

On Modern Women

program note

During the spring break of sophomore year, many were writing senior theses at ‘Senior Thesis Camps’. I went along for the free food, but as I was about to sip the orange juice, a friend jokingly demanded that I write a sophomore equivalent, because the refreshments were for those who were in the throes of their writing. I took her up on the offer, and wrote this ‘Sophomore Manifesto’.

A technique of knowledge that I often employ in conversation, in writing, and in writing music is to say something before I know what it means. This practice seems especially prevalent in art. Performance in art, and performance in general, always exceeds intent, even when the artist doesn’t intend it to.¹ This idea is closely related to the Heideggerian saying, ‘Language speaks,’² for it frames words as those which spring from pedagogically-ingrained, relational structures – words appear, and it is only upon second consideration that I come to recognize how they are appropriate. If they are not appropriate, it is often the case that I will make them so.

“On Modern Woman” fully embraces this idea. I began by writing an introduction in which I linked concepts together with limited conscious regard for their mutual relevance, and the rest of the essay attempts to address what the introduction has proposed, without stopping to pause to consciously adhere to notions such as ‘logic’ and ‘sense’. Of course, there is both logic and sense to be found in “On Modern Women,” for a couple of reasons. 1) I can’t delogicize my thought (I unconsciously number and categorize things as they come to mind), and 2) I am interested in creating something that interrogates the aesthetics of logic, not something that entirely refuses them.

I’ve found that the industrial context of academic knowledge often distances it from the idea of knowledge as something intimate and personal, and I’m much more inclined towards learning if it means uncovering the latter. To say this in another way, there are many conventions in academia that seem more concerned with imperializing knowledge than with democratizing it. Academic production is a profession, and professions in meritocratic society tend to require a specific technicality, a privileged means of creating product so as to legitimate that product. For many professions, particularly in the business world, that technicality is a vocabulary. Claiming efficiency, professions are constituted via a set of terms, a dictionary, and professional proficiency is often nothing more than access to and familiarity with that dictionary of terms.

There is something to be said for professionalism that legitimates itself in this way, however, for it is not absurd to claim that knowledge is nothing more than a shared vocabulary, and that it is a shared vocabulary as such that enables cooperative action and

¹ I am grateful to Judith Hamera for making this point: my rendering is a paraphrased, re-appropriated version of the original.

² See the chapter “Language” of Heidegger’s book, “Poetry, Language, Thought.”

productivity in the professional sphere. What can certainly be said is that this conception of ‘knowledge as shared vocabulary’ complicates the means by which one is able to distinguish between the ‘legitimate’ and the ‘illegitimate’ within a particular epistemological system.

Academia is perhaps the most active profession when one thinks of epistemological systems that are repeatedly interrogated by instances that bridge the legitimate and the illegitimate through semantic re-appropriation (that is, through subscribing to a profession’s vocabulary). As the Sokal hoax demonstrated³, a legitimate academic paper is often nothing more than elevated vocabulary, and recognizable references, with an elegant touch of obscurity to give the reader a little kick (something spicy).

Despite the reluctance of my prose, there are many things I like about Western academic tradition, and the structure of analytic thought that it cultivates in those who are schooled in it⁴. Sentences, paragraphs, titles; these are mostly good things to me, I am inclined to think. Though, perhaps it is exactly because I am inclined to think in this way that they are good things. I, nevertheless and resultantly, have some doubts in the logicity and continuity of subject that analytic thought requires. For whatever reason, I think more emphasis should be given to tangents.

Beyond interrogating the politics of academic genre as professionalism, I am also interested in the cognitive repercussions of epistemological norms and practices. Gregory Bateson’s “Metalogue: About Games and Being Serious” probes at the distinction between serious and playful representation not only as semantic categories of legitimation, but also as metrics of cognitive difference.⁵ This is a dimension of academia that interests me; how can academic architecture inform an understanding of how we understand things? Walter Ong’s ‘Orality and Literacy’ is perhaps the seminal address question in the recognized scholarly literature, and studies in linguistics, philosophy, literature cognitive science, as well as a range of other fields continue to address the questions “what is most meaningful to us?” and “what makes it meaningful?”

