welfare state” (such as teachers and social workers) are trained to prevent and take action against processes of religious radicalization and other potential threats.¹⁹

11 For further information about the Danish cartoon crisis, see Peter Hervik, “The Danish Muhammad Cartoon Conflict,” in *Current Themes in Imer Research, Number 13*. (Malmö: Malmö University, 2012).

12 Edwin Ardener, “Social Anthropology, Language and Reality,” in *Semantic Anthropology*, ed. David Parkin (London: Academic Press, 1982).

13 Kirsten Hastrup, *Kultur. Det Fleksible Fællesskab* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2007), 105.

14 Lasse Koefoed and Kirsten Simonsen, “Den fremmede”, *byen og nationen – om livet som etnisk minoritet* (Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag, 2010), 63-64.

15 Ulrik Pram Gad, “Muslimer som trussel. Identitet, sikkerhed og modforanstaltninger,” in *Islam og muslimer i Danmark. Religion, identitet og sikkerhed efter 11. september 2001*, ed. Marianne Holm Pedersen, and Mikkel Rytter (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2011), 76-77.

16 Erik Bleich, “Muslims and the State in the Post-9/11 West: Introduction,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35:3 (2009): 355.

17 Ibid.

18 Gad, “Muslimer som trussel. Identitet, sikkerhed og modforanstaltninger”; Marianne Holm Pedersen and Mikkel Rytter, “Islam og muslimer i Danmark. Udviklinger efter den 11. september 2001,” in *Islam og muslimer i Danmark. Religion, identitet og sikkerhed efter 11. september 2001*, ed. Marianne Holm Pedersen, and Mikkel Rytter (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2011); Marianne Holm Pedersen and Mikkel Rytter, “A decade of suspicion: Islam and Muslims in Denmark after 9/11,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2013).

19 Lene Kühle, “Radikalisering: Ekstremisme eller vækkelse? En undersøgelse af aarhusianske muslimers holdninger,” in *Islam og muslimer i Danmark. Religion, identitet og sikkerhed efter 11. september 2001*, ed. Marianne Holm Pedersen and Mikkel Rytter (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2011), 91-93.

These restricting political initiatives have had huge effects on the everyday lives of ethnic minorities, especially people with a Middle Eastern and/or Muslim background, who as a consequence of the securitization have become hyper-visible and subjected to scrutiny as problematic stereotyped others.²⁰ Thus, feelings of exclusion seem to have affected the positions and sense of belonging of people with a Middle Eastern appearance, not least the younger generation, who have almost no other experience than being cast as "the usual suspects".²¹ For some, such experiences lead to dis-sociation with Denmark and Danish identity.

Activating rap music as a tool through which these "usual suspects" are urged to express themselves – and where social workers (front-line personnel) in and around the musical production process itself can influence the youngsters positively – might be interpreted as a pre-emptive measure of socioeconomic interest for the Danish society and a way to mediate between the life worlds of these young people and the Danish society.

However, such use of rap as a social resource, exhibiting an obvious socioeconomic agenda, raises questions about freedom of expression as well as about conceptions of the capacity of rap music for reaching out to the target group. Based on material collected during my field research, the aim of this article is to examine how the socioeconomic goals of the projects assert influence on the musical expressions produced within the context of social work and to discuss how the rap coaches' different conceptions of rap music's usefulness affect the agencies available to the participants in the projects.

Rap as a mediator in the field of integration politics

According to Stuart Hall, identities – or identifications – are constructed within discursive practices as temporary attachments to the subject position. Thus, they are always the results of a successful articulation of the subject into the flow of the discourse.²² However, for many people with an ethnic minority background, the identification as Danish is not always successfully received within the discourse where it is articulated. Because of experiences of such unsuccessful articulations, many young people do not bother to identify themselves as Danes. As most of these youngsters are born or have grown up in Denmark, and only have a peripheral relation to their so-called country of origin, they live in a condition of what Homi Bhabha defines as "unhomeliness". An "unhomed" subject physically lives in a certain place, but figuratively he or she inhabits a space in-between, obstructing the subject's sense of belonging socially and culturally.²³

20 Iram Khawaja, "Blikkene. Muslimskhedens synlighed, kropslighed og forhandling," in *Islam og muslimer i Danmark. Religion, identitet og sikkerhed efter 11. september 2001*, ed. Marianne Holm Pedersen and Mikkel Rytter (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2011).

21 Pedersen and Rytter, "A decade of suspicion: Islam and Muslims in Denmark after 9/11," 16.

22 Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall, and Paul du Gay (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 6.

23 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2004), 13.

The self-identification as a "*perker*" (originally an ethnic slur in the Danish language) functioning as a reappropriation of otherness and a distancing to what is "Danish", seems to be a strategy for some young people to deal with feelings of exclusion and for trying to sustain a sense of agency in their lives.²⁴

In creating an identity as a "*perker*", hip hop and rap music seem to be important tools. The rap coach Zaki, who also works as a playwright and an actor, has described how ethnic minority youngsters according to him often strategically use rap in their identity work and as a response to the Danish integration policies:

We have to do certain things to be real foreigners, otherwise you are integrated, and then you are suddenly something totally different, then you are in some kind of vacuum, and then what the hell are you? You have said goodbye to your base, but you haven't really got any other country. Well, so you have to shave your head, wear street wear and listen to hip hop and rap. You can't for instance play rock music and have long hair.²⁵

Zaki's words exemplify John Street's argument, that music – in this specific case rap music – embodies political values and experiences, organizing our responses to society as political thought and action. Thus, the music is not just a vehicle for political expression, "it is that expression."²⁶ Following John Street's argument about music being at "the heart of political life,"²⁷ rap music may thus be seen as central to the political scene of integration.

It has often been suggested that hip hop and rap music have evolved as a kind of lingua franca among urban youngsters on a global scale, encompassing mobility of immigrant and refugee youth.²⁸ The origin of the aesthetic expression of hip hop and rap music among marginalized African-Americans in America's big cities, rap's claim to be on (and about) the street as well as a persistent image of the genre as the political mouthpiece of "the ghetto" seem to have led the way for the use of rap music among groups feeling marginalized in other contexts. In this sense hip hop appears as a counterculture, sometimes giving rise to explicit political resistance, sometimes just emphasizing an opposition to the established, the neat, the politically correct etc. – as does every counterculture.²⁹

According to Stuart Hall difference and otherness are of central importance in popular culture when seen as a field where struggle over meaning takes place. In this sense popular culture is "the arena of consent and resistance"³⁰ that opens onto a "politics

24 For a further discussion of the "*perker* identity", see Kristine Ringsager, "'I Wanna Be a Dark-Skinned Pork Roast' – and other stories about how 'dark' Danish rappers negotiate otherness in their marketing and music productions," *CyberOrient*, vol. 7, iss. 2 (2013).

25 Zaki, interviewed by author, June 18, 2012.

26 John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 1.

27 *Ibid.*, 22.

28 Forman, "'Hood Work: Hip-Hop, Youth Advocacy, and Model Citizenry", 249.

29 Mads Krogh and Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen, "Hiphop i Skandinavien," in *Hiphop i Skandinavien*, ed. Mads Krogh and Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2008), 11.

30 Stuart Hall, "Notes on deconstructing 'the popular'," in *Cultural theory and popular culture: A reader*, ed. John Storey (New York: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 1998), 453.

of representation".³¹ As such the field of hip hop and rap music is very much a venue where struggles over representation of ethnic minority boys take place. Here, social workers can influence the way these boys think of themselves and the way they choose to depict themselves musically by trying to influence their creative musical articulations.

Echoing such thought on representation, Tia DeNora has argued that music acts as a resource and progenitor of individual agency and thus also operates as a force for social ordering at the level of collectivities as well as that of individual behavior: in other words, as a mediator of social agency or social situations.³² In this context the rap coach Babak explains, how he experiences that (African-American) commercial rap music portraying the stereotypical outlaw "nigga" is often interpreted and reflected in relation to personal experiences by many young people with ethnic minority backgrounds, who live out the identity of "gangster" through the music:

No matter which ghetto you enter, the kids will put G after their names. Ahmed G, Muhammed G, Abdi G – everybody G. G for 'gangster'. It says a lot when for instance a 6-year-old says 'G' about himself, right? [...] Their identities are developed around the so-called rap culture stressing topics as 'I'm tough,' 'we shoot in the ghettos,' 50Cent lyrics and that stuff. Not that they'll do it because 50Cent says it, but the music you listen to, and what you identify with creates a kind of frame for your life.³³

It is important to emphasize that "music in itself 'makes nothing happen'," ³⁴ as DeNora suggests, and that it is the music in "specific contexts, as framed and consumed, that holds power 'over' its recipients."³⁵ Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan argue that both the context of individual and collective memories, and the concrete musical situation and its power relations are always crucial for the emotions produced by the music consuming individual.³⁶ When youngsters within the communities of ethnic minority groups listen to African-American commercial gangster-rap or produce and listen to what is often referred to as "*perker* rap"³⁷ the music accordingly is interpreted in the context of these people's personal experiences of living "in a society where you feel that your identity and your skin color are unwanted,"³⁸ as the rap coach Ali, who also has managed several local rap projects, puts it. According to Ali such musical ex-

31 Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," in *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 277.

32 Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 160.

33 Babak, interviewed by author, July 8, 2010.

34 Tia DeNora, "Music and Emotion in Real Time," in *Consuming Music Together. Social and Collaborative Aspects of Music Consumption Technologies*, ed. Kenton O'Hara and Barry Brown (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 21.

35 Ibid.

36 Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 144.

37 Rap performed from a position as "*perker*" – partly reflecting and commenting on, partly staging, capitalising and dramatizing this position. Cf. Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "8210-Cent, Perker4livet Og Thug-Gangsta," in *Hiphop I Skandinavien*, ed. Mads Krogh and Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2008).

38 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

pressions can then intensify the feelings “that they are only hanging in there, that they fight every day, and that they have to protect themselves from being crushed by all their problems.”³⁹ Accordingly, musical expressions such as “*perker rap*” can contribute in the creation and/or maintenance of a collective identity in opposition to the national Danish one. In this sense, as Martin Stokes also suggests, the physical realization of feelings of community, are also situations and events where hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed and where boundaries between “us” and “them” are established and maintained.⁴⁰

Because music is active in individual identity work as well as in constructions of community, control over music, as DeNora points out, is an opportunity to structure the parameters of action and a source of social power.⁴¹ In trying to affect the very musical expressions of the young rappers and by introducing political or conscious alternatives to the “*gangster-perker rap*”, the rap coaches and social projects can not only affect the identity processes of the individual participating rappers, but potentially also the social situations in which the rap songs are produced and performed. Thus rap music production can work as a potential social catalyst and be a powerful resource in mediating between the life-worlds of young rappers and the agenda of specific projects, all of them emanating from and funded by a Danish social beneficial rap-as-resource policy platform.

Rap production as a project of personal formation

There are two reasons, why it [rap music] is so insanely powerful in terms of integration. One is that you don’t have to lure the kids to come. Give them an open studio and they crowd around it. The second is, that if you wanna learn to rap, it’s of no use if you don’t speak Danish. Then you have to learn to fucking articulate yourself, right? You can rap without being able to articulate yourself, but then it’s just not cool [...] Being able to articulate yourself is maybe the most important thing in society. That’s the first step. If you can’t articulate yourself, it’ll go wrong.⁴²

Besides rap’s apparent usefulness as a popular cultural form, the rap coach Babak quoted above also points out that what makes rap music a useful socioeconomic resource in the context of integration politics is that the young rappers have to learn to articulate themselves and to speak better Danish in order to become good rappers.

According to the rap coaches and project managers, I have spoken with during my field research, a huge part of the strategy in using rap music in social work is to use the musical – and especially the lyrical – production to encourage the young rappers

39 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

40 Martin Stokes, “Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music,” in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 3-6.

