

PARTY STUDIES

VOLUME 1

# Party Studies

VOLUME 1

Home gatherings, flat events, festive pedagogy  
and refiguring the hangover

edited: VÍCTOR AGUADO  
RAMÓN DEL BUEY  
BRANDON LABELLE

**ERRANT BODIES PRESS, BERLIN**  
**AMEE, MADRID**

as part of Communities in Movement: research on  
social acoustics, escape, and common life

CONTENT

Introduction .....	7
Pedagogy of Revelry – Toward Party Studies .....	10
<u>BRANDON LABELLE</u>	
Budapest flat concerts – past and present .....	36
<u>LUCIA UDVARDYOVA</u>	
Once Upon a Party .....	58
<u>ISTVÁN JÁVOR</u>	
Our Heroes on the Wall – Irony and Distance .....	74
<u>ANDRÁS KOVÁCS</u>	
A Cataphoric Witness .....	89
<u>VÍCTOR AGUADO AND MIGUEL BALLARÍN</u>	
Sala 603 – community of friends .....	104
<u>OCTAVIO CAMARGO</u>	
Politics of Sleep – A Text for the Right to Rest .....	123
<u>JULIA MORANDEIRA</u>	

# Introduction: the postponed

VÍCTOR AGUADO, RAMÓN DEL BUEY,  
BRANDON LABELLE

This publication is the first in a series of three volumes addressing the topic of the party as an experimental social form and expression. The series is developed in the context of an artistic research project focusing on the poetics and politics of community and collectivity. By posing the party as a particular social undertaking, we're interested to unpack a range of perspectives, from issues of hospitality, conviviality, and festivity to strangerhood, escape, and noise, all of which suggest a larger critical and speculative framework.

Developed collaboratively by the artist Brandon LaBelle and AMEE, Madrid, the project is organized around the staging of three parties in which different expressions and critical reflections can be manifested. Moving from domestic space and the house party, where intimacies and resistances found in home gatherings and events are considered, to the clandestine and hidden gatherings by which underground culture mostly subsists, and finally, to dance clubs and the large-scale raves that articulate partying as a culture, the project aims to mobilize different scales and forms of expression. The three parties are organized around collective discussion, performative gestures, and workshopping, so as to activate each party as a time and space for experimenting with what a party can be and where it might lead us.

As the Covid-19 pandemic swept across Europe in the spring of 2020, it became clear that our project would have to be delayed. Postponing our first party workshop and event from April, then to June, then to November, and now, until spring 2021 (though that may require further postponement), we felt the need to find a way to keep going. The idea came to us to initiate a publication series, to shift from social and material encounters to more discursive and textual. This first publication is therefore marked by an experience of delay, and by the current realities which make partying impossible. How can we imagine new ways of creating parties, of instigating forms of coming together today, of *staying in touch*? Within our current conditions of illness, uncertainty, infection, and collapse, there has emerged an ever-pressing need and desire to reinvent our practices and to figure ways of keeping together. We take great encouragement from many friends and colleagues who have worked at caring for each other, and caring for planetary communities, bringing creative responses and responsibilities to our interdependent situation. It is in solidarity with such movements that we share this publication.

In recognizing the challenges around gathering today, this first volume in the series addresses the issue of the House Party, and the ways in which the home or domestic space can act as a crucial and generative site for being together. How often the home becomes an informal gathering point, in which friendship and love are extended in the making of wider families. The publication includes essays by Brandon LaBelle, whose reflections on teenage parties as scenes of revolt allow for a series of philosophical and pedagogical views, and Víctor Aguado, in collaboration with Miguel Ballarín, who, in following a given poetic text chart out the transformative capacity of the party.

These essays are complemented by documentation and interviews capturing specific cultural situations and communities, where home gatherings and flat events nourish forms of

resistance and social vitality. These include interviews conducted by Lucia Udvardyova on flat events taking place in Budapest (partly organized by herself and the musician Rozi Mákó); a photographic presentation and related essay by István Jávör and András Kovács documenting house parties in Budapest in the 1980s along with a particular mural painted within the home of Ferenc Kőszeg, an important figure within the democratic opposition. Through such documentation and dialogues, the ways in which house parties become scenes of political resistance and cultural creativity are brought forward, and which move from the communist past to the oppressions experienced in the present situation in Hungary.