There are many other Western, textual formats that embrace various versions of illogicality, in deviating from what I have been calling academic legibility – the poem, the novel, the song, the conversation are all examples of such a deviation. What I am interested in interrogating is the way in which we give precedence to academic legibility as ‘clear thinking’. To write a poem about something is to come at it from a different angle of understanding than to write an essay about it: I want to integrate those

³ See Steven Weinberg’s “Sokal’s Hoax.”

⁴ Bibliography is not a structural convention of academic convention that I particularly enjoy. I think that this is somewhat evident in the way that I have structured “On Modern Women”’s bibliography.

⁵ Certain strands of phenomenology and/or cognitive science suggest that the two are one and the same: that internal cognitive architecture is symbiotically tuned to political representation in the external world (see Heidegger, “Being and Time”, Minsky, “Music, Mind and Meaning”)

perspectives, and experiment with what it would mean if alternative expression (such as poetry, song, and other ‘non-linear’ representations of meaning) were given an equivalent standing in relation to clarity as the academic essay.

My affection for tangents and the promise of illogicality is maybe a function of the connection I want there to be between knowledge and intimacy. Theory is useful only insofar as it is useful, for me: I don’t want to hold onto its legitimacy simply because it is externally worshipped as asymptotic approaches to truth.

In these veins, there is something about the kind of pseudo-satire that “On Modern Women” embraces that interests me much more than ‘legitimate’ academic work, theses contained by the droll mechanics of formulaic argumentation, by qualities such as *completeness* and even, to a certain extent, *coherency* and *understandability*. A friend of mine, whom institutional practice regards as particularly clever (last year he was the recipient of a Marshall scholarship), often seems troubled by academic practice, by logic, by forms of legitimation, by words. Though this path is rife with the risk of hermeneutic anarchy, there’s something appealing about that. I don’t think he will mind me quoting from a recent email he sent to me:

“i worry less about having to put thoughts to words and in general have just felt much less anxious. this might also just be my transition out of princeton—there’s really an obligation to talk a lot with the types of mind and personalities princeton cultivates.”

Maybe it is because I am young and idealistic, and perhaps particularly reckless in that state today, at this time of writing. When I’m looking for something to hold onto tomorrow, I imagine logic will be one of the first things I reclaim. But for today I’m thoroughly seduced by illogicality’s closeness, its seeming closer to desire, and further from Truth.

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on modern women

music & the function of self

It is not uncommon for music to exist as a function of romance. Many a young lover has turned to music's lonely caresses when desire's reality bites too aggressively at the continuum of social performances that he has, up until this point, contained by desire's abstraction. There is only so much consolation that one may find relationally when love may only take forms that are transparently legitimated by the other. The hydraulics of love's retrieval from sociality is not optional, despite relativism's claims – the mantra 'claim only what is given' is love's prerequisite and its parent. Without this protocol, love does not exist today, for desire is then hardened in its primordial concoction, and realizes itself only as malady and/or obsession⁶. Rather, softened by modernity's self-awareness (and causally the awareness of others as self⁷), love makes itself manageable as the bones of our bed and is figured in the pillows, rather than in the bed's frame.

Music, as an instance of art, is a palliative for the mind that is caught between the interior and the exterior: the voice that cannot find a suitable surface for the projection of cognitive, romantic landscape in the quotidian social sphere that is characterized by the aimless quizzes of day-to-day interaction. For this sentence, there is no quotidian vendor by which the inextricably mingled mind may purchase a high enough resolution for his fears, desires and delusions in the relational. Mingled in an atmosphere that demands particles to be understood, the mind must reconnoiter the artisan, crafting the image of an interior completeness, while love all around dismembers its commoditized sycophants on the rack of selfhood. Music, in its favorite cultural trope, is figured for the mind as consolation, as an alternative to what is absent. It is as consolation that music seduces the mingled mind; as such a mind is in search of placement. Music locates in longitude and latitude the lonely knoll of moral landscape where we feel we must be.

Because music imaginatively geo-locates the self through non-physical methods (i.e., triangulation), it does not reinterpret love's modern anatomy. That is to say, the bones of the bed remain figured in its pillows as they freely lie on its mattress. Therefore, what I am interested in developing as this manifesto extends into its next pages is a set of conceptual instruments for understanding what it means in our society (for the state of its modern love) to treat women as music. More comprehensibly perhaps (for from this point on, if the manifesto is comprehensible, it has not succeeded) – how are those practices that are considered socially permissible for women etymologized and reinforced by music's romantic function (for the mingled mind)?

a fascination with the mall

⁶ And/or, genius – though this issue would require another manifesto entire.