41 DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, 20.

42 Babak, interviewed by author, July 8, 2010.

to reflect upon themselves as subjects, upon the society in which they live and upon themselves as social agents in this society. The rap coaches try to influence the associations, reflections and evaluations of the music that the participants listen to and are inspired by – as well as the music they produce themselves and hereby also the identity they articulate and live out through that music. Furthermore, as also shown by socio-linguistics Andreas Stæhr and Lian Malai Madsen, rap coaches often urge the young rappers to express themselves in a more standardized Danish and, in the name of success and intelligibility, to use majority-language terms rather than bringing indexes of minority status and youth culture to the front stage.⁴³ Like many other of the rap coaches, I have spoken with, the rap coach and project manager, Joseph, sees his work with the young boys as "primarily a pedagogically directed project, which uses hip hop and rap as tools in relating to the target group. If somebody gets a career as rapper, it's a side benefit. That's secondary."⁴⁴ Another rap coach, Erkan, working at a youth club, has a similar approach: "There are a lot of things you can improve musically, and those things I also introduce regularly. But it is not my focus. My focus is on what they write. That they become more mature."⁴⁵ In other words, it is primarily the process-related identity work with the individual young rappers rather than the musical outcome itself that generally is the main focus of the rap coaches I have spoken with.

However, at the same time the very musical outcomes function as incentives to engage the young rappers, who often regard these as the most important motivation factor: "The youngsters are product-oriented, so it's not just about the process and the hippie pedagogy,"⁴⁶ as Joseph explains. For this reason it is in the individual participant's work on becoming a good rapper and producing what he/she regards as good tracks that the rap coaches can guide the young rappers' writing towards more positive expressions about life and society.

From an American context Murray Forman has argued that social agencies' guidance and overseeing of young rappers' lyrical productions often expose a pre-existing ideological framework as well as parameters of language and content promoting respectfulness, non-antagonism, positivity/a positive life style and absence of (at least brutish) profanity. In doing so, they not only establish alternatives to prevailing themes in commercial and underground rap music. As role models, the rap coaches – or what Forman refers to as "Hood workers" – clearly advocate what is often referred to as "conscious rap", hereby also, as he argues, more or less explicitly imposing genre rules.⁴⁷ This point can also be applied to the Danish context. With reference to values of authenticity and being "real" inherent to conscious rap, coaching is often focused on developing themes in the texts that emphasize personal narratives trying to tone down some of the overt clichés associated with more radical forms of

43 For a socio-linguistic study of the linguistic practises in rap music coaching, see Andreas Stæhr and Lian Malai Madsen, "Standard language in urban rap – Social media, linguistic practice and ethnographic context," in *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies, Paper 94* (Tilburg: Tilburg University, 2014).

44 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

45 Erkan, interviewed by author, June 27, 2013.

46 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

47 Forman, "Hood Work: Hip-Hop, Youth Advocacy, and Model Citizenry," 253-254.

rap music, such as gangster-rap. The rap coach Joseph, has for instance described, how he always more or less implicitly works to affect the young rappers' focus on what he calls the "positive life story", in which participants express where they come from, and then hopefully get better at finding their path forward.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he hopes to be able to positively "brand being a Dane," and to promote the "values of democracy". "These are some of the values I try to pass on, through discussions about what to write about,"⁴⁹ as he puts it.

In a conversation with the rap coach Asem, who also manages a studio affiliated with a local youth club, he told me that he always asked the young rappers to send him their lyrics before they came to the studio. Referring to a correspondence he had with a young rapper, who had sent him some lyrics, he explained:

He can't get access to the studio before he has changed this [the lyrics]. That's how I get him to think about it. [...] The first thing I do is to ask, why he makes a song like this with so many nasty words. I pass it on slowly. Then he tries again, sends me a revised text where he has removed some of the nasty words, but there are still many left. Then I tell him to remove this and that and send me a revised version of the song as soon as possible. And the third time, I directly change it all, and tell him 'that's the way to do it. That's what I mean. The other stuff doesn't work.'⁵⁰

However, when a rapper has been granted access to the studio, he often begins to come there regularly. As a young rapper coming to Asem's studio every Friday after school has explained, he uses the afternoons there to write and talk about rap songs, to record and have fun with other young rappers and Asem. During his years of frequenting the studio, this young rapper has gone from making what Asem called some "thug-life-2pac-outlaw stuff"⁵¹ to rapping about his experiences of being a teenager in his local "hood", about how cool a rapper he is and about how and what he feels. The last track he made was about his occasionally difficult relation to the school and how he had to pull himself together.⁵²

Besides the work with writing the rap lyrics, it is very much in the social setting of the music production that the rap coaches can affect the young rappers. As the rap coach Erkan explains:

Teaching is teaching and recording is recording. But the time you spend together is important. Because you sit in a studio together and it's maybe only a tenth of the time that you actually record something. The rest of the time you talk and then a lot of stories come up, and you can't avoid drawing some ethical points.⁵³

48 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

49 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

50 Asem, interviewed by author, February 1, 2013.

51 Asem, Facebook message to author, December 9, 2013.

52 Anonymous under-age rapper, interviewed by author, February 1, 2013.

53 Erkan, interviewed by author, June 27, 2013.

The rap coach Ali has explained that when he interacts socially with the young rappers and takes part in the guidance process of picking a theme for the rap song and assisting in the actual writing and recording process, he conducts what he refers to as a "mainstreaming process"⁵⁴ through which he introduces the young rapper to certain values and ideas that are slowly internalized as mainstream.

In the "mainstreaming process" aimed at the young participants, the status of the coaches as rappers and musicians, recognized in the local communities, is essential. As Ali puts it, it provides "respect and justification"⁵⁵ for making demands that can push the young rappers forward.⁵⁶ However, in order to maintain this status as musical role models (with only indirect moral guidance) there is a delicate balance between the controlling and regulating aspects on the one hand, and meeting the participants at eyelevel on the other. The rap coach Erkan has for instance considered whether it is a disadvantage that all the young rappers know that he does not allow the recording of songs with violent content – since this might have the consequence that some youngsters would not attend.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the project manager, Amir, has explained how he is very aware of the fact that he "can't just censor," as he puts it. He continues:

[...] but you can say 'I really think it's stupid, when you write that you want to stick a knife in his head. That's not cool at all.' You can say that to people. That's the way to guide and supervise, until they understand what it means [...] Tell them how things are done in the music business, what it is that makes one rap song a hit and not another – and in this sense use the music business and the music as the pedagogical common denominator. Instead of just saying 'you just can't do that.'⁵⁸

Rappers as mouthpieces

According to my field observations the regulations and the limitations of what is acceptable to express in the rap songs produced in the context of the rap projects are relative depending on the specific context and situation – and on the specific rap coach. However, generally speaking, the young rappers are urged to be "real" in their songs. As a young rapper who has participated in several projects has explained:

54 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

55 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

56 Furthermore, several rap coaches have stressed that an ethnic minority background is also an important factor in relating to ethnic minority youngsters.

57 Erkan, interviewed by author, June 27, 2013.

58 Amir, interviewed by author, June 7, 2012; One might object that Amir's use of the standards of the music business as a regulator of the musical outcomes (which is quite a common strategy among the rap coaches) evades the fact that until recently one of the few ethnic minority rapper's who were signed by an established Danish record company (Tabu Records), was Marwan, whose debut album came out under the name *P.E.R.K.E.R.* – a strategic branding of Marwan as a stereotypical outlaw "gangster-perker." So even though the reference to standards of the music business might diminish for instance pronounced incitements to violence, the tough "gangster-perker" brand is not without value in the music business.

I have always been taught that you cannot lie in your songs. You can't do that. I have learned that from day one. For instance I can't rap about having expensive cars and lots of money – or about being a tough gangster from the ghetto. [...] When people begin to rap, they often lie, but they learn from it. Many think that it's all about money, pussy, marihuana etc. But that's not what it's about. [...] It's about rhythm and poetry.⁵⁹

In order to change the image of a rapper from being something associated with a tough gangster to being what the rap coach Ali refers to as an “everyday politician”,⁶⁰ arguments about the typical hip hop authenticity discourse of being “real” and always telling the truth as well as rap music's “inherent critique towards society,”⁶¹ as Ali puts it, are brought into play. Hereby, the young rappers are ascribed the roles of mouthpieces for the people they identify with, which entails a responsibility to reflect constructively upon society. In this sense, as Imani Perry suggests: “Being “real” is a call to authenticity that becomes a political act.”⁶²

On public releases from the respective social projects it seems especially important that the rappers are represented as positive mouthpieces. A young rapper, who has contributed with several songs to albums released by a social project, has explained that he was “told not to make songs that could incite others to do something stupid. The things I wouldn't do myself I shouldn't rap about – at least not on the albums.”⁶³

There can be several motives for such exclusion of deviant voices from albums publicly released by social projects. Joseph, the manager of a project releasing several albums with nationwide distribution, has explained why he finds a curatorial approach to the lyrical content to be appropriate:

If we make an album financed by the municipality or something, it has to be within the scope of certain things. I explain that to them [the participants]. And then I try to make them understand, that there is no need to depict something that is not real. If it's true, that for instance you have seen a robbery or something, then it's permitted to tell that story. But you have a responsibility towards those listening to your music and towards your little brothers and the next generation, who don't know and who can't distinguish between, whether the story is a lie, or bragging or something real.⁶⁴

For Joseph the exclusion of deviant voices is substantiated by socioeconomically based arguments about responsibility for the younger generation. Hereby, he emphasizes that an important strategy in the use of rap music as a social resource is also the musical mediation of the positive life story to a broader audience.

59 Anonymous under-age rapper, interviewed by author, June 18, 2012.

60 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

61 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

62 Imani Perry, *Prophets of the hood: Politics and poetics in hip-hop* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 87.

63 Anonymous under-age rapper, interviewed by author, June 30, 2012.

64 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

Even though, as Johnson and Cloonan argue, "incitement need not result in excitement"⁶⁵ – and that it most often is the very sound and sonority as well as the non-musical context, rather than the lyrics, that lead to arousal of different feelings⁶⁶ – Joseph's quoted argument about not adding fuel to the fire of young potentially angry boys with angry musical agencies, could seem to be a good socio-pedagogical strategy. Thus, along with the good, educative intentions, the regulation of lyrical content should also be understood in an economic context, where the musical output of the project can be regarded as a parameter of the individual project's socioeconomic success. Consequently, this regulation is also important for obtaining (further) financial support to uphold the social work with the young rappers – as well as to maintain the jobs of the rap coaches and project managers themselves (cf. the case about the "Messerschmidt Diss" and the closing of the rap school). In this context it is worth noting that besides being moral agents working for a greater socioeconomic benefit many of the coaches do this for a living. Thus, the young rappers are not only mouthpieces for their local "hoods", but also representatives of the projects to which they are affiliated.

Well-intended education or repressive tolerance?

In the light of these observations, it seems relevant to question the agency that the participants are given as well as the well-intended acts of the rap coaches and project managers employed by the social projects. Are the young rappers actually urged to speak up with their own voices, in order to express their opinions and thoughts to an outside world? Or are the only possible subject positions offered within the context of the projects, those that picture well-reflected young people, working with themselves in order to be included in the Danish society?

As shown in one of the examples above, the rap coach Asem explicitly denies young rappers with deviant expressions access to the studio. These rappers might have been granted access elsewhere – but most likely they would have been met with questions and arguments trying to "mainstream" them into the "right direction" in order to put them on "the right track" – socioeconomically speaking. As Forman has noted, hip hop creativity is instrumentalized – engineered, mobilized, acted upon – and "integrated into a larger management technology that is structured to manifest particular kinds of citizenship."⁶⁷

From the Swedish context, Johan Söderman has argued that apparently, there are parallels between this way of aiming to empower and provide voluntary education for marginalized young people with ethnic minority backgrounds through hip hop and rap music and the old Scandinavian non-formal education tradition of "*Folkeoplysning*" was aimed at empowering and educating the working class.⁶⁸ "*Folkeoplys-*

65 Johnson and Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence*, 123.

66 Ibid. 139-140

67 Forman, "'Hood Work: Hip-Hop, Youth Advocacy, and Model Citizenry", 254.

68 Johan Söderman, "Folkbildning' through hip-hop: how the ideals of three rappers parallel a Scandinavian educational tradition," *Music Education Research* 13:2 (2011).

ning" has been supported by the Danish government since the 1920s and is still widespread in the Scandinavian countries.⁶⁹ According to Söderman the Scandinavian idea of non-formal adult education has, from its very beginning, had two sides to it. On the one hand, non-formal education has promoted the belief that people can achieve emancipation and empowerment through education. In this sense it can be considered a radical educational ideal by trying to empower people through their own engagement with an investment in education and societal debate, ultimately aiming to change society. On the other hand, Söderman argues, non-formal education has also been used to discipline people, ideally replacing the "old habits" and "bad taste" of the common people with more refined and proper habits and tastes. In this sense it can be regarded as an elitist educational ideal where people are seen as objects from a top-down perspective, and where the overall aim is about taming and disciplining the "wild" (working class) people. Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu, Söderman claims that a certain degree of "symbolic violence" must be present, even when democratic ideals and intentions precondition educational concerns.⁷⁰

In the light of Söderman's second understanding, it can also be argued that the use of rap music as a means in social work is in fact an act of repressive tolerance – a term most often associated with the influential philosopher and public intellectual of the 1960s, Herbert Marcuse. When people experience repressive tolerance, they mistakenly believe they are participating in discussions characterized by freedom of speech and an inclusive emphasis on their ideas, while in fact those same discussions actually reinforce the dominant ideology. In this sense, repressive tolerance works as a kind of societal pressure cooker, letting off just enough steam to prevent the whole pot from exploding. As such, it ensures continuation by allowing just enough challenge to the system to convince people that they live in a truly open society, while still maintaining the system's structural foundation.⁷¹

Besides the concrete work with the young rappers and the "mainstreaming process" that takes place here, there is, in my view, another level where repressive tolerance is conducted relating to the use of rap music in social work; a level closely connected to the usefulness – or what George Yúdice refers to as the "expediency"⁷² – of rap music as a social resource.