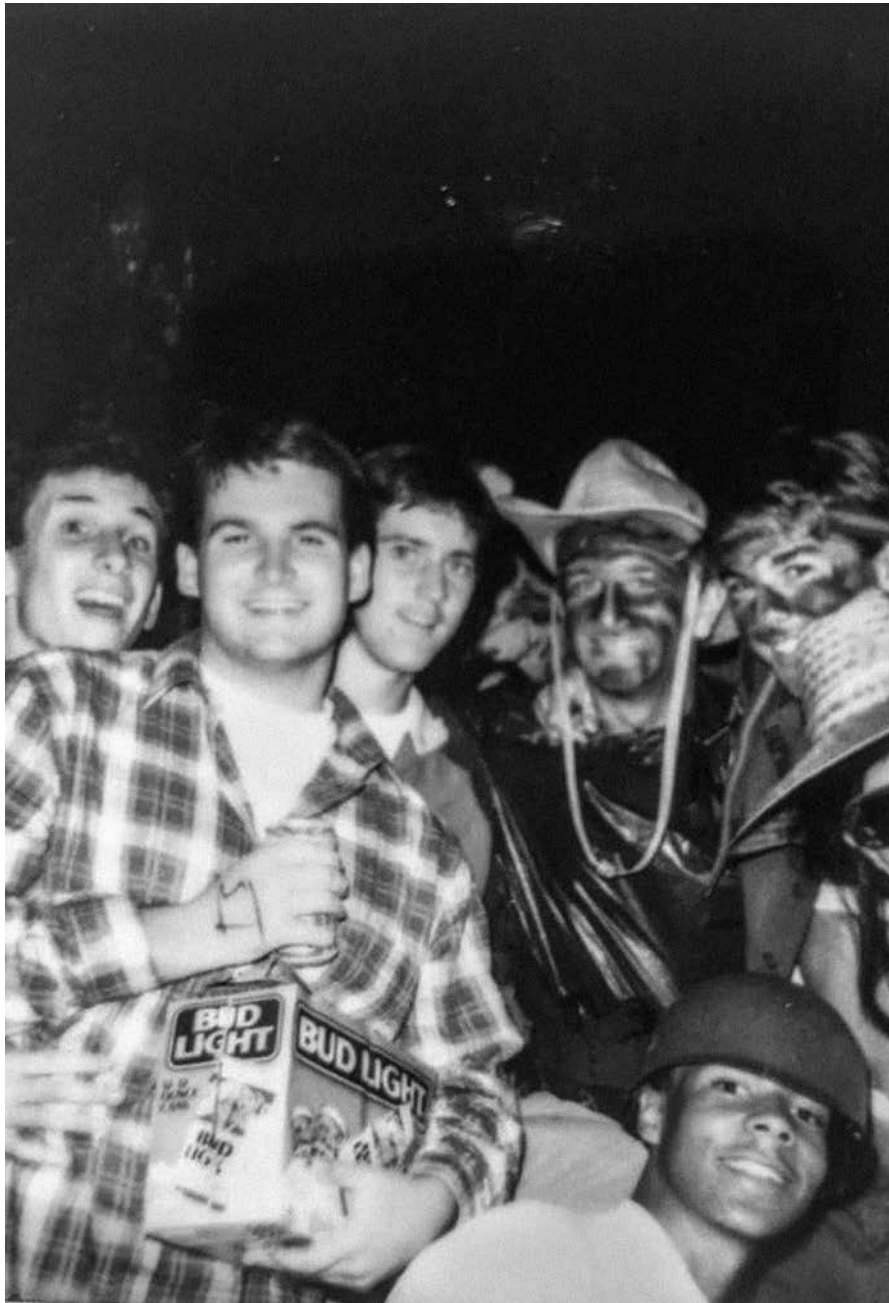
These perspectives are echoed in the activities at Sala 603, a home in the city of Curitiba, Brazil, where informal gatherings have led to self-organized theater and musical performances. Through opening the private home, Sala 603 reminds us how strangers and neighbors may find each other, and how families can be constructed by way of communalizing a domestic space. Concluding the publication, Julia Morandeira examines the issue of sleep, and how questions of labor and rest run throughout histories of capitalism. As Morandeira argues, our 24/7 society puts ever more strain on the right to sleep, and also, the desire and need for useless and unproductive activity (which parties greatly enable).