⁷ As per Freud, Jung as they have been interpreted by contemporary psychoanalysts. It is an awareness of one's own psychoanalytic symptoms, they argue, that allows an appreciation of other as a 'self'. In other words, introspection is the precursor (and, indeed, parent!) of all ethical thought.

At a younger age music was often used for feeling closer to women. Conditioned as other in a milieu of manly expectation, an all-boys-all-the-time school, we were inexplicitly taught that women required instruments for access: this was social suggestion. The forms of these were different, depending on the way our parents and other associated influences had scored childhood and the movements that it anticipated. Sometimes we deviated from the score with some like a simple excuse – “I’m walking home with Tom” – but often the notes were there, we just didn’t have the dexterity (and sometimes lacked the talent) to play them. It could be blamed on early age, but what it meant is that the applause we received after the final cadence was loving but dismissive, the expected clatter that commemorates a child who has just learned how to ride a bike for the first time (this is mainly, it should be said, because the audience was not literate in the sort of loving we demanded knowledge of).

After several blowjobs in a domestic forest that separated boys and the girls, we stopped looking for love in the music, as we were sick of asking people to listen, of exteriority, and instead let it furnish our interior. We learned modes and scales to break down the spectrum of our appetites, mirrors to refract its blinding brightness into colors to which we could give names, blue, green, blue, red, red. Taxonomy made it easier to sit with what we were supposed to be listening to, and songs like “Boom Boom Pow” sound-tracked the trajectory of contact between self and other, between women and man.

Let, for a moment, us follow the ghost of an idea and remember the Victorian ideal of femininity, with particular attention to the bodily ethic that it entailed. Jeanette Walls paints this picture neatly in her book *Half Broke Horses: A True Life Novel*: “She wore tight corsets to give her a teeny waist – [someone] helped her lace them up – but they had the effect of causing her to faint. Mom called it the vapors and said it was a sign of her high breeding and delicate nature. [Someone else] thought it was a sign that the corset made it hard to breathe.”⁸ Women in Victorian times were squeezed into versions of the era’s ideals, and were referred to in the same way that we modernly refer to horses: the quality of their breeding was of the utmost importance, for it was directly connected with marriage utility in the phenomenal world of men. If the self refused this hetero-normative agenda, then the matter, so as not to disparage the person, was dismissed as ephemeral and vaporous. The social reality of the times, as in all times, grounded sense of self.

Modernly, women, it was told to the boys who purchased blowjobs at the expense of alienation, liked and indeed were fascinated with going to the mall (though it was rumored that they liked music as well). Thinking about the sort of music that is played at the mall, this is how we reasoned their fascination:

- i . the mall is a place for buying, and, if you don’t know what you’re doing, purchasing. Capitalism well knows that purchase is the mingled mind groping at and/or flirting with a subscription to clarity. Expansive, peregrinating interiority peeks at us from every odd-numbered window. Thinking that the interior-exterior dualism may be both maintained and understood is a belief in individualism.

⁸ Jeanette Walls, “Half Broke Horses: A True Life Novel.”

- ii. particularity demands itself ubiquitously. On runways and on concrete, it has been taught that clothes, or the lack of them, figure the personality of the beholder. Beauty is something necessarily other, for the requirement that it be transcendent of quotidian attractions. Love insists its modern anatomy, and the purchase of clothes is equated with not just beauty, but particular beauty, an instrument intended to console the self when and while assaulted (in the sense, sexually) by insistent exteriority.
- iii. the store never satisfies, a singularity of which Adorno, Kracauer, Buddha, Richard Curtis, and even Benjamin are convinced. Yet the women's return is undoubtedly a rebellion, synonymous with someone's acknowledgement that a corset makes it hard to breathe. Social reality is quick to retaliate and render the objection beneficent for its own aims. The mall, figured by mingled selves as Icarian wings by which gender politics may be seagulled (if not orbited), instead becomes a recursive labyrinth that continually plays a purposive soundtrack. The album is marketed as alternative, but is in fact an altered regurgitation of the mainstream; namely the Victorian ideal of femininity. In purchase at the mall, we with the blowjobs have been told that women teach themselves the identity of Jeanette's grandmother – they will keep buying corsets.