In clarifying his notion of expediency of culture, Yúdice refers to the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of the term "expediency" as something "merely political (esp. with regards to self-interest) to the neglect of what is just and right."⁷³ Yúdice modifies this definition into what he refers to as a "performative understanding of expediency of culture," which, in contrast to the above definition, focuses on "the strategies implied in any invocation of culture, any invention of tradition, in relation to

69 The Danish law on "folkeoplysning" (*Folkeoplysningsloven*) was renewed last time in 2011.

70 Söderman, "Folkbildning' through hip-hop: how the ideals of three rappers parallel a Scandinavian educational tradition," 215.

71 Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

72 George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University, 2003).

73 Ibid., 38.

some purpose or goal."⁷⁴ Following this argument, it is possible to speak of culture as a resource, insofar as it harbors the possibilities to constitute a means to an end.⁷⁵

The consensus about rap music and hip hop culture being expedient as a resource in the social work with young people with ethnic minority backgrounds is closely linked to the conceptions of rap music that are at the heart of integration politics – the purpose of getting the target group included in the Danish society and giving them an opportunity to be heard. As I will develop and discuss in the following, the strategies implied in invoking rap music as a resource seem to be, on the one hand, the conception of rap as something that ethnic minority youngsters almost "inherently" connect to because of the relative parallel to the African-Americans in the States⁷⁶ – and thus is a part of the culture they already live in. On the other hand, my field observations indicate that the expediency of rap music also is based on the conception of rap being much easier to learn compared to other kinds of musical expressions, and therefore appropriate in the work with the target group.

The conception of rap being "part of their culture"

[...] rap is part of their culture. They all wear the clothes; they all listen to the music. And when you are part of a culture, there will always be a lot of people dreaming about being a performer.⁷⁷

As the rap coach Ali exemplifies in the quote above, a part of the motivation for using rap music in social work with ethnic minority youth, is the conception that rap music is already "part of their culture." This idea is, of course, not unproblematic. It is true that many of the young participating rappers, I have spoken with in my field research, have described, how they – because of the otherness they experience in their everyday life – feel a kind of relative parallel to the life of African-Americans in the United States and therefore easily can relate to the lyrics of African-American rap music. Hereby, they reinforce the myth that ethnic minorities' interest in rap music and hip hop is caused by the material and political conditions in the socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, where they live. The conception of rap as "part of their culture" is then commutable and appears "natural", but on the other hand, it also allows for a simplified reproduction of the public image of ethnic minority youngsters. In this way, it establishes hip hop as *the* youth culture and provides the grounds for its appropriation and reproduction both by the youngsters themselves and by policy makers and social workers.

The increasing economic support to people designing projects working with rap music in the field of integration politics has almost resulted in an overload of rap projects and recording studios in disadvantaged areas in Denmark. In this sense a rap-

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Jensen, "8210-cent, Perker4livet og Thug-gangsta," 39.

77 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

as-resource industry that employs a great deal of more experienced rappers has been established, working in parallel with the commercial rap music industry. In this context, you might argue that rap music has become doubly expedient – as a resource to be mobilized in solving problems relating to social integration, empowering marginalized people and sustaining communities – and as an industry that extracts value from difference.

It might be argued then that this high concentration of rap music activities in disadvantaged areas may have the effect that young people living there come to think that this is the type of music they *can* make, and thus *do* make. Hence, the institutionalization of rap in social work and economic support of rap projects and studios in certain areas, also to a great extent contributes to reproducing the conception of rap music as “part of their culture” – both internally, in the local communities and externally, in the Danish society.

Along with this, the great supply of rap projects directed towards the inclusion of young marginalized people has, in some cases, paradoxically led to a marginalization of the young rappers participating in the social projects – partly from the general music industry and partly from other young people, who might even live in the immediate neighborhood.

Contrary to his own ideals and expectations, Joseph questions whether the project he manages actually plays a part in the inclusion or integration process of ethnic minority youngsters. As he has described, almost all the youngsters, participating in his project, are boys with ethnic minority background, all knowing each other, all living in the same blocks etc.⁷⁸ In retrospect Amir further notes how his project took another turn, than he had initially hoped for, as many of the youngsters participating instead of becoming part of the music business actually distanced themselves from the music business and, even more so, took on the role as marginalized ethnic minority rappers.⁷⁹

Both the social and the musical isolation or marginalization of the young rappers that the two project managers refer to, can be related to the fact that workshops or classes in rap music are rarely affiliated to the public music schools (i.e. music training institutions for children and youngsters, which are very common in Denmark), but are most often, in order to meet the rappers at eye level, associated with youth clubs or work as independent social projects with their own facilities, often placed in the centre of an area with a high percentage of inhabitants with an ethnic minority background.

Obviously, the choice of not having rap classes in music schools can also be explained in terms of history, traditions, employment policies and the scope of activities carried out in this particular educational environment, which often focuses on technical skills and individual musical excellence. Economic considerations may also be involved. Contrary to music schools, which are very expensive to attend, it is much cheaper – sometimes totally or almost free – to attend youth clubs and social projects working with rap music production.

78 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

79 Amir, interviewed by author, June 7, 2012.

Still, the exclusion of rap music production from more established music schools contributes to creating an unfavorable distinction between young people rapping and young people singing, playing the guitar etc., which might attribute to rap a lower aesthetic status in generalized perceptions of musical genre-hierarchies. In this perspective, rap music primarily becomes a tool to reach a socioeconomic goal, rather than an opportunity for the individual. Echoing Yúdice, rap music is thus "being invoked to solve problems that previously were the province of economy and politics."⁸⁰

The conception of rap music as "easy to learn"

This leads me to the second conception of rap music's expediency: Because rap is thought of as easier to learn than other kinds of music, it provides a quick feeling of success for the practicing rapper, and therefore it can be regarded as especially appropriate in engaging the target group. The project manager Amir exemplifies this assumption:

It's definitely harder to become a good guitarist than a rapper. Becoming a lyrical rapper is the easiest thing in the world. And it's a shortcut to get recognition and credit, it's a shortcut to get spotlight, and it's a shortcut to get girls, it's a shortcut to get more friends, it's a shortcut to get a social circle. That's the way I see it. In here [referring to the local neighborhood] nobody bothers spending ten years practicing.⁸¹

During my field research, I have experienced that this conception is widespread within the internal discourse of the project managers and rap coaches. Sometimes the idea is accentuated by arguing either that compared to other kinds of music, rap is "quite democratic, because it's easier,"⁸² hereby giving everybody access to expressing themselves musically – or by pointing back to the "primordial design" of rap music, where, as Joseph puts it, "there was almost no melody. It was just some beat box or drums or something. It was the message that carried it."⁸³ This points to the idea that the authenticity of rap music lies in the message, not necessarily in fancy productions or how musically gifted a rapper is.

Several points can be made from this; the first one being that the idea of becoming a good rapper being easier than becoming, for instance, a good guitarist, is not provable. However, expecting that rap is an expedient and appropriate means to reach the target group because it is assumed to be "easy to learn," is in fact to create an institutionally structured musical frame, where the young people are given an opportunity to express themselves regardless of aesthetic quality.

Following this, it might be useful to question, what exactly the value of the produced musical products may be, if they are not valued as aesthetic expressions. In this

80 Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*, 25

81 Amir, interviewed by author, June 7, 2012.

82 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

83 Joseph, interviewed by author, June 14, 2012.

context it is also worth considering whether the music is actually a mouthpiece for the young rappers and the people they identify with – at least a mouthpiece that has the potential to reach out to the local network as well as the surrounding society – or whether the musical engagement should only to be understood as a kind of “stopgap” to keep the boys off the streets.

In DeNora’s argument about music’s mediation of social agency she emphasizes that agency involves “the ability to possess some capacity for social action and its modes of feeling,”⁸⁴ and likewise that it involves social alertness (as opposed to “social sleep”). “To be an agent in the fullest sense, is thus to be imbued – albeit fleetingly – with forms of *aesthesis*. Feeling and sensitivity – the aesthetic dimension of social being – are action’s animators,”⁸⁵ she writes. In line with this, Martin Stokes argues, that only a “good performance” – in relation to the specific cultural context – can “make a social event ‘happen.’”⁸⁶ Because, as he elaborates, “without these qualities, however they are conceived in a particular society, the ritual event is powerless to make the expected and desired connections and transformations.”⁸⁷

In other words, it is only if the aesthetic material is considered “good” in the specific cultural context that the consuming agent will be imbued with *aesthesis*, making the musical expression posses and mediate its capacity for social action. If that is the case, the rap coach Babak’s characterization of the aesthetic dimensions in the use of rap music in social work becomes almost ironic:

It ain’t shit about the music. The important thing is – and that is also why it should be supported economically – that it gives empowerment. There might be some good musicians, there might come one or two groups out of it. However, it gives people an experience of success in life. It gives people an identity. Instead of being the psycho with the hardest punch, you can be the guy, who blows harder in the mic or the guy who has the best rhymes or the guy, who is the best beatboxer, or who can make beats or sing. Right? That gives people, who, one way or the other, are just fucking ‘*perkere*’ another approach to life, saying that ‘I’m also a rapper.’ That’s also why I started to rap.⁸⁸

Elaborating on Stokes’ observation it is also worth noting that in the “specific cultural context,” according to the people I have talked to, what is valued as musical quality in the ethnic minority rap community differs from the aesthetic standards of the more established Danish rap scene. The rap coach Ali for instance, points out, how he finds that “Danish rap media value rappers in terms of the rhymes, whereas the [ethnic minority] rappers have other objectives such as flow and message, when they make the songs.”⁸⁹ He concludes by stating that in this sense “there’s race segregation in rap as

84 DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, 153

85 Ibid.

86 Stokes, “Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music,” 5

87 Ibid.

88 Babak, interviewed by author, July 8, 2010.

89 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010.

well."⁹⁰ This also means that even though the local network might listen to and value the musical expressions of the "best" rappers, the music produced is not listened to outside these networks – in the Danish majority society. Consequently, the metaphor of 'rap as a mouthpiece' becomes doubly hollow both in terms of repressive tolerance and because there is no actual audience (considering the rap music as 'good') 'outside of the ghettos'.⁹¹

In her seminal essay "Can the subaltern speak?,"⁹² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that even though the subaltern may cry out in various ways, they do not speak, in the understanding of speaking as "a transaction between speaker and listener."⁹³ In other words what is being expressed, does not achieve the dialogic level of utterance. To some extent, the same can be said about the work of rap music in social work, in the sense that the lack of aesthetic impact outside the circles and networks where the music is produced obstructs the music's ability to become a mediator of social action and a promoter of social change. In this perspective the projects contribute to re-inscribing the subordinate position of their participants in society, while having the best of intentions in trying to promote and establish the image of a positive voice and a locus of agency.

Concluding remarks

From my point of view, it is hard to think about rap music in social work, without paying attention to the socio-political economy in which this work takes part.

It needs to be pointed out that the initiatives and efforts carried out within social rap projects are, above all, driven by philanthropic concerns – and that rap coaches and project managers, as Forman also points out, are placed in an unenviable position in working via rap music to redress social ills and revise systemic barriers to urban youth progress.⁹⁴ However, it should be kept in mind that this position is also a powerful position. In their own opinion, and due to their ideological, moral and political points of view, these rap coaches have the power to suppress people's opinions and affect the local youth from a position that is most often economically supported by the government and/or the municipality.