From the passion of festivity, the transformative joy of partying, and the numbing ache of the hangover to a politics of home-making, resistance, and sleep, Party Studies is put forward as a generative, and rather restless method and discourse, and maybe even, a way of life, which may help in keeping the party alive as an imaginative and extremely promiscuous enactment.

January 2021

8 /

9



## Pedagogy of Revelry – Toward Party Studies

BRANDON LABELLE

As teenagers, the home was always a potential site for impermissible gathering. Especially when parents would be on holiday, or traveling for work, leaving us at home. This is undoubtedly a typical scenario when it comes to throwing parties; with parents away, teenagers are left to take over. The home becomes a site of sudden transformation, upheaval, as if another type of law emerges, one of teenage life and imagination, which are often relegated to the background (even the basement) when it comes to defining domestic space and the dynamics of family togetherness. While the teenager may have their own room, if they are fortunate enough, allowing for a certain individuation within the family construct, a “free zone” within an otherwise adult organizational logic, when parents leave the entire apartment or house suddenly becomes material for other forms of expression. In fact, throwing a party, in this situation, is to open the home to a different type of family, one conceived less by parental ordering and more by tribal affiliation, adolescent love and loyalty, teenage struggle. Within this scene of the house party, home and family are transfigured. What emerges is never so completely foreseen, comprehensible, or legible – this is the beauty and power of such a scene, such an act: disobedience leading explicitly to states of delirium, new emotion, a raw order. However slight or

expressive, intimate or boisterous, the teenager throwing a party at home mostly oversteps the bounds of proper sociality and the law of family life, giving way to an intensification of experience and the testing of limits.

I start with this particular form of party in order to suggest that parties in general tend towards disobedience, and that they capture a potentiality founded on passion and erotic power. From the social to the spatial, the (electro)acoustic to the performative, the hospitable to the inhospitable, parties draw out challenges to what is deemed lawful or acceptable behavior, putting into question the general order of the proper and the improper. All of which suggests that parties are not only scenes of social gathering or celebration, but also operate as a material ground for the expression of dissidence, rebellion, love, and solidarity, and as such may give guidance to how one may rework the bonds of social subjectification – to perceive a given social order as mutable. The party, in other words, can be seen as a worlding endeavor and as such draws into play what Dimitris Papadopoulos terms “ontological organizing”<sup>1</sup>: the manifestation and enactment of being together otherwise. While the party may be a temporary break within the humdrum of daily life, an escape from the usual, I’m equally interested in the ways in which the party impacts onto a social and bodily imaginary by delivering a *criminal* sensation that one may carry back into the world. A sort of divine hangover from which law and order, subjectification and productive life, are seen as banal, that is, refutable.

I’m tempted then to follow the party in a rather utopian or rather, *atopian* way to suggest that it may teach a great deal, affording access to the erotic force of common or uncommon life, of being in one’s body with others; and further, that it may function as a mechanism by which sociality disorganizes itself, acting as a testing ground for a community to come, and supplying lessons on the radical plasticity of social worlds.

In this sense, I’m interested to extract from the cultures or mythologies of partying, and the general enactments found therein, a series of pathways: to approach the party as a scene of invention that moves one into an arena of emergence and raw sociality: a being-in-common that is equally uncommon. The natural law of the party is imaged here less as an expression of “the good life,” but rather, one of danger and destitution: to party must be to risk something. This is what I witness in the teenage party: a type of primal scene – a mythical narrative: the first party – that introduces partying as a dangerous enactment, an organizational radicality, one that brings into relief the often hidden disciplinary ordering underpinning the experience of growing up by drawing out the ever-present threat of capture, arrest, punishment. To take over the home, in that disobedient drive that seeks to free teenage life, is to already know one is breaking the rules. Recalling my own experiences of teenage partying, how often the police or parents would arrive onto the scene to forcefully draw back into shape the broken order of the home.