The dialectics of purchase here described canonically resounds in the synchronous dialectics of eroticized touch to which we, as blowjob boys, were subject. It was observed that women harbor an obsession with touching each other, interpretable as a groping motivated by the same mechanisms as sartorial purchase at the mall. It has been told (though by God we have no proof) that contingency is exacerbated in the presence of the other, namely, us.

Before this continues, it should be noted that 'otherization', the imputed erection of categorization, is unavoidable. As per Douglas Hofstadter in his 2007 book "I am a Strange Loop", the ability to abstractedly consider moments not only as themselves, but also as things other to themselves, such as minutes and hours, foundationalizes our intelligence and indeed may paradoxically be the founding constituent of consciousness⁹. To do away with otherization is to do away with our selves. The ethical impulse to abscond category is a symptom of the mingled mind, stranded between interiority and its exterior projects. By paralleling these dualisms, interiority-exteriority and self-other, each is dimensionalized (by the other). In this moment, it suffices to say that just as we cannot do away with the interior and the exterior, so too we cannot do away with the self and the other.

Thus, continuing to dichotomize for the sake of consciousness and interpretability, an ethic of physicality has been learned in association with two versions: self and other. Those to whom an idea of self is extended – in the case of women, other women – figure as pillows, a niceness that makes bearable extended contact with the other, figured as the frame. Pillows are not primary, their necessity is fictional; were it not for the frame, or the floor, or some variation of structural hardness, the pillow would have no function and therefore offer no consolation.

⁹ Douglas Hofstadter, "I am a Strange Loop."

To lay one's extended body against the frame with neither mattress, neither duvet nor pillow seems heedless to our modern sensibility, for refusing the luxuries of the modern is the same as being dated. At his lectern, modern Capitalism counsels those looking for love, insisting that touch means nothing when it is not ghosted by persistent feeling. In this, we learn to lather our selves on those who bolster the self we have purchased, accruing opaque self-reinforcement and enabling the refinement of our oral technique. However, such crutches are nothing but reflections, and as is well known, reflections more often make us feel partial than they make us feel whole.

slut shaming

A second Jeanette (of the surname Winterson) etherealizes what has heretofore been recognized as a mundane matter in her gripping essay, *The Semiotics of Sex*. Winterson criticizes the modern state's politic of self and other, demanding a reconsideration of cognitive discretion and attribution, a more lenient exchange between the interior and the exterior:

“Why do we flee from feeling? Why do we celebrate those who lower us in the mire of their own making while we hound those who come to us with hands full of difficult beauty?”¹⁰

The pronoun “their” here obstinately refuses the politic of self and other that has been taught in learning how to give a blowjob. It may be understood as either ‘their’ or ‘our’, for Winterson’s argument is that the barriers that selfhood erects desire to forget themselves in Art: “Art is not Capitalism, what [someone] find[s] in it [they] may keep”¹¹. Curiously, Winterson does not consider Art consolation, like young lovers seeking extrication in the eternal sunshine of a mingled mind, but rather sees it as creation, “energetic space that begets energetic space”¹². As an author typecast by Capitalism’s lecture, Winterson is used to being reduced to the state of her sexual preferences. Her response to this is to seek objection, a frame that finds resolution in the project of her book, aptly titled “Art Objects”. The objection, “Art is Creation”, is her bolster; it serves as a pillow of a slightly different structure that softly frames and states the arrangement of the pillows on which she places her head.

Winterson’s objection is an instance of a modern listening that is tuned to erotic culture and the role that women are expected to play within it. Because we have been built on History’s foundations, women can only structure themselves in certain ways, for if they do so otherwise, they serve no purpose in the house (or, worse, threaten its architecture) and will inevitably be demolished before tenants have even moved in.

¹⁰ Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, Jonathan Cape, London 1995, “The Semiotics of Sex”, pg 116.

¹¹ Ibid, pg 112.

¹² Ibid, pg 114.