Furthermore, it should of course be noted that many of the youngsters participating in social projects working with rap music production do acquire a lot of positive societal tools. Many of them are inspired to write, to read, to articulate themselves (in

90 Ali, interviewed by author, December 21, 2010; Of course such experiences must be contextualised with other considerations such as quality, 'playlist-ability', general adjustment to the market etc.

91 By the end of my field research a few rappers with ethnic minority background *have* become mainstream, also among the "white" youngsters in Denmark. This 'new cultural wave' in Danish rap might indicate that the differentiation within the rap community in Denmark is slowly dissolving.

92 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

93 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Talk: Interview With the Editors," in *The Spivak Reader*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge, 1996).

94 Forman, "Hood Work: Hip-Hop, Youth Advocacy, and Model Citizenry", 255.

"better Danish"), to keep appointments, to handle social situations – and thus to reflect upon themselves as individual agents in society. In this way, people who comply with the rules of the projects can be empowered by the process-related work with the music. The production of rap music has the potential to educate young people and to put (some of) them on "the right track," seemingly being an expedient means to reach out for youngsters that do not engage in other after-school activities, and are at risk of being drawn into crime etc.

At the same time the music produced at these projects can be a result of many hours of hard work, and (at least the best of) it is valued not only by the boys producing it, but also by other young people from the participants' network in their local neighborhoods. Thus, positive life stories can be musically mediated to this local network.

However, when the use of rap music as a resource in social work is regarded within the frame of freedom of expression, several things obstruct the image of success. The process-oriented focus in mainstreaming the positive life story, excludes the more deviant voices. Furthermore, the conception of rap music's expediency based on ideas of its almost "inherent" association with the target group and its "easy accessibility" both suggest that the musical output has small aesthetical value. Rather, the production of rap music within these contexts works in an economy of socioeconomic transformation of the possible subject positions offered to the young marginalized people, as well as hopes to affect their public image.

The musical output, itself part of a rap-as-resource industry, may be produced and performed in order to speak for, or on behalf of, the youngsters. However, if the political intentions rest on ideas of giving the participants agency through musical expression; of music working as a mediator of social action or a mouthpiece for collective or individual voices, effectively mediating between their own life-world and the Danish majority society, the balance between the aesthetic dimensions of the musical product and the assumptions about its expediency could fruitfully be reconsidered. Put in another way: if the music based social projects "ain't shit about the music," then their expediency hints at a moral ambiguity, within which an elitist culture lurks in the background, asserting its symbolic powers in tolerantly repressing a possibly destabilising minority within society. Seen like this, it also becomes evident that the values promoted inherently by the overall political framing of the projects run counter to much of the democratic and liberating aspects within hip hop ideology.

Abstracts

På baggrund af feltforskning blandt deltagere og ansatte ved en række rapprojekter undersøger denne artikel brugen af rapmusik i socialt integrationsarbejde med etniske minoritetsunge ud fra et musikanthropologisk udgangspunkt. Ved at belyse de særlige diskursive omstændigheder, der synes at indramme forståelserne af, hvorfor produktionen af rapmusik er egnet som socialt integrationsværktøj, fokuseres der med blik for forhandlingerne af personlige, politiske og sociale aspekter på hvordan ytringsfrihed spiller op imod folkeoplysning og repressiv tolerance. På denne baggrund diskuteres det, hvordan projekternes socioøkonomiske målsætninger påvirker deltagernes ytringer, og der stilles spørgsmålstegn ved, hvorvidt den musikalske og personlige agens, der er projekternes ideal, stemmer overens med de reelle ytrings- og handlemuligheder, som deltagerne tilbydes.

Based on field research among participants and employees at a series of rap projects, this article examines the use of rap music in social integration work among ethnic minority youth from the perspective of anthropology of music. By highlighting the specific discursive formations around the expediency of the production of rap music as a non-formal educational resource, the article focuses on the personal, political and social aspects of freedom of speech and the ways in which these are negotiated by repressive tolerance within the projects. On this background, it is discussed how the socio-economic aims of the rap-as-resource industry affect the participants' expressions, and it is questioned whether the musical and personal agencies that are ideally offered by the projects are consistent with the actual freedom of action and expression that becomes available to the participants.

JOHANNES FRANDBEN SKJELBO

Jamaican Dancehall Censored: Music, Homophobia, and the Black Body in the Postcolonial World

*The music does everything for the people.
The music tell the people what to do in Jamaica*
Bob Marley

Introduction

I find it strange that Pumpehuset is prepared to have him on stage. It's not a question of a certain song—but rather what he stands for [...] Copenhageners should not be subjected to such filth.

Copenhagen Councillor L.A. Rasmussen, October 2009¹

The purpose of this article is to point to some effects of the colonial legacy of Jamaica as they emerge in the dancehall genre. My point of departure is the "filth" mentioned above. The garbage metaphor hints at the dancehall artist Sizzla, who in 2009 was only allowed to play in Copenhagen on certain "conditions".

Jamaican dancehall artists visiting Western countries are often put in the centre of discourses of regulation and censorship. Many of those artists are actively engaged in anti-gay discourses, and most do undeniably have songs with rather problematic lyrics on their repertoires—at least when taken at face value: Part of the controversy surrounding dancehall arises from the very question of "the meaning" of songs and lyrics.

Overview

Sodomite and batty bwai mi seh a death fi dem. [I say lesbians and faggots should die]
Sizzla in the song Taking Over²

The questions I seek to explore can be put as follows: What is the relation between Jamaica's colonial history and the present day manifestations of heterosexism and

- 1 Quoted in *Politiken News in English online* October 16, 2009, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://politiken.dk/newsinenglish/ECE810744/councillor-seeks-sizzla-cancellation>
- 2 Sizzla, "Taking Over," in *Taking Over* (VP Music Group, Inc, 2006).

homophobia in Jamaican music? What does it mean that the genre in question is often perceived as “black music”? And further, what can the dancehall/homophobia connection tell us about (the limitations of) freedom of musical expression in a Western country like Denmark?

I will argue that the historical background for dancehall—technologically, socially, and musically—are relevant aspects when one is trying to understand the censorship discourses surrounding dancehall in Western societies, not least because both defenders of dancehall and proponents of censorship are using historicized arguments and interpretations.

In the following pages, I will focus on the connections between what I call three aspects of dancehall: *Production*, *content*, and *reception*. The aspect metaphor is chosen to indicate that I am talking about different points of view, not discrete entities. I shall, however, present them separately as analytical categories, while maintaining a discussion of how they interact and overlap in this context. Johan Fornäs’s article “Limits of Musical Freedom,” from 2001, is my inspiration for doing so. Thus it is my premise that the text alone cannot qualify meaning in music and musical performance:

There are no straight lines between **production**, **content** and **reception** when it comes to symbolic forms. Wherever the lines are to be drawn, it has to be made through careful interpretations that take both the textual content and the contextual setting into consideration.³ (My emphasis.)

This article falls in five main parts. After this introduction, I present the case of Sizzla Kalonji’s near-cancelled Copenhagen performance and the surrounding debate in order to illustrate some of the arguments being used. I also point to some other incidents where dancehall has been involved in controversy in Denmark. Then I take a brief detour through the *production* of Jamaican dancehall as musical sound, and its history as a genre. Since “dancehall” and “reggae” are very often synonymous in the West, it is important to know the quite significant differences between the two, musically, socially, and historically speaking. The third part of the article is about the *content* of dancehall music and the differences between modes of constructing musical meaning that become significant when music is transferred between cultures. The fourth part is about *reception*, not least restrictions on and regulation of Jamaican music. Finally, I will return to the case of dancehall in Denmark and connect it to the larger picture of dancehall’s role in the postcolonial international landscape.

Few Jamaican intellectuals have to this day taken dancehall seriously. One of the few to do so, Literature Professor Carolyn Cooper of the University of West India, often engages in Jamaican and international discussions over the nature of dancehall and its effects on relations between the former colony Jamaica and Western countries. Parts of the following involve a (selective and one-sided, I admit) discussion with her texts.

3 Johan Fornäs, “Limits of Musical Freedom,” Freemuse, 2001, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://www.freemuse.org/graphics/Publications/PDF/musicalfreedom.pdf>.

It is my basic premise that music and lyrics and words in and of themselves can be considered actions. So it follows that expressions can actually have harmful effects.⁴ But, crucially, this is not the same as taking any utterance for its surface meaning. As Fornäs says, "Words certainly have effects, but they do not necessarily effect precisely what they say!"⁵

Sizzla in Copenhagen

We are looking forward to welcoming the king of reggae, Sizzla, for a night far out-of-the-ordinary [...] [the last time Sizzla played].....not one arm-pit nor one pair of panties were dry.⁶

From the official announcement of the Sizzla Concert in Copenhagen, October 2009.⁷

Rastaman don't apologize to no batty-boy. If you dis King Sellasia I, mih gunshot you boy
Sizzla in *Nah Apologize* (2004)

On the 19th of October 2009, Jamaican dancehall Deejay Sizzla Kalonji was scheduled to perform in the high-profile Copenhagen City venue Pumpehuset. Sizzla has been involved in a number of controversies over homophobia and racism in his lyrics. He has been officially banned from playing in the UK, and some of his songs are black-listed in Germany. His concerts in Europe continue to raise debate.⁸

Sizzla's appearance in Copenhagen went on as scheduled, however, on one remarkable condition: An interpreter was to be present during the concert in order to guarantee that Sizzla would not be saying or singing anything that could get him or Pumpehuset in trouble. In other words, the violently homophobic songs and statements Sizzla is infamous for were not going to be heard in Copenhagen that night. The venue management, defended Sizzla's music (not his lyrics) as "insanely good",⁹ but yet firmly vowed the PA system would be shut down instantly should Sizzla step over the line. This promise came after calls that the concert should be stopped had sounded for some time.

Prior to the promise came a heated debate in the Danish public. Sizzla himself, gay activists, music lovers, experts, and politicians clashed in a public debate on freedom of speech vs. minority protection. The venue Pumpehuset is run partly through

4 Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan, *Dark side of the tune : popular music and violence*, Ashgate popular and folk music series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

5 Fornäs, "Limits of Musical Freedom," 6.

6 When Danish quotations are translated by the author, the original text is found in a footnote.

7 "Vi glæder os til at byde reggaens konge Sizzla velkommen, til en aften langt udover det sædvanlige" [...] "...og ikke en armhule eller underbuks var tør". From the official presentation of the concert with Sizzla. Accessed September 10, 2014 <http://www.billetlugen.dk/musik/8619/sizzla/>

8 See Freemuse.org, <http://freemuse.org/archives/5254> for an overview

9 "Det er klart, det er en udfordring, at manden stadig tænker som han gør, selvom han ikke synger sine værste tekster. Men musikken er så sindssygt god, så jeg synes, det fortjener en plads" Uffe Savery, manager of Pumpehuset, in Danish newspaper *Politiken*, 16. October 2009, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://politiken.dk/ibyen/nyheder/musik/ECE810468/pumpehuset-klar-til-at-afbyrde-koncert/>

public funding, and some local politicians noted that tax money should not go to such concerts, and at least one councillor all but threatened to cut this funding over the controversy.¹⁰

Sizzla was quoted for contradictory statements. For example, within a few days, he apparently said both that he had signed an anti-homophobia treaty for economic reasons only AND that had honestly decided to never engage in homophobia again. We will come back to the treaty later. Here is what Sizzla said:

It was about money, I make my money on touring, and so it was important for to be able to play in Europe again. As an artist and a role model, no one can stop me from telling people what I think is right. I just don't do it officially anymore. Sizzla, 16th October 2009¹¹

It is clear that what I have said has been misconstrued [sic] in an interview I have given since I have been on this tour some interviewers who are granted interviews in good faith may have other motives or axes to grind but I have none, I believe in peace, equal rights and justice for all mankind [...] Sizzla, 19th October 2009¹²

The second statement came after Pumpehuset had stated that they considered cancelling the concert if Sizzla did not withdraw the first one.