#### A WRECKED BODY (ESCAPE)

*One arrives, moves into the scene, which is brimming with energy; there are the matters thrown here and there, others arranged according to an intuitive idea; the passing of bottles, chips, and other stuff, a passing from the kitchen to the living room, to the balcony and back, to the bathroom and bedrooms; a general flow of festivity bumping against the walls, being jostled here and there, as the music (for there is always music) thumps and pumps, vibrating the scene, the skin, the neighbors; one arrives, enters this lively dance of commotion, the ebb and flow of laughter and longing, inebriation and hallucination, with the lights turned low,*

*the walls splashed with shadows; it is hot, someone opens a window, the clothes are peeled away, shoes come off as the music kicks up a notch, to get us moving; within this strange collaborative situation things are pushed together, messed up, the life-force of bodily-being is given room, time for joyous as well as painful revelations.*

While there are a variety of parties, from dinner to bachelor parties, wedding receptions to birthday celebrations, I follow the teenage house party as a guide, for it may capture (or remind of) the erotic potentiality of the party. Here, the party is more intuitive than thought out, more unsanctioned than operational, more inhospitable than hospitable; it is a sort of *untamed version* whose example may be carried forward into future (adult) gatherings and what we may come to desire from any social get-together. The party, from this perspective, emerges as a fundamental site or experience of rupture by which to experiment with alternative social and bodily principles. From the expression of non-normative behavior, or that of a certain “nocturnal” identity, to the reshaping of time and space into a creative work – the making of a décor or milieu in support of rapture, where partying becomes an act as well as a staging – the party emerges as an aesthetic, material force, one that carries us somewhere else.

Although parties often express a certain fraying of the socially acceptable, they are also fully integrated into the operations of a social world; the party, in other words, is deeply social, at times even scripted, engrained within rituals of celebration, which always mark some form of transition or transformation. The party is thus often situated unsteadily between bolstering a social order and tensing its borders; between subscribing or reinforcing a certain narrative and breaking the vocabulary by which such narratives retain their meanings.

The teenage party is also not without such tensions. With the temporary upheaval of the family home, the party often affords expressions of individual standing within a community of peers captured through drinking games, performative excess, a being-cool, and one’s ability to stand out or pick up partners. Within the teenage party, one may experience the deeply unsettling stigmatization of being unpopular; the isolated figure standing in the corner looking awkward, feeling uneasy in this scene of social performance – this is also key to the general enactment of the party and its tribal, inhospitable character.

Togetherness and loneliness, performances of excess and stigmatization, sexual conquest and drunken collapse, joy and despondency, interweave into an unsteady form whose tensions become the very force of its own pleasure. As an ontological construct, a worlding expression, the party is always moving toward excess – it gravitates, or works its way there, where territorial lines are continuously drawn only to be erased, limits breached or disputed, defining a rhythm, a pulsating beat that continues to a point of exhaustion, a going too far. To party is to work at wreckage.

It is within such a scene, such a construct, that identities shimmer, bodies fall apart or stand out, social forms rupture – these may be grasped as fundamental performativities structuring the party and its force, what I would highlight as its erotic quality. Here, the erotic is cast as a sensuous power emerging between oneself and others, where the body is held within a greater intensity of togetherness. The erotic is therefore physical as well as spiritual, even ecological: an intensity of sensuality that, in the scene of the party, moves to give shape and meaning to experiences of encounter and collectivity. In this regard, the wreckage expressed in partying carries the potentiality of emergence, a going too far that stresses the lines separating pleasure and pain, love and hate. Rather, something else takes hold, is given



traction. In short, the party enables the materialization of a *possible body*: an erotic undoing that impacts onto one's sense of corporeality. As a scene of intoxication and delirium, one commits to a certain disintegration, a falling apart. It is never clear where such an undertaking may lead – one is never truly in control of such enactments. Through the dynamic commingling inherent to partying, the body and the bonds that hold it are unsettled, giving way to an ecstatic charge that is both joyous and violent.

Following the dynamics of the party, the body takes on a trans-subjective, or even anti-subjective perspective: the “party-body” is a body overcome; it works against itself, drawing together passion and dejection, joy and self-destruction, intimacy and loss of control, into a deeply potent construct. A body in pieces, or remade into a new whole? This is precisely the unsteady, erotic logic of the party: holding together contradictory or conflictual forces. In this regard, the body becomes more and less of itself, shot through with feverish (un)doing. Where the body ends up is never so certain, but clearly it arrives near to oblivion. The party, after all, is often the very thing enabling escape from oneself and a logic of self-management.