The modern's conservative architectonics of feminine interiority is projected to the exterior, as with all interior politics. One surface for the interior's visualization is the social practice of slut shaming. While men boastfully share news of their sexual exploits among their selves, and even in the presence of other, for women it is almost always considered culturally bashful to do the same, with either party. Gender equality is not and should not be the same as gender equivalence, and it would be anatomically amaurotic to demand gender equivalence in the realm of the erotic. However, modern love must be moldable. The state of erotic social discourse precludes women from playing with love – it demands that they lie on their backs without a word, sleeping soundlessly on a preset configuration of pillows, while man is granted the liberty of stretching out on the mattress, throwing those pillows he has no care for from the bed, and demanding there be warmth beside him in a specific place. The social practice of slut shaming traces a box on the concrete, and harangues her until she does not know what it means to be beyond the lines of chalk.

The exterior conditioning of an interior confinement is recognized by Jerry Watts in the introduction to his book *Heroism and the Black Intellectual*, in what he calls the 'victim status syndrome':

*"The victim status is a metaphor for the ideological discourse that mediates the political, economic, and psychological relationships between oppressed and oppressor.... The victim status sacrifices moral autonomy for social acceptance and material gain."*¹³

The conditions of a social reality demand an interior conception of self that caters to exterior typecasting. Moreover, cultural expectation determines the form and key signature of love, for love must harmonize with the other (or else it is not love at all), and the tone has already been set. The mingled self is looking for a high-resolution projection of interiority. The projection needs a surface, an other, in order to have visual effect – by its self, it is nothing but the impulse of a desire. Love (in its modern form), has the same premise, for it is figured as harmonization. If we allow these fugues to capitulate into each other as one, what is realized is *the modern need for an other*. The other listens, and teaches exterior means to the self, by which it may reflect on its structure.

The indispensability of the other philanders slut shaming as a social practice, and then swallows the exasperation it has provoked. The male interiority demands some recognition of its sexuality, for that very sexuality is inspired by the thought of the other's recognition (as Winterson puts it in another essay, "admire me is the subtext of so much of our looking"¹⁴). Taught by blowjobs in a domestic forest, that recognition finds itself all too often as shame. Women, similarly taught by the other end of the same blowjob, figure that shame as the interior banister of their exterior erotic ethic. This notion of shame as structural support perhaps explains the socially perverse pride that promiscuous women sometimes embrace: to shout "I AM A SLUT" to the world from a rooftop is to whisper "i am what you want me to be" to a lover, on a mattress. Thus the female figure learns

¹³ Jerry Gafio Watts, *Heroism and the Black Intellectual: Ralph Ellison, Politics, and Afro-American Intellectual Life*, University of North Carolina Press, 1994, pg 17-18.

¹⁴ Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, Jonathan Cape, London 1995, "Introduction"

how to love just as the all-boys-all-the-time schoolboy learns to throw fruit at girls when they walk through the grounds at lunchtime.

The rough physicality of the constricting corset forces the vapors of feminine interiority against its exterior projection in the social realm, and forces them from childhood to ‘maturity’, from datedness to the ‘modern’. The scene most famous for this allegorical admission is the tightening of Rose’s corset, in James Cameron’s classic *The Titanic*. Rose’s mother admits the obvious: “Of course [life]’s unfair, we’re women”. Aside from citing cultural tropes of modernity, however, she also alludes to the call-and-response between exterior and interior that features in the music of the everyday, in a more subtle statement: “Your father left us nothing but a legacy of bad debts hidden by a good name. That name is the only card we have to play”. Her mother here alludes to the interior’s obfuscation in the exterior, and, perhaps more resonantly, the exterior’s obfuscation in the interior.

fetishistic regression to the Victorian ideal of femininity

It is well known that the Victorian woman witnessed voluminous social, psychological and psychoanalytical abolishment due to the state of relations with the othered sex. Without suffrage rights, the right to sue, or the right to their own property, women existed only as they were indexical to men in the exterior. In this politic, the mind is stifled and forgets its capacity to be mingled, for it is presented with a superficial source for its discontent – the state of its relations with the other.

Though this ideal of femininity implies harrowing subjectival confinement, there is nothing dated in the relational ratiocination of the Victorian woman. As we have seen, the anatomy of self is inextricably bound in the other across every political conception. In other words, the self is always tempered by the reception its performance receives on the stage of sociality. Just as the performative walls of a type-casted character imprisoned women in Victorian times, the modern woman’s interiority must similarly act only between the parameters of exterior expectation, if subjectivity is to be afforded any merit. To once again reiterate modernity’s favorite trope, the modern is no more autonomous than the ideological biologics that precede it; it is only differently imbibing the exteriorized substance of its era.