The role of the interpreter was a peculiar one. He was to be there, said Pumpehuset, because Sizzla's rapid-fire Patwa (Jamaican/English creole dialect) is unintelligible to the non-initiated. Thus, ironically, in the case that the singer actually had sung anything problematic, chances are that only a few among the audience would have gotten the message at all.

Sizzla is known to self-censor when appropriate. But he has been playing highly controversial material in Europe recently.¹³ The Copenhagen concert was never interrupted, however, presumably because Sizzla stayed on the safe side.¹⁴

According to the rarely used Danish Penal Code §266b, it is punishable by up to two years of prison to publicly vilify or threaten minorities. I find it beyond doubt that some of Sizzla's lyrics, theoretically, could bring him serious trouble, including prosecution, were they ever played publicly in Denmark. The section in question says:

10 *Politiken News in English Online*, October 16, 2009 <http://politiken.dk/newsinenglish/ECE810744/councillor-seeks-sizzla-cancellation/>

11 "Det handlede om penge. Jeg tjener mine penge ved at turnere, og derfor var det vigtigt for mig igen at kunne spille i Europa. Som kunstner og rollemodel er der ingen, der kan stoppe mig fra at fortælle folk, hvad jeg mener er rigtigt. Jeg gør det bare ikke længere officielt" Sizzla in Henrik Bæk, "Interview: Jamaica's Homofobiske Stemme," *Politiken online*, October 16, 2009.

12 Birgitte Kjær, "Comeback Pumpehuset Gennemfører Omstridt Reggaeconcert," *Politiken online*, October 19, 2009.

13 Henrik Bæk, "Interview: Jamaica's Homofobiske Stemme," *Politiken online*, October 16, 2009.

14 Similar incidents have taken place in Sweden, Germany or Norway for instance. For an overview of incidents involving Sizzla, visit www.freemuse.org.

§266b

Any person who publicly or with the intention of dissemination to a wide circle of people makes a statement or **imparts other information** threatening, insulting or degrading a group of persons on account of their race, colour, national or ethnic origin, belief or sexual orientation, shall be liable to a fine, simple detention or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. (My emphasis)

The formal legal aspect is important because Pumpehuset obviously is operating under Danish law, which is explicitly censorious when it comes to the protection of minorities.¹⁵ So while the presence of the interpreter might make this law-enforced censorship extremely visible and present, it was in fact already there, *and it is always in effect*.

Except from a few comments on the internet, nobody in the public debate defended the artist's right to engage in hate speech or "hate music"¹⁶ in Pumpehuset. So the debate was not so much about the particular repertoire; it was very much about the mere *presence* of the artist.

Many people argued that Sizzla, as an exponent of homophobia himself, should not be allowed to play, no matter what the content of the performance. Some compared him to neo-Nazi musicians, which, they claimed, would never be allowed to play in Pumpehuset, regardless of which songs they would or would not be playing. Some gay rights activists pointed out that exactly *because* Sizzla targets homosexuals (and not other minorities) he was allowed to play. They were saying that homophobia is still broadly socially acceptable in societies where most other forms of prejudice are not—an argument that is backed up by scholars, such as Burne Fone.¹⁷ And so it was maintained that the message sent from Pumpehuset, by hiring the artist, was the real problem.

Nevertheless, the venue tried, with some success, to turn focus towards the *music* and the artistic qualities of Sizzla and away from his lyrics and his public statements on homophobia. Many fans did much the same, by saying that nobody understands much of Sizzlas lyrics anyway, and that this concert was all about music, partying, and *dancing*, not about words or semantics. This is an argument that often shows up when dancehall and homophobia are being discussed in Denmark.¹⁸ The idea that dancehall is mostly for dancing, not listening to lyrics, is something we will return to later.

*I don't care if they ban me
 Damn, me say fi bu'n batty-man, yuh cyah wrong me
 Yow, me nah born over England, a real African this
 Real Rastaman this! boom!*

15 The 266 b has been applied on music at least once; see Johannes Frandsen Skjelbo, "Dancehall og Homofobi – en undersøgelse af Jamaicas populærmusikkultur i postkolonial sammenhæng, med sideblik til musikkens danske reception" (Master thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2009).

16 The anti-music-censorship organization Freemuse has coined this term. See www.freemuse.org.

17 Byrne R. S. Fone, *Homophobia a history*, 1st Picador USA ed. (New York: Picador, 2007), 3.

18 Skjelbo, "Dancehall og Homofobi."

*[I don't care if they ban me
 Damn, if I say we should burn the gays, you can't wrong me
 (because) I was not born in England
 I am a real African a real Rastafarian! Boom! (as in gunshot)]*
 Sizzla Nah Apologies (2004)

The lines above shows Sizzla's awareness of the risk of being censored in Europe, but it also shows how he *uses* the censorship he is being subjected to, to position himself as a black, male, and African postcolonial activist who is up against the former colonial powers.

The Sizzla song points to colonial tensions in more than one way. His reference to the Rastafari movement and his own physical appearance with dreadlocks and Rastafari symbols brings up strong associations to another Jamaican star, Bob Marley, and his anti-establishment project. Sizzla sees himself as a political activist in the same way Bob Marley did. And this is something he has in common with most dancehall artists.¹⁹

Production

The Genre, or Why Dancehall Is Not Reggae

Strictly speaking, "dancehall" is a Jamaican-gone-global music genre that emerged internationally in the '80s following the death of Bob Marley and the general dissemination of cheap music technology that made it possible to create and distribute music without investing heavily in equipment.²⁰

Dancehall music is known for its danceability, the impressive vocal deftness of its performers, and its sometimes extremely sexually explicit and/or violent lyrics. The associated dance culture is characterized by a quite obsessive fascination with sex, bodies, and gender roles.²¹

Stylistically speaking, dancehall builds on the concept of the *riddim* (rhythm). The riddim is a backing track, over which a vocalist performs. But it signifies much more than just that. The term riddim (or riddim-method²²) points to a unique Jamaican field of cultural production that dates back to just after WW2. At its heart is the fact that local Jamaican popular music since the War has been much more about recorded music, technology, and Deejays than live bands.²³ Bob Marley and the Wailers and the

19 Norman C. Stolzoff, *Wake the Town & Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Carolyn Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

20 P. Manuel and W. Marshall, "The riddim method: aesthetics, practice, and ownership in Jamaican dancehall," *Popular Music* 25, 3 (2006): 447-70.

21 Donna P. Hope, *Man vibes: masculinities in the Jamaican dancehall* (Kingston/Miami: Ian Randle, 2010); Inna Di Dancehall: *Popular Culture And the Politics of Identity in Jamaica* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2006); Tara Atluri, *When the Closet is a Region. Working paper no. 5* (Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, 2001).

22 The term *riddim method*, coined by Manuel & Marshall (2006), covers this Jamaican technical music-making method as well as some of its wider social and economic implications.

23 Manuel and Marshall, "The riddim method: aesthetics, practice, and ownership in Jamaican dancehall."

other big reggae live acts are in a sense the exception, not the rule. The rock band “format” was used to promote Marley internationally and to make his music and his persona somewhat recognizable to consumers in USA and Europe.²⁴

In this sense, reggae as we know it in the West is very much an international (Western), not a Jamaican, phenomenon. I will return to the construction of reggae. The point is that although Bob Marley is and was a hugely important figure in Jamaica, the music of the lowest, black classes never really did sound like the reggae that made Marley famous in Europe and the US from the late 60’s and onwards.

Saturday Night Dance

Culturally we [Jamaicans] are as old as the cultural history of Africa.
Olive Lewin, 1971²⁵

Dancehall, on the other hand, is arguably more of a local Afro-Jamaican phenomenon. According to American anthropologist Norman Stolzoff, dancehall predates reggae by centuries.²⁶ In this view, dancehall is much more than a genre; it is a way of *using* music. Stolzoff dates the origins of dancehall back to the days of slavery, where the Saturday night dance was one of the few pastimes in the hard life of the plantation slaves. It was the primary space for sexual and social encounters. Despite the obvious risk of the party turning into one of the dreaded slave rebellions²⁷, the plantocracy²⁸ accepted the dances as a means of “venting steam”, since they knew that banning the dances could lead to uncontrollable amounts of anger among the slaves. The plantocrats also used dances as evidence that the slaves thrived and enjoyed themselves. In this sense, the dancing was another factor in the justification of slavery.²⁹

As Stolzoff points out, the function of the dance(hall) as the place for the underprivileged to construct their own identities and to negotiate the borders between them and the upper strata of society has continued to this day. This is part of the reason why attacks on dancehall are perceived locally as attacks on black culture. In the ghettos of Kingston, outdoor dance parties are frequent and very popular. Stolzoff demonstrates how the Jamaican police force fear, but also explicitly acknowledge, the dance as a “safety valve” and how this ambivalence is articulated on the streets. “Recognizing the cathartic effect of the dancehall, a policeman at a dance one night told me; “Jamaica would explode if it were not for dancehall” “³⁰

The strong metaphor of the dancehall as the musically constructed *place* for black Jamaicans goes way back. The dancehall veteran Hedley Jones speaks of dancehall as a

24 Stephen A. King, Barry T. Bays, and P. Renée Foster, *Reggae, Rastafari, and the rhetoric of social control* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002).

25 Olive Lewin, “Jamaica’s Folk Music,” *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 3 (1971): 15-22.

26 Stolzoff, *Wake the Town & Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*.

27 Slaves outnumbered the whites by 20:1. The Haitian uprising in 1789 proved that the risk of the slaves taking over was very real.

28 A plantocracy is a political order or government composed of plantation owners.

29 Stolzoff, *Wake the Town & Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*, 26.

30 Ibid., 7.

kind of transferable space over which “we”, i.e. the black underclass, hold ownership: “Dancehall has always been with us [...] because we have always had our clubs, our marketplaces, our booths... where our dances were kept. And these were known as dancehalls.”³¹

The music for the dances was in the slavery days provided by slaves mastering a variety of different European and African genres. This led to hybrid genres, in particular *mento*, which was characterized by its “Africanized”³² dance moves, its syncopations, and lyrics that often dealt with the hardships of slavery, sexuality, and everyday problems. Typically the mento lyrics were (and still are) fashioned in an understated or even coded way, using humour, metaphors and double entendres to make sure that only the initiated understood their true meaning.

An example from a traditional mento song shows how sexualized discourses were sometimes put to music in a not-so-subtle coding:

“My ripe tomato, my ripe tomato
Surrounded by a bush
And to reach that tomato, you always have to push

My ripe tomato, my ripe tomato
You can pick my tomato
That is, if you have your right-size tool”³³

The sexual explicitness that generates much of the modern critique of dancehall truly has old roots.

Uncontrolled Sexuality

What the plantocrats saw in the dance was a confirmation of the belief that the slaves were in no control of their sexual drives. An idea which was easily employed to reinforce the racist worldview that was a result of, as well as a precondition for, the slave-based economy. As Lewin demonstrates, by quoting a 19th century eyewitness to a slave dance:

“Sometimes they stamped their feet while performing voluptuous movements of the body. [...] The body was writhed and turned upon its own axis while the dancers slowly advanced or retreated from each other. They would be nearly naked and their writhing approaches to each other were highly sexual”³⁴

Of course, this account is to be seen in the light of the ambiguity involved in the white gaze on the black body: The exoticist fantasies of the black as a more natural creature

31 Ibid., 23.

32 Mento dancing probably grew out of a fusion between European Quadrilles and African dances. See also *ibid.*

33 Transcription of traditional provided by on-line mag *Perfect Sound Forever* <http://www.furious.com/perfect/jollyboys.html> 03-12-2014

34 Lewin, “Jamaica’s Folk Music,” 17.

free from the burdens of civilization are also a part of this picture. The very idea that black music and dance are connected to savage, uncontrolled, and animalistic sexuality is still around, says Jamaican literature professor and dancehall scholar Carolyn Cooper: "Everything that black people do is demonized."³⁵

Following this point of view, the typical misconceptions about dancehall are much the same today as they were in the 19th century and before. According to Cooper, the Jamaican establishment (still) fails to see dancehall for what it really is: An authentic expression of African politics of the body, not just an unregulated celebration of material hedonism and vulgarity, as it is often depicted in mainstream Jamaican media. Importantly, she sees the Western condemnation of homophobic lyrics as a variation of the same problem—namely, that African sexual discourses are not easily interpreted by outsiders.³⁶

Homophobia in Jamaica. The Law and the Colonial Legacy

It should be observed that Jamaica is a place with sky-high rates of crime, violence, and corruption. On a global scale, Jamaica is one of the most violent societies on the planet, in league with Afghanistan or Chechnya.