Here, I follow Catherine Clément and her philosophy of delirium, which she articulates through an elaboration of the musical concept *syncope*, where “a note lags behind and anticipates the rest of the movement.” From such a starting point, syncope is captured as what “creates delay” – it staggers time, introduces gaps, hesitation, a prolongation of suspension: a holding that gives way to an anticipation of resolution. Following syncope as a musicality of delay, Clément applies this to understandings of the body and subjectivity, and importantly, processes of transition: “The difficulty of crossing from one body to the next, from one stage to the next, and from life to death, will always be a test: initiations, love at first sight, depressions, syncopes are used to resolve this.”<sup>2</sup> Syncope is a “coming out of oneself;” a pause that

staggers temporality and the forward progression of a productive self; rather, syncope is a *being-elsewhere*. In this sense, syncope is underscored as a crisis that carries its own power of return: a “dissonance” whose interruptive force operates as a vehicle for reclaiming a sense of consonance, for reinventing precisely the logic of an order.

Returning to the party, and the notion of the party-body I'm pursuing, delirium performs to undo the daily rhythms of the body, staggering or dizzying a given schema of corporeal being, from the sociality of productive life to the biological practices of a managed self. The party-body, in contrast, is a wrecked body, in so far as it destroys itself. It puts itself into crisis, this body thrown to pieces. At the same time, such crisis is mostly temporary – the party as a construct introduces an instant of dissonance, an eruption even, that carries a sense of return and process of recovery. As such, I'm concerned less with a notion of the party as an expression of collapse, or absolute loss, and more by way of syncope – a “fainting, an eclipse”<sup>3</sup> that interrupts and replenishes at the same time. This dynamic of breakdown, escape, wreckage and then recovery, consonance, reordering, is suggestive for understanding the party as a scene of transformation, a testing of limits and an articulation of (re)invention. What I may focus on when it comes to the party then is not only acts of drunkenness and debauchery, but equally the aftermath: the reordering that follows, which is never without the experience of the party itself (never without the hangover, the impress of transgression and breakdown). In other words, in what way do we carry the party with us? How does the erotic intensities underpinning partying influence how one returns to the societal? Might the party, in fact, manifest a certain *general state of revolt*? Where escape turns into a method – a form of engagement.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Clément, *Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 119–120.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Clément, *The Call of the Trance* (London: Seagull Books, 2014).

Syncope, and the delay the party performs, gives way to a logic of transformation, where the body is moved by way of passion, dissolution, aggression, heightened joy – all of this together. From such a view, the party-body locates itself upon a trajectory of change: an othering that, while steering itself toward wreckage, recovers something of the body: that which is often occluded by the obligation of control and self-management.

The wreckage of the party-body is thus, at the same time, a type of healing, a gesture or an act that attempts to recover something of the body: that places the body at the edge of itself so as to not only disorient, but equally, to reorient one's sense of bodiliness as always being more or less than oneself.

Valentina Desideri and Denise Ferreira da Silva suggest, through their “poetical reading” practice, that it is imperative to upset the notion of “the subject” often understood as a separate entity – as the delineation of oneself, as a form of self-possession, even of self-administration – in order to recuperate the connectedness always already shaping and influencing us. For Desideri and da Silva, it is about learning to live with the complexity and uncontrollability of that connectedness, which requires a practice, an “experimentation.”<sup>4</sup> In this sense, I take the party, and the undoing of the subject it comes to incite or encourage, as such a practice, as a scene of experimentation that may allow for experiencing oneself as inseparable – as always already incomplete: a finitude, and with the capacity for erotic power. The party, as I'm envisioning it, is the site for an absolute loss of control that, at the same time, allows for recovering oneself as more and less than oneself.

#### AN IMPOSSIBLE COMMUNITY

Can we speak of a natural law of the party? A cosmology of party-life that follows certain principles, however shady? Might we consider party-making as a strange-craft that produces forms of

knowledge as well as sociality – that impacts onto epistemology and the social imaginaries that lead us to each other? As the party is dramatically a social scene (it is hard to imagine a party for one?), how might we understand sociality, collectivity, and even community by way of partying? Within the delirious comingling the party incites, and the general state of revolt, what becomes of the relational and feelings for being-in-common?