By expounding the condition of his hypothetical intimacy with a sex doll, Tim Minchin brilliantly exposes the modern’s festered vocabulary of freedom in his parodic love song, “Inflatable You”. Here I quote the first verse:

*“Your love for me is not debatable
Your sexual appetite’s insatiable
You never ever make me waitable*

*Delectable, inflatable you.*¹⁵

Defined in the negative, Minchin's object of love is the angel of capitalism. She is love's unattainable object (for love does not want to be cast in capitalism's confirmations), a paradigm whose positive attributes find themselves only in Minchin's own self-consideration. The typecasting of beloved as blow-up doll through language is no more than a modern reinterpretation of the Victorian ideal of wife as trinket, tamed by her metaphorically constricting bodice. The mechanism is more abstract, but the outcome is the same: the other's focus resettles on the woman's bulging chest, no matter what modesty attempts to cover its conspicuity.

It is this festered rhetoric that constitutes the performative realm in which modern women assemble interiority, and what brings her back to a Victorian ethic of femininity just as a musical theme reestablishes itself as its sonata comes to a close. Exteriority's varnish inevitably stains the bed on which intimacy lies during the nights between the days of social nicety. Educated in a tradition that taught blowjobs as emotional currency, malls as the shopping carts of subjectivity, and promiscuity as a social negative, we become less concerned with the bed's bones, frames and pillows and instead scrutinize the small print scribbled on the label of the sheets.

In Noam Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, he notes that each formulation in language has a 'transformational history'; a genealogy of rules by which axioms and impulse have interpenetrated each other in order to conceive a genuine statement (within a given semantic system). This is a useful framework for thinking about the influence of the Victorian ideal of femininity on modern women, as it demonstrates the idea that women can be both 'modern' and 'Victorian' in the same semantic system. The modern serves as the impulse, and the Victorian as the axiom, and through transformational rules they repeatedly grope each other, resulting in what Rebecca Schneider would call a 'sticky' final product¹⁶. This final product – namely interiority – exists with a transformational history that maps its axiom, Victorianism, to its current state, the modern.

Though art has almost been exhausted, I want to conclude with Adorno's remarks on it in his famous essay, *On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening*, to return the Victorian ethic to a discussion concerning music, and the other:

*"The categories of autonomously oriented/intended art have no applicability to the contemporary reception of music; not even for that of serious music, domesticated under the barbarous name of classical so as to enable one to turn away from it again in comfort. If it is objected that specifically light music and everything intended for consumption have in any case never been experienced in terms of those categories, that must certainly be conceded. Nevertheless, such music is also affected by the change in that the entertainment, the pleasure, the enjoyment it promises, is given only to be simultaneously denied."*¹⁷

¹⁵ Tim Minchin, 'Inflatable You'.

¹⁶ See the first chapter of Schneider's book, "Performing Remains".

¹⁷ Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character'

Adorno here laments the modern's lack of a successful aesthetic totality, a complete transitivity between interior and exterior, and ultimately our inability to appreciate the cracks that characterize our every intimacy. It is the lack of appraisal for incompleteness, the unfathomability of the not-full, that functions as overture in the ghostly symphonies of the interpersonal sphere. There is little we can do to allay such specters; we are consigned to live by the shadows of fruit thrown at an age younger than now. What we are left with is a supernatural ache that courses through structures of mortality, spirituality that has no sanctioned physicality (and it is all but clear that God must have a body).

By blowjobs, women are victimized. By corsets, women are constrained. By ideology, women are reified, and by God! they must be Victorian, or they may not be women. There are norms that our music cannot forgive or obfuscate; and what remains is not the bed's bones, but the impression of where bodies once lay, the pillows of its Freudian discontent.

music and the function of self

Having now composed interiority's projections, let us elucidate its role in the exterior. As we lie uncomfortably on a mattress feathered and tethered specifically to a personalized narrative of relational politics, the story's structural support, the bed's frame, represents socio-political norms that have been reified and physicalized. While we depend upon the mattress for immediate comfort, it is an undecidable frame that has configured the subsequent exchanges between interior and exterior to which we wake. Our bodies are comfortable in an awareness of the mattress, and afford little consideration to the bed's frame, the skeletal infrastructure that enables love's emergent anatomy, allowing a sense of our Selves that is physical.