The Jamaican penal code section 76-80, regularly referred to as the "sodomy laws", that deals with homoerotic encounters is literally colonial. It stems from Victorian legislation from mid-19th century. It states that a man that engages in the "abominable crime of buggery" can be punished with up to ten years of prison.³⁷

Jamaica is a principally Christian country, with Pentecostalism and similar strains being predominant. Only a very small fraction can be considered Rastafarians. The country's institutionalized homophobia evidently has roots in the hard-liner reading of the Old Testament, which is characteristic of the Jamaican strain of faith, as Cecil Gutzmore puts it.³⁸ This, in combination with Victorian sexual norms and legislation from the 19th century, explains the Jamaican attitude towards homosexuals to some extent. However, other factors are also at play, and some of those connect with post-colonial "blackness" and perhaps indirectly with "black music". Some of the taboos concerning anal sex and homosexuality may even be older than Jamaican slavery. At least there is evidence that male-male homosexuality in sub-Saharan Africa has historically been associated with diseases and has been condemned as a foreign habit: "Biblical prohibitions against homosexuality and Victorian norms of Euro-American morality that have only recently been undermined in our much more liberal times are thus reinforced by Afrocentric proscriptions."³⁹

35 Andreas Johnsen and Rasmus Poulsen, *Man Ooman (Man Woman)* (Denmark: Rosforth, 2008), DVD promotional copy.

36 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 107.

37 Section 80 even gives police officers the right to arrest people pre-emptively if they are even suspected of being about to commit the above crimes. Albeit this is only effective during nighttime.

38 Cecil Gutzmore, "Casting the first stone!," *Interventions: The International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2004).

39 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*.

It seems fair to at least hypothesize the implied relation here, although the research on historical African attitudes towards homosexuality is rudimentary.⁴⁰ In Jamaican discourse, homosexuality is often connected with diseases and unnatural use of the body and its openings. An interview with an anonymous Rastafarian Elder in Jamaica Observer makes this clear:

It is simply that he [the average Jamaican] cannot condone the abandonment of the clean 'nip and tuck' of normal heterosexual relations for the **unhygienic** foray amid waste matter, unfriendly bacteria and toxic germs [...]

Then, attempting to sanitize their abnormal, patently **unnatural** inclination, they [the gays] refer to it as an "alternative lifestyle"⁴¹

These discourses on naturalness are reminiscent of white racist ideas of the black (slave) as a "natural" being with an instinctive and unspoiled sexual drive as presented earlier.

In context of this article, this again brings us close to the sticky idea that blacks are naturally more "rhythmic" or musical than whites. We will come back to that.

The Sound System

After WW2, musicians and live-bands were scarce in lower-class urban areas in Jamaica. Many musicians had found jobs in the booming tourist industry; others had immigrated to the UK. But parties were still everywhere. Ingenious people found out that the gramophone could be amplified by means of PA-systems made for public speech. And so, the technology of the sound system was born, and soon after also the DeeJay, as the one in charge of operating it was nicknamed. The combination of the DeeJay, his music, and his equipment shortly became an entity: The *sound system* or "*sound*" for short.

From early on his job was also to nice-up the dance and not least to compete aggressively with other sound systems for the attention of paying customers. To meet the challenge, DeeJays took up the mento tradition and started singing, joking, talking, and *toasting* over the music to single their sound out from the rest. The toasting was very much about the sexual competence and *machismo* of the DJ, often exaggerated to completely unreal proportions. Prince Buster, a legendary dancehall pioneer, framed himself playfully as a gangster and a dangerous person by mixing in sound effects like gunshots and screeching car tires in his performance. The toasting skills, the sound volume, and the clever selection of music became the weapons in a symbolic war between sound systems.

A skilled DeeJay can perform entire narratives via a sequence of songs utilizing parameters such as tempo, style, and feeling, often without the lyrics of the individual songs or the semantics of the toasting having particular significance. This is not the same as saying that such a performance does not *mean* anything. Quite the contrary. But the meaning is sometimes emerging from the constellation of tracks being played,

40 B. Chevannes, *Betwixt and Between: Explorations in an African-Caribbean Mindscape* (Ian Randle Publishers, 2006), 25.

41 Mark Wignall, "The Rasta view on homosexuality," *Jamaica Observer*, April 22, 2007.

stopped, and played again in a considered manner, not from the semantics of the individual song's lyrics.⁴²

Eventually a local recording practice grew up around the sound systems to supply each one with their own original music for their arsenal. Importantly, the recordings were often not meant for distribution or broadcasting in the traditional sense. The extreme example is the emergence of the *special*—a unique master recorded for one sound system only, as a guarantee of its originality. Sometimes the special was provided on fragile acetate, which had the peculiar effect of deteriorating while being played.⁴³ The similarity to ammunition being irrecoverably spent in a war is rather striking. Competition among sound systems is still fierce, and it sometimes spills over into real violence.⁴⁴

By the mid-60s, the Deejays themselves began making studio recordings of their own voice-overs plus riddim, or *tunes*, as the combinations of riddim and the Deejays verbal performances are frequently called. Importantly, the backing part of such tunes, the riddim, would take on a life of its own, without any copyright issues to speak of: A single often included an instrumental version of the riddim on the B-side for others to use for their own cutting, mixing, and voice-over, using the simplest of technology.

And so, to make a long story short, by the '80s where affordable recording- and PA equipment began to hit the market, there was in Jamaica a decade-long aesthetic tradition of copy-paste production, where voice-overs and riddims had become independent of each other.

The Riddim and the Voice of the Deejay

Most dancehall tunes are structured via technically simple, yet elaborate, usage of riddim and voice. The following example is an analysis of the core elements of the tune Boom Bye-Bye⁴⁵, which is recorded on the riddim *Flex (Time to 'ave Sex)*, named after the 1992 tune by Mad Cobra. Flex itself is an explicit song which deals with a heterosexual relation in a quite direct sense.⁴⁶

Boom Bye-Bye was arguably the first tune to cause international discussion about homophobic messages in dancehall. Yet it was a radio hit in the US early in 1992, until a member of the US Jamaican diaspora provided a translation of the words.⁴⁷ Literally translated, the chorus is about killing gay men and the song expresses a general loathful attitude towards (male) homosexuals.⁴⁸ It should be noted that the tune's lyrics are not representative of Buju Banton's production as a whole; nevertheless, it provides a useful example of how words and music interact in the dancehall idiom.

42 Stolzoff, *Wake the Town & Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*, 54.

43 This practice is far from unknown today, despite the abundance of digital gear

44 Stolzoff, *Wake the Town & Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*.

45 Buju Banton, *The Early Years (90-95)* (Heartbeat Europe, 2002).

46 Mad Cobra, *Flex, dancehall 101*, Vol. 3 (VP Music Group, 2002)

47 Timothy S. Chin, "'Bullers' and 'Battymen': Contesting Homophobia in Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature," *Callaloo* 20, no. 1 (1997): 127-41.

48 The song is readily available from services like iTunes and Spotify, often without hints to its volatile content

An excerpt from the chorus:

Boom bye bye
Inna batty boy head
Rude bwoy no promote no nasty man
Dem haffi dead
 [Boom goodbye, goodbye
 In a faggot's head
 Rude boys ("tough guys") don't promote no nasty men
 They have to die]

The riddim is made out of a simple 4/4 drum pattern, a two bar bass groove, and a melodic motif played by a bright, almost cheerfully sounding, synth-bell. Harmonically, the riddim is self-contained, still eerily ambivalent, seen from the perspective of harmonic analysis. There is no harmonic progression, no further chord changes or substitutions, which in other popular genres work as form-creating elements. The root key never becomes firmly established. Such harmonic/tonal ambivalence is a common trait in dancehall.^{49 50}

So musical progression in the traditional sense does not contribute to the musical form of this typical dancehall tune. Instead, the variations, which provide some feeling of forward motion, consist almost entirely of the cutting and mixing of the drum, bass, and motive tracks.

The simple (or absent) structural development leaves the vocalist—the DeeJay—with the core responsibility for driving the individual tune forward. On one hand, it might seem the repetitive riddim thus demands attention be drawn to the lyrics. On the other hand, the individual tune cannot be taken as a "message" or a *work* in the way that you typically would, for example, a Western rock song. The lyrics, as *semantics*, indeed are sometimes to be considered more or less inferior in the dancehall: "[...] hence, **in some contexts**, the lyrics may receive more critical attention than they might merit, insofar as they may be valued by dancers primarily for their rhythmic flow rather than semantic message."⁵¹ (My emphasis)

Summarizing the production aspect of dancehall, I argue that the low-tech life-performance oriented production environment that defined the genre from around 1950 has had clear aesthetic/artistic implications ever since, no matter how advanced the hardware has later become. The fundament—the riddim-method—is still the paradigm for making and using music. It should also be clear that the vocal performance of the DeeJay has its roots in a fiercely competitive environment, where standing out is a matter of survival, and where lyrics understood as meaning is a complicated matter.

49 Manuel and Marshall, "The riddim method: aesthetics, practice, and ownership in Jamaican dancehall," 559.

50 A more profound analysis can be found in Skjelbo, "Dancehall og Homofobi." <http://freemuse.org/archives/1440>

51 Manuel and Marshall, "The riddim method: aesthetics, practice, and ownership in Jamaican dancehall," 460.

Content. The (Body) Language of the Dancehall

Disintegration of the Song Body

Danish dancehall DeeJay Egger put on *Boom Bye Bye* while operating his turntable in a fashionable club in Copenhagen in 2005 in front of a dancing crowd. That is, until persons from the audience told him to stop, when they recognized the tune (or at least the riddim). Then Egger “pulled” the pick-up, a musical act, which in a dancehall context does not mean that the tune is “over”, necessarily. Sometimes DeeJays tease the audience, *the massive*, by playing only fragments of a particularly popular tune before playing it as a whole later in the evening.⁵² So it is rather uncertain what it actually meant to play, and then stop, a track the way Egger did that night. It certainly problematizes many concepts of (self-)censorship.

A journalist was also present at the club. He later condemned the incident in a major newspaper under the title *Tolerance; we do indeed shoot gays* as an example of a new homophobic trend in club and dance culture, but he also noted that the DeeJay had stopped playing the tune when asked to do so.⁵³

In the intense online debate following the incident, Egger explicitly made the point that stopping, or pulling, the track was *not* an act of (self-) censorship. He wanted to play the tune as an act of freedom of speech, and he, and other fans and DeeJays discussing the incident, obviously agreed that the dancehall DeeJay performance practice in itself changes the meaning of the music being played.⁵⁴ There seems to be consensus among Danish dancehall DeeJays that the musical context is more important than the words of any given tune.⁵⁵

Slackness and the Punanny

“With all this sort of competitiveness, the only way people could get the better of each other is by being more extreme.”

Gussie Clarke, producer, quoted from Lloyd Bradley⁵⁶

Jamaican dancehall culture is highly sexualized. One can find examples of lyrics with an explicitness that might surprise even a seasoned fan of gangsta rap or similar genres. One of the first exponents of this sexually explicit sub-genre, known as *Slackness*, is Yellowman, who started his career in the early '80s. His persona boasted a sexual capability of unreal proportions and he praised the female body in a very direct language. Especially the Punanny,⁵⁷ the vagina, had his love and his whole-hearted attention.

Admiral Bailey followed Yellowman's sexual style, and in 1987 he recorded what is perhaps the most iconic slackness tune ever, *(Gimmie) Punanny*. The following excerpt demonstrates the song's main theme in no uncertain terms:

52 Stolzoff, *Wake the Town & Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*.

53 Lasse Lavrsen, “Tolerance: Man skyder da bøsser,” *Information*, July 19, 2005.

54 For a Danish transcription of the debate, see; Skjelbo, “Dancehall og Homofobi.”

55 Ibid.

56 Lloyd Bradley, *This is reggae music : the story of Jamaica's music* (New York: Grove Press, 2001).

57 As far as I know, there is no consensus of the spelling of “punanny”

Gimmie punanny waan punanny
Gimmie punanny waan punanny
Gimmie punanny waan punanny
Gimmie punanny waan punanny
Coolie punanny, chiny punanny, blacky punanny
Whity punanny any punanny a di same punanny...