*Arms outstretched, feet tapping, hips shaking, while others smoke and laugh, stealing cigarettes or throwing matches out the window; who are you and what brings you here?*

Jean-Luc Nancy, in his writings on community, or what he terms “the inoperative community,”<sup>5</sup> gives an indication for approaching the social within the scene of the party. As Nancy outlines, community is to be understood as the “sharing of singularities” expressed as a state of passion not so much defined by a notion of “the project” (a work of identification, a myth of lost origins), but rather, one figured by way of a “social ontology” – subjectivity as always already “interrupted.” In this regard, community precedes any notion of subjectivity and individuation; under the vitality of community one is *unworked* as an individual, leading less to a force of “communion.” Rather, for Nancy, community is the anti-thesis of communion, because communion necessarily puts one to work by demanding allegiance to a figure or narrative of immanence: that one may find completion by way of an internal set of bonds. In contrast, community is defined by a more transcendent condition or quality, by that which is external to itself – the otherness which one is always already touched by.

<sup>4</sup> Valentina Desideri and Denise Ferreira da Silva, *A Conversation Between Valentina Desideri and Denise Ferreira da Silva*, publication as part of the artists installation *The Reading Room*, Rupert, Vilnius, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

Nancy's social ontology, and his inoperative community, this community not of work nor communion, but of play and the passion that is only to be found in the fact of things, in the fact of the body as a vitality, is extremely suggestive for approaching the question of the party. While the party is certainly at times a scene of membership, a closed circuit that tries to reinforce itself according to a set of internal meanings and rituals, it is also often constituted by a relation to its own undoing, whether by way of strangers who happen to enter, maybe brought in by an invited guest, or by the fact of its transcendent and rapturous nature: the party as being aligned with an emergent sense of becoming, of excess and abjection, a breaking down and a leaking out. Here, I may highlight the etymology of the word "party," which points to the formation of a specific group: "to part, or to separate" into particular parties (hence, the political party). The party, in this sense, carries the inherent dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, of territorial separation into clubs or associations, and around which particular values and meanings are articulated. Partying is thus to celebrate the fact of ourselves as an associated group – an affiliation whose definition is enhanced by way of festivity: to party is to join the club, as that which is in tension with a greater society.

Within this scene of membership, though, things happen. Doors may be flung open, intruders may arrive, neighbors may slip in or complain; friends may suddenly become strangers, lovers may betray, bullies may enter the scene; and yet such positions are also never stable – friends may re-emerge, in ever pronounced ways, and relationships may return, reinvigorated by the drama of argument or brawling. As with the figuring of the wrecked body, the sociality of the party fuels delirium: a collaborative, renegade and uncontrollable type of sociality in which to be together is to oscillate along an unsteady line where friendships may suddenly fray, fights may break out, new intimacies may be found – the world, in short, is turned upside down. Overall, the meanings that

bring some together are also continually undone, translated, re-worked, disputed. The party often pushes hospitality to its limit, where friends may suddenly break things, upset the order of the home, or turn against the host; hospitality is fundamentally strained by the party it creates. This is the risk one must take – the party, if it is to realize itself, must be dangerous and inhospitable.

Leaving the political party behind, and returning to the teenage gathering, and the atopian line I'm pursuing, parties may give way to the inoperative community Nancy theorizes, as that which is defined by interruption, passion, a sociality gone too far. Throwing a party is to literally throw caution to the wind: it is to push together with the secret hope of losing bearings, of dirtying the home – to relish that feeling of letting go. Such inoperative sociality unworks the body and the social bond, displacing or destituting the myth of lost origin by evading meaning, by residing in the moment, fully and completely, and if there is communion it is only to that of the bottle, music, the vibratory force of being-in-common which, following Nancy, is interruptive, inoperative. (This is the fundamental distinction to be made between the party as communion (politics) and the party as community (revolt)).