Let music serve as an analogical instrument that metaphorizes the procession of politics between the body's nakedness and the earth above which it rests. Borrowing from Aristotelian conception, music harmonizes theory's philology with physicality's applicability, and thus is an apt semantic container to conceptualize the relationships such as those between the anatomically real and its social counterpart, between the interior and the exterior, and ultimately between the body and the bed.

To refactor our figure's current framework with a set of new strings: music circumnavigates the sociological politics of romance, because it hides our learning's debts. Love is softer with music, for it's technique redefines the labels we give to self and other, to interior and exterior, to pillow and frame. But music, and especially erotic music, is difficult to find in the modern, for ours is a visual culture, not an aural one. When we read the word 'blowjob', we picture the act, rather than imagining the sounds. It is this cognitive project that propels regress in the modern state of our gender politics, returning our erotic ethic to its Victorian predecessors: in the portrait that popularized music paints, we regress to a Victorian ideal of femininity.

It is the emphasis on the affective that is wishing to be stressed – the capacity for the exterior and the interior to have permeable separators, and indeed for such separators to be the conceptual erects of a socially indoctrinated semantic requirement. In the

concise formulation of George Orwell: “if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.”¹⁸ Orwell is here gesturing towards the transitivity of objective existence that so distinctly characterizes postmodern thought – if music can be played in a bar, it might also be played at home. What music manages as a theoretical construct is the softening of those concepts that have solidified in the interior as presupposition. The hard and fast landmarks that have been programmed in the interior by the exterior’s ubiquitous insistence are given new geographic imagination; what was a range of mountains becomes nothing but a writhing mass of immobilized agents, and therefore anything to the next person¹⁹. Music is a means by which we may put ourselves in this place.

There are few movies where music does not feature as a romantic lubricant in the courting stage. Romance is the self’s fascination with the capacity of an-other to reflect the self, and love is the result of a successful negotiation between these two contradictory terms. Music placates both sides of the argument in such a conference; one is glad both that a forest blowjob is worthy of song, and that no artistic rendition could contain its privacy, for there is nothing that can be as it was again. Music sophisticates yet remains childish, both retaining adolescent thrill and doing away with it by recognizing its maturation.

It is in this sense that music consoles the mingled mind, in relation to love. The Victorian ethic of femininity that has been established by modernistic fetishism is given space to breathe – though we must be careful to clarify extent in any claim towards freedom, for music, too, has its reservations. What music allows is flirtation that remains faithful to the anatomy of modern love (frame, bed, pillows, etc), yet at the same time relocates ‘civilization’ in a forest where we used to feel free. With music, we are granted all the liberation of Thoreau’s extrication, while still having access to the adorning feathers and fair garments of Thomas Hardy’s ruined maid²⁰.

Where logic meets us in relation to modern woman, then, is at music’s crossroads. There is an ethical space (though not the only possible space of such character) when women are, in both the interior and the exterior, treated as music. Indeed, it is music that exposes the contemporary collection of legitimately feminine practices as *illegitimately* democratic. Only when we can trace the state of feminine affairs, the architectonics of its composition, are we able to observe a suspicious social reality: women are required to carry themselves pregnant with Victorian suggestion. Despite the postmodern claim to have embraced the progressive, we are mired in the gender inequality of our predecessors. Though music reimagines via a politic that makes love possible, in pondering a radical change in intimacy’s trajectory, I can think of few words, even less that make sense, and virtually none that logically follow those that come before. With regards to the future, we can say only what we know of the present, as it has been formulated by an interpretation of the past.

¹⁸ George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”. Pg 137.

¹⁹ Here I am aware that I am simply ventriloquizing the deconstructionist project. In one sense, however, the deconstructionist project is nothing more than ventriloquism, and thus in embodying its action I am both touting its success and flaying the remnants of what it has not addressed.

²⁰ Thomas Hardy, “The Ruined Maid.”

Honor Code

I pledge my everything and every other everything that I have not violated the codes of practice required of me and my everything in this examination.

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