[Give me vagina, I want vagina, Give me vagina, I want vagina....etc
 Indian vagina, Chinese vagina, black vagina, white vagina any vagina is the
 same vagina]⁵⁸

Shabba Ranks (double Grammy Winner) has also recorded his share of slackness tunes. The following example, *Wicked inna bed* from 1989, is among the most well-known.⁵⁹ What makes Shabba Ranks' tune important here is its playful and humorous coupling of heterosexuality with homophobia and violence.

All a di girls go tell di world dat I am wicked in bed
Bad, mad, and a wicked inna
All a di girls go tell di world dat I am wicked in bed ...

Inna fi mi bed mi don't waan Alfred
Don't waan Tony mi don't waan Ted
Mi nah promote maamaman [(litt "motherman") = derogatory term for male
homosexual], all maamaman fi dead
*BAM BAM!!! Lick a shot inna a maamaman head*⁶⁰

It is quite common to see heterosexual explicitness in concurrence with homophobia, such as in the example above. One can find this in the individual tunes as well as in larger musical structures, such as a sequence of songs played by a DJ. Jamaican journalist and reggae historian Kevin Chang sees a pattern in this:

The established tradition that never fails to drive crowds wild is **Boom Bye Bye** followed by **Love Punanny Bad** and a string of slackness classics like **Position**, **Backshot** and **Stamina Daddy**. It may not be uplifting art, but as they say, it doesn't get any more real. (The invariable pairing of **Boom Bye Bye** and **Love Punanny Bad** deserves serious academic study.)⁶¹
 (Chang's emphasis)

The Punanny is not the Jamaican equivalent of the word "pussy" or similar semi-vulgar terms, with which it is sometimes confused. The Punanny is much more than

58 LP: Admiral Bailey, "Punanny," in *Kill Them With It* (Jammys/Live & Love, 1987).

59 I personally recall having been dancing to the song in Copenhagen numerous times, without having a faint idea of its semantic content

60 Single: Shabba Ranks "Wicked inna Bed" (Digital-B, 1989)

61 Kevin Chang, *Jamaica Gleaner online*, December 18, 2008, <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080224/focus/focus2.html>

just the female sexual organ. It is in most Jamaican contexts associated with motherhood, attractiveness and an overall reverent attitude towards women as life-bearers and mothers, says Cooper.⁶² (Cooper, 2004)

As Cooper puts it, the frequent mentioning of the female reproduction system in one form or another in the dancehall is not necessarily sexist; it is *African* in a way that most non-Afro-Jamaicans fail to understand: "The flamboyantly exhibitionist DJ Lady Saw epitomizes the sexual liberation of many African Jamaican working-class women from airy-fairy Judaeo-Christian definitions of appropriate female behaviour."⁶³

Lady Saw is a female DeeJay/singer with a reputation of engaging in extreme slackness in some of her stage shows and videos. She is a respected singer of other genres as well, a fact which perhaps emphasizes the point Cooper is trying to make: Women in the dancehall make their own (sexual) choices much more than they get credit for. When other feminists accuse dancehall music and dancehall culture of misogyny and complains that it is reproducing patriarchal norms, Cooper questions their personal competence in the field as such: "So what sounds to [American feminist writer] Obi-agele Lake's unseasoned North American ears like abuse of the female body can be re-interpreted from a Caribbean perspective as an X-rated affirmation of the pleasures of heightened sexual passion."⁶⁴

At this point, I have shown some examples of how homophobic lyrics are often connected with hard-core heteronormative slackness. This connection indeed confirms the classic feminist notion that homophobia and general male sexism are just two sides of the same patriarchal system.⁶⁵ But Cooper turns this argument around somewhat. She does so by, at least partly, placing homophobic lyrics as a *subset* of slackness in general. And so it follows that role play, metaphors, humour, and playfulness, all part of the slackness discourse, are in fact also to be considered part of the subset of homophobic discourses. So just as a knife is to be taken as a metaphor for a penis in a tune by Lady Saw and not as an instrument of sexual violence, the gun Buju Banton is shooting with in Boom Bye Bye is in fact also a metaphor: "In the final analysis, the song [Boom Bye Bye] can be seen as a symbolic celebration of the vaunted potency of heterosexual men who know how to use their lyrical gun to satisfy their women."⁶⁶

In Cooper's analysis, the general negative attitudes towards dancehall held by the Jamaican establishment are deeply based in the repressive patriarchal and colonial views on black people and women. She does not deny the virulent homophobia in Jamaica, but she reads dancehall as a whole, not least slackness, as an emancipatory strategy employed by the colonized against the colonizer.

62 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 244.

63 Ibid., 99.

64 Ibid., 101.

65 Chin, "'Bullers' and 'Battymen': Contesting Homophobia in Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature," 129.

66 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 160.

What is Patwa?

Patwa, or patois, is the creolized English spoken (or at least understood) by most Jamaicans and to some extent in Diasporas. It is a powerful marker of class and, ultimately, of skin colour.⁶⁷ Tunes in Patwa are by far the most common within the dancehall repertoire. The dialect, or language, depending on point of view, has been vilified as bad English, but also valorized as a genuine expression of empowered Black Jamaicans.⁶⁸

Patwa belongs in the informal, personal, and oral domain. English is still undisputedly the language of formal encounters, literature, and the upper strata of Jamaican society.

Patwa is often incomprehensible to the non-speaker, even though it is built on English vocabulary and grammar. But, importantly, most Jamaicans do understand and speak both languages, and so it follows that which language is used in any given situation is a *choice* by the speaker... in theory, at least. As Cooper demonstrates, using Patwa in the wrong situations can lead to serious trouble. Part of the heavy critique of dancehall in Jamaica is the argument that Patwa destroys English and ruins the language skills of Jamaican youth.

When Boom Bye Bye was a hit in the US in the early '90s it was partly because nobody understood what the lyrics were really about, until a specific translation started a heated debate. However, the polemic was not just about translating Patwa into "standard" English (whatever that is). Using subversive language in the postcolonial struggles with the former colonist is a well-known strategy, often employed by the subaltern artist as a means of showing or even changing power relations. The very choice of language and the use of specific phrases and words in the dancehall can be perceived as black Jamaicans "writing back" to the centre, as this artistic phenomenon is termed by Ashcroft et al. in "the Empire Writes Back".⁶⁹

In the case of Boom Bye Bye, it was argued that the translation that led to the controversy was biased and one-sided in more than one way. For example, it was stated that the postcolonial aspects of the translation were largely ignored in the USA.⁷⁰ Below, I discuss Carolyn Cooper's point of view on this.

Firstly, the very title "Boom Bye Bye" is not a correct transcription. The original title, says Cooper, was Boom *By By*, with *By* being an onomatopoetic for a ricocheting projectile, NOT a "final goodbye". A ricochet, more or less by definition, does NOT hit its target. The iconic fading howling is the sound of a damaged projectile flying away after having hit something hard. A point Cooper does not mention, but which in fact supports her analysis.

67 TJL Unit, "The Language Attitude Survey of Jamaica," *Jamaica: The University of the West Indies* (2005).

68 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 281-90.

69 B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

70 Chin, "'Bullers' and 'Battymen': Contesting Homophobia in Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature."

More generally speaking, the use of concepts like murder and killing in dancehall discourse are merely macho metaphors for getting rid of something unwanted. Furthermore, the batty-boy that is “killed” is not a representative of the gay community. To think so is to colonize Patwa by thinking it semantically similar to English:

First, the derogatory word “batty-man” itself illustrates the use of graphic imagery in Jamaican Creole [Patwa] to express abstraction. The explicit Jamaican word “batty-man” encodes a very precise naming of the place to which the sexual propensities of the homosexual are presumed to incline literally. “Batty,” the Jamaican Creole word for buttocks, compounded with “man,” encodes anal sex.

[....]

Thus, taken out of context, the popular Jamaican Creole declaration, “all batty-man fi dead,” may be misunderstood as an unequivocal, literal death-sentence: “all homosexuals must die.” Read in its cultural context, this battle cry, which is appropriated by Buju Banton in “Boom By-By,” primarily articulates an indictment of the abstraction, homosexuality, which is rendered in typically Jamaican terms as an indictment of the actual homosexual: The person (the homosexual) and the project (homosexuality) are not identical.⁷¹

With the Jamaican expert, Cooper, having had the last word, I will summarize the *content* discussion by pointing to three things: Firstly, one can argue that the field of production in which dancehall emerged makes it complicated to translate the meaning of its content without qualification. Secondly, the anti-establishment, anti-colonial nature of dancehall makes any attack on its products look neo-colonial to some extent. And finally, it is important to note that the idea that sexual explicitness (slackness) is a black emancipatory strategy, strangely, can make critique of homophobia seem even racist.

Reception

The Reggae Island. Mythology, Music and Money

The next song is about how much easier life would be without women.

S, Danish Musician before playing No Woman No Cry⁷²

Some of the Western critique of dancehall homophobia, draws conceptually and rhetorically on certain ideas of what Jamaican music “really” stands for, namely things like nature, peace, love and tolerance.

I postulate that “Jamaican Music” in the West is a construction and a result of strategies employed by the Jamaican tourist industry and the Western music industry. It is a perhaps trivial, but still amazing, fact that the country Jamaica is world famous almost exclusively through its popular music culture. Billions of dollars come from

71 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 160.

72 From my private recordings, 2005

the musical branding of Jamaica.⁷³ The tourist industry is an active part of this process and it is in many ways inseparable from the music industry, because of their obvious economic interdependence.⁷⁴

Marley's political militancy was gradually bended away from local Jamaican political and racialized issues towards a more universally acceptable or "generic" image of a spiritual man singing for justice and peace. As King et al state it, songs like *Get Up Stand Up* are so unspecific that they lend themselves easily to all sorts of freedom discourses all around the world.⁷⁵ The sound of Marley's music was altered in the transfer to the Western markets, with tempo changes and tracks dubbed by British and American musicians as some of the hearable results.⁷⁶

Marley's hit song *No Woman, No (Nuh) Cry* was not about the carefree life of the sexually free male bachelor or about the burdens of romantic love. With *Nuh* being a general negation, in this song it means "don't" cry. In its original context, the song is about a man comforting a woman in the hardships of poverty.

Probably, the Jamaican political establishment's strategic adoption of the Rastafarian symbols and iconography and the branding of Jamaica as a lush tourist paradise via reggae are parts of the explanation why Marley's deeply political songs can change their meaning so radically. King et al have written extensively on this hypothesis in King et al 2000.⁷⁷

Cooper points out that some of Marley's lyrics can definitely be read as sexist and problematic in many ways. She attacks the idea that dancehall is always more sexist than reggae.⁷⁸ Jason Toynbee and Danish journalist Henrik Bæk note the transformation of the revolutionary outspoken black activist Marley into something almost everyone can endorse.⁷⁹ The more unpleasant aspects of the Rastafari movement are also often ignored. Rastafarianism can to some extent be connected with racist Black supremacy discourses, for example.⁸⁰

Marley was not always all about peace and love, which is clear if one looks at the titles of his albums, for instance. Whereas the early Marley/Wailers records had titles with words such as *rebellion*, *survival*, *uprising*, and *fire* in them, the *post mortem* compilations are much more peaceful and downplays the fighting rhetoric. Instead, the natural, the mystic, and the peace are foregrounded.

What is perhaps unknown to some European readers is that at least one Wailers albums published in the early 1970s had photos of black guerrilla warriors with automatic weaponry on the cover.⁸¹ If one compares this with the later compilation cover

73 King, Bays, and Foster, *Reggae, Rastafari, and the rhetoric of social control*, 121.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., 99.

77 Ibid.

78 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 83.

79 Jason Toynbee, *Bob Marley: herald of a postcolonial world?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 2; Henrik Bæk, "Det jamaikanske tordenskræld," *Politiken*, October 16, 2009.

80 Toynbee, *Bob Marley*, 164.

81 For example *Soul Rebel*, Trojan, 1970

art, sporting a smiling Marley with a ganja cigarette on a lush green background, the tendency is rather clear. In *Reggae and Caribbean Music* Dave Thompson says the following about the (Western) reception of Marley:

Bob Marley ranks among both the most popular and the most misunderstood figures in modern culture [...] That the machine has utterly **emasculated** Marley is beyond doubt. [...]