I want to suggest, at the same time, that the sociality of the party, even while tending towards inhospitality does so according to a form of love: the commingling defining the party, and the inoperative passion shaping its dynamics, puts love into the crowd. I might call it a "polyamorous" scene whose criminal sensations and wild aggressions come to distribute love, shifting from the intimacies between two and toward a general social feeling. The party comes to act as a scene of loving each other, loving the party itself, a getting together that supports and nurtures friendships, as what interrupts us, remakes us. As such, the party may teach how to love more generally, to figure love not only as what one



may share through intimacy, but also what one may bring into the crowd: to love for no reason. The community of passion Nancy outlines is suggestive for such an understanding, where bonds are not necessarily traced by way of heritage, ancestry, investment or history, but are found in the “nocturnal splendor” of the body, as the violent joy that sustains us.<sup>6</sup>

The sociality that emerges in the party is therefore never only social, in terms of staying with the subject, its constitution as a self, and a linguistic order or public discourse. Rather, I may emphasize that sense of tactile partnership and collaboration that emerges with other matter: not only bottles, drugs, or other stuff, which are so vital to driving the party-body along its wavering course, but also, the matter of music and its vibrational force. Music must be captured within the scene of the party as a more-than-social agent – an acoustic, vibrational force that explicitly underpins the party-scene as an ontological endeavor, as a flourishing that spreads itself. From the rhythms bringing bodies into movement to the vibratory waves of sonic energy that assist in binding the scene together, giving atmosphere and deep affect to the experience every party tries to generate, music forces the party into motion. In doing so, music figures the party as a narrative – it assists in defining the spatio-temporal dimension, and the general affect of loving, to give dynamic shape and punctuation to the unfolding the party performs. From within the scene of wreckage and affection, music helps turn the party into a story – a literature of the event that brings all things together, forcing them into an intensified state of erotic sensation and touch.

Such a literature is founded on acts of DJing, as that gesture aimed at the mix. Cutting and scratching all musical matters, assembling and synchronizing multiple beats, superimposing and juxtaposing all types of tonalities and lyrical sentiments, DJing is a performative sonic act fully aligned with the party as an ontological, material, collective and atmospheric endeavor

– as that worlding movement that is fundamentally a mix: from the musical to the social, the bodily to the energetic, one enters the party in order to mix and be mixed, to fall into the mix, stepping to the beat of an altogether different order or groove. Here, DJing might be said to orient those that party by granting a vibratory, tactile, and lyrical thread.

To be a good party is to set in motion an unforgettable vibe, an indescribable rhythm that brings an erotic power to the fore, to ride upon the skin as one brushes against and through the crowd. From within such a scene, I might suggest, the party is deeply social while being antagonistic to society; it may build clubs only in order to rebuild society – to break the nature of its operations by going too far. As such, the party captures an impossible community, a community for and against itself, and may offer insight into the creative, erotic constitution of the common in general. Nancy’s social ontology must be extended, in a deeply passionate and monstrous way, to integrate in its emergent weave all such matters and vibratory forces, radical partnerships and loving intensities, which is something every partier knows: one is never quite alone as long as there is a bottle and a beat.

#### EROTIC KNOWLEDGE

*With the cops outside, and the band thrashing, he bolts the doors shut, hammering nails into the windows, while others are crashed out on the sofas, oblivious to the situation, and some are in the pool, smoking dope in the bushes, another in the kitchen downing Gatorade and vodka, and later on, he walks right into the glass door, feeling smashed even more as his girlfriend breaks up with him leaving him devastated. And she, finally free, taking a swig and enjoying the music.*

What is the party's relation to epistemology and the articulations of discourse? If the party is suggestive for a particular study, how does it relate itself to the field of knowledge – is there a specific knowledge path or framework engendered by way of partying, and if so, what might its impact be on the general dynamics of research and education? Can there be such a thing as a scientific view or approach to the party as a cultural form? From felt, erotic experience to the intensification of a generative disordering, the party as I'm outlining gives way to a range of delirious enactments and sensations, which moves the body and relationships toward passion, wreckage, revolt. As such, questions of knowledge may equally be considered by way of excess and the erotic – by what Georges Bataille calls “sovereignty.”<sup>7</sup> For Bataille, sovereignty is found less through an act of possession, production or labor, as a struggle for self-determination; rather, sovereignty, or what he terms “sovereign life,” is articulated through forms of expenditure: by a compulsion toward excess and the consumption of the “surplus” of production. In this regard, sovereignty exists beyond the necessities of life and the labor one often undertakes in order to fulfill them. Through such a view, Bataille aims at recovering the sovereignty that all persons possess, steering us, by way of the pleasures of the sensual, toward the “miraculous.” As Bataille argues, sovereign life is grounded in the moment: it is a taking leave of the directive to produce, to be always operative, in service of a future to come. Instead, sovereign life is consciousness of the moment and, as such, it is never a work of knowledge, for “to know is always to strive.” For Bataille, the miraculous instead resides in a state of “unknowing”: a nonknowledge that finds expression in what he calls “happy tears,” as the intensity of ecstatic being.

Is not the party a scene of happy tears? Where pain and pleasure, suffering and joy fuse, leading to all sorts of sudden, unknowing articulations: of comradeship and betrayal, of sensual

dizziness and despondent misery, vibratory rapture and brutal breakage – one that firmly situates one within the moment. The party turns the moment into a world of sensation, a common (or rather, uncommon) life that, fundamentally, requires an intensification of presence, a deep hanging-out.

Following Bataille's erotic philosophy, knowledge is based on a leaving of the life of utility: a rupture, a laughter that moves one through the fullness of the senses to arrive on the other side. A taking leave that enables one to live by the moment, in the realization of sovereign life, for the erotic is founded on bringing attention to the ever-emergent, the festivity of shared discovery and invention, the sensual, tactile materialization of joy found in being together that may interrupt utilitarian value as what instrumentalizes towards a future goal. In this regard, for Bataille knowledge by way of sovereign life is shaped less by a logic of production, but rather, by becoming conscious of the moment – nonknowledge as knowledge against itself.

I'm curious in what ways the erotic may be understood as an approach to study. And the party itself as the expression of research. By this I'm suggesting that the party may be appreciated as a scene of concerted doing, or rather, undoing: the presenting or glorification of one's own fragmentation that gives way to a pedagogy, a position of study. To be clear, my intention is not to capture the party as a scene of teaching, in terms of showing how one should party, or to channel partying into forms of academic output. Rather, the pedagogy I'm envisioning is along the lines of what Jan Masschelein terms “poor pedagogy.”<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the notion of a “rich methodology,” and the relaying of knowledge by way of a hierarchy of expertise, Masschelein seeks to ground learning, “impoverishing” the tower of knowledge in order to stay close to the process of shared discovery. Poor pedagogy thus locates us as a collective body gathered by way of

<sup>7</sup> Georges Bataille, “Knowledge of Sovereignty”, in *The Accursed Share*, vol. II & III (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Jan Masschelein, “E-ducing the gaze: the idea of a poor pedagogy,” in *Ethics and Education*, 5:1 (2010): 43-53.

curiosity, improvisation, and the joy of finding out together, and which wields an attentional demand – within the scene of poor pedagogy, one is displaced, continually moved and as such, one must attend to the unfolding emergence of what is found along the way, rather than what is given, stated, handed down. To some degree, poor pedagogy is about getting lost; it is about allowing for a lack of control, and a lack of “intention,” a suspension of the plan, thereby putting knowledge within a framework of “art”: that is, the capacity to manifest, and inhabit, the edges of truth.

Following Masschelein’s position, to study is to take leave of knowledge as commodifiable, as something one works at, to figure instead an ecstatic act of collective concentration. This finds echo in Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s notion of study as a “fugitive gesture” that explicitly counters the valorization of knowledge as a commodity (within today’s neoliberal environment).<sup>9</sup> For Harney and Moten, to study is to upset the classroom as what “calls to order,” and that positions subjectivity and the production of knowledge within a greater sweep of institutionalization. Study, instead, is posed as that which we do as a “speculative practice” and which involves a range of activities, from cooking, cleaning to walking and dancing – and partying. To study, in short, is to draw out “intelligence in motion.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, to study might be to party: with ideas, with each other, with things, and with what we may create from nothing.

In considering the party as a scene of study, as what may keep us attuned to the principles of the moment and the miraculous, a principle of sovereign life as founded on the ecstatic and a state of general revolt, I’m led to pose a *pedagogy of revelry*. To revel is to engage in a form of behavior particularly aligned with intoxication and indulgence