Instead, the Bob Marley who surveys his kingdom today is smiling benevolence, a shining sun, a waving palm tree, and a string of hits which tumble out of polite radio like candy from a gumball machine. Of course it has assured his immortality. But it has also demeaned him beyond recognition. Bob Marley was worth far more.⁸² (My emphasis)

So Cooper's argument that Jamaican dancehall is easily misunderstood also ties to Western reception of reggae.

The Black Body and the White Head

...Damn,it should be okay that a nigger comes by once in a while and says some stupid things to 3-400 dancing people who do not have a faint idea of what the guy is doing anyway.

K, Moderator at Danish dancehall forum⁸³

The idea that black dance music is not to be taken intellectually serious is perhaps as old as the concept of black music itself. It is my argument that the residual racist essentialism behind that point of view is alive in public discourse on dancehall. I would like to point again to the public statement from the Venue Pumpehuset in defence of Sizzla's concert, found in the introduction to this article, "the *music* is insanely good." The way the venue manager juxtaposes lyrics and music hints at which one is the important, and that is certainly not the semantics of Sizzla's lyrics. The use of the term "insane" in such a context also brings up Ronald Radano's classic argument that black music connotes loss of control, insanity, intoxicating agents, etc.⁸⁴ The references to wet panties and sweaty armpits also found in the beginning of this article also serves to exemplify how dancehall is positioned as talking to the body.

I am not trying to imply that the persons in charge of Pumpehuset or the moderator quoted above are racists in any sense. Nevertheless, they do act within a discourse, which for example Walser and McClary find problematic:

Those who have accepted such theories have often embraced African and African-American musics as sites where the body still may be experienced as pri-

82 Dave Thompson, *Reggae & Caribbean Music* (San Francisco: Backbeat, 2002), 159.

83så må det sgu' også være ok at der kommer en neger forbi i ny og næ, og siger nogle få dumme ting til ca. 3-400 dansende mennesker der alligevel ikke fatter et kvæk af hvad han har gang i... KZ, moderator at Danish Reggae/dancehall portal in E-mail correspondence 2009.

84 Ronald Michael Radano, "Hot Fantasies: American Modernism and the Idea of Black Rythm," in *Music and the racial imagination*, ed. Philip Vilas Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

mordial, untouched by the restrictions of culture. Yet although such attitudes may sometimes contribute to cross-over and to promoting the appreciation of black music, the cost is enormous. For in such accounts, the **mind and culture** still remain the exclusive property of Eurocentric discourse, while the **dancing body** is romanticized as what is left over when the burdens of reason and civilization have been flung away. The binary opposition of mind and body that governs the condemnation of black music remains in force; even when the terms are inverted, they are always ready to flip back into their more usual positions.⁸⁵ (My emphasis)

Marley as well is linked to discourses of exoticism and naturalism. The sexual connotations of Marley the Rastafarian, not to mention the bodily, repetitive and bass-driven music he is associated with, are arguably part of sexualized Western conceptions of black males in general, again following King et al's view of the male Rastafarian as a sex symbol and (sex-)tourist attraction.⁸⁶

The Reggae Compassionate Act – Censorship and the Dancehall

There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.

M. Foucault⁸⁷

I dare presume that instances of censorship in a broad sense against dancehall and on all levels of this culture is far more frequent in Jamaica than is the case in US or Europe, where dancehall acts as a rule have been targeted solely because of homophobia. The language, the sexual content, the homophobia and the perceived glorification of gun violence has led to numerous cases of artists being banned from airplay or just accused of leading Jamaican youth astray.⁸⁸

Knowing that reggae in its origin is a highly racialized, militant black and sometimes even violent political music, it is interesting to notice that the notion of peaceful reggae as the *opposite* of violent and homophobic dancehall was invoked in what became known as “the Reggae Compassionate Act”. This document was an attempt by British LGBT group OutRage! at making dancehall artists sign a treaty in 2007. The treaty was not just about the artists agreeing not to perform homophobic material in the West. It defined what Jamaican music is about—or should be about. Some excerpts follow here:

Throughout time, Reggae has been recognized as a healing remedy and an agent of positive social change.

We will continue this proud and righteous tradition.

85 S. McClary and R. Walser, “Theorizing the Body in African-American Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 14, 1 (1994): 75-84. 76.

86 King, Bays, and Foster, *Reggae, Rastafari, and the rhetoric of social control*, 121-23.

87 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol 1, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 27.

88 Cooper, *Sound clash : Jamaican dancehall culture at large*, 168.

[...]

We do not encourage nor minister to HATE but rather uphold a philosophy of LOVE, RESPECT and UNDERSTANDING towards all human beings as the cornerstone of reggae music.

This Compassionate Act is hereby calling on a return to the following principles as the guiding vision for the future of a healthy Reggae music community:

- Positive Vibrations
- Consciousness raising
- Social and Civic Engagement
- Democracy and Freedom
- Peace and Non-Violence
- Mother Nature
- Equal Rights and Justice
- One Love
- Individual Rights
- Humanity
- Tolerance and Understanding

We, as artists, are committed to a holistic and healthy existence in the world, and to respect to the utmost the human and natural world. We pledge that our music will continue to contribute positively to the world dialogue on peace, respect and justice for all.

To this end, we agree to not make statements or perform songs that incite hatred or violence against anyone from any community.

ONE LOVE⁸⁹

It is still disputed who really did sign this treaty at the end of the day.⁹⁰ In addition, it is unclear why they did so. Sizzla said to Danish Newspaper Politiken that he signed solely to be allowed to play in Europe. However, he later denied having said so.⁹¹ What is significant is that the Reggae Compassionate Act is almost an artistic manifest of sorts, stating what “healthy” Jamaican music is about.

The Reggae Compassionate Act seems influenced by the constructed image that leaves out the darker sides of Jamaican music. The explicit mentioning of acceptable themes comes close to what one might call “constitutive censorship,”⁹² since it positively defines what you can say, not what you cannot say. The assertion that dancehall artists should “return” to the role of the all-peaceful reggae star is thought-provoking.

89 Full version at http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/w_compassionate_001.htm

90 See the Web site “Murder inna dancehall for the full story. http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/f_apology.htm

91 Politiken, Oktober 19, 2009

92 Beate Müller, “Censorship and Cultural Regulation: Mapping the Territory,” *Critical Studies* 22, 1 (2003): 1-32. 1.

A Danish TV journalist made it clear that the image of Marley as a representative of Jamaican music is rather fixed when she started an interview about the 2009 Copenhagen Sizzla incident with the statement “Well, many of us do indeed know about Bob Marley... but who is this guy...Sizzla...?”⁹³ By appealing to a specific framing of Marley as the *opposite* of Sizzla, she effectively prevented any nuanced discussion of the matter. My point is not that there is no difference between Marley and Sizzla, but rather that the binary opposition between “good” and “bad” Jamaican music is an interesting construction.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

The case of dancehall/homophobia shows how discourses of skin colour, sexuality, and music production (and regulation) are complexly related. A full account of the significance and importance of Jamaican music in and out of Jamaica is, of course, much bigger than this one topic. Nonetheless, I have hopefully demonstrated how the issue of homophobia highlights some thought-provoking residuals of colonialism in a specific musical context.

I would like to summarize some of my points in relation to the organizing themes of this article, production, content, and reception.

To some degree, it might be pointless to try to derive fixed meanings or messages out of one single dancehall tune. Exactly because it never really is permanently fixed. The production culture mixes up improvised live performance and recordings to the point where reification of songs or “tunes” becomes somewhat meaningless. Impermanence is at the heart of this way of making music. The “Eagger incident” demonstrated how knowledge of production/performance practice has considerable effect on the perceived meaning of musical actions. This is not to say that “anything goes, because it is all about context,” but it is worth remembering that dancehall is very much about the particular moment, not the fixed message of the musical work.

When it comes to discussions of the homophobic content of specific songs, one should take the genealogy of the genre into account in order to contextualize arguments. The argument against censorship is often that the lyrics should not be taken at face value. To some extent, this article supports that view. Patwa speakers notoriously use very colourful metaphors. The explicitness and general roughness of the dancehall lingo suggest that lyrics about killing and murder are not automatically to be perceived as real threats or as incitement to violence in the legal sense.

On the other hand, Jamaican dancehall artists frame themselves as activists with political messages and a claim to be taken seriously. That fact makes it interesting that Pumpehuset (and others) dismisses the semantic message and tries to separate music, artist, and lyrics.

93 “Mange af os har jo hørt om Bob Marley....Nu er der ham her Sizzla...Hvem er *han*?” TV NEWS Denmark, Interview with Johannes Skjelbo, 18th of October 2009

The idea that black music is something that talks to the natural body rather than the civilized mind does possibly influence discourses on dancehall in and outside of Jamaica. Historically speaking, reception of black music has always involved an element of sexual/body anxiety. Only this time it is Western *liberal* sexual politics, not Victorian norms, that are under fire. The challenge will be to counter this attack without again resorting to stereotyping based on pigmentation.

Part of this complex is that heteronormativity is still sometimes used as a marker of "blackness" or "African-ness," at very great costs for homosexuals in countries like, for example, Uganda or Zimbabwe. But also in the Western world, not least in the US, there are strong connections between homophobic discourses and blackness.⁹⁴

It has been discussed in Denmark whether or not Pumpehuset was acting as a censor in its own right in the 2009 case. The inferred threat of having a translator monitor the artist could make it seem so. But as I have shown, Danish Penal code section 266b is always in effect, and anyone could hypothetically have reported Sizzla to the police had he played any hate music. With Johan Fornäs you could say that the situation in Copenhagen 2009 was one where censorship can be considered legally justified, since Sizzlas expressions could hypothetically harm "very important interests", and since the suppression might *prevent* such harm.⁹⁵

I also see the translator as a message from the venue to anyone concerned about the concert. A message saying that even coded homophobia is not accepted in Pumpehuset. A more cynical (and speculative) interpretation could be that the risk of the concert having serious economic repercussions, like funding being withdrawn, led the venue management to hire the interpreter.

It remains uncertain to what extent it was the presence of the interpreter or rather the attention following the debate before the show that kept Sizzla from stating his views on homosexuals in Pumpehuset in October 2009. We cannot not know what could have been, of course. With Foucault we could say that that there are many forms of silence.

94 Elijah G. Ward, "Homophobia, hypermasculinity and the US black church," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 7, 5 (2005): 493-504.

95 Fornäs, "Limits of Musical Freedom".

Abstracts

The genre dancehall has for some time been the target of accusations of hate speech (or hate music), especially homophobia. In USA and in some European countries, concerts and tours featuring Jamaican dancehall artists have been re-scheduled or cancelled. This article explores the background for the controversy from a post-colonial point of view. I argue that the reception of dancehall connects with problematic notions of the black body and black music in general, including reggae. The article has its starting point in one specific incident in 2009, where a nearly-cancelled concert with Jamaican artist Sizzla incited a heated debate about freedom of musical expression vs. minority protection in Denmark.

Genren dancehall har i en længere periode været beskyldt for at formidle hate speech (eller hate music). Der forekommer homofobiske budskaber i en del dancehalltekster. Konserter med jamaicanske kunstnere er på den baggrund blevet aflyst eller flyttet i USA og Europa. I denne artikel undersøges baggrunden for denne konflikt med udgangspunkt i en postkolonial læsning. Artiklen fremlægger det synspunkt, at receptionen af dancehall har forbindelse til problematiske ideer om sorthed, den sorte krop og sort musik i almindelighed- især reggae. Artiklen tager udgangspunkt i en hændelse fra 2009, hvor den Jamaicanske kunstner Sizzlas koncert i København nær blev annulleret. I den forbindelse blev det heftigt debatteret, hvornår musikalsk ytringsfrihed bør vige for mindretalsbeskyttelse.

Note on the contributors

Kjetil Klette Boehler. Researcher, PhD, Department of Musicology, University of Oslo.

Ursula Geisler. Associate senior researcher, Lund University.

Helmi Järviluoma. Professor of Cultural Studies, University of Eastern Finland.

Antti-Ville Kärjä. Academy Research Fellow, Finnish Jazz & Pop Archive JAPA.

Jan Sverre Knudsen. Professor of Music, Faculty of Education and International Studies, Oslo and Akershus University College.

Tore Tvarnø Lind. Associate Professor, PhD, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen.

Johannes Frandsen Skjelbo. PhD student, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Section of Musicology, University of Copenhagen.

Thomas Solomon. Professor of Music, Grieg Academy-Department of Music, University of Bergen.

Kristine Ringsager. PhD fellow, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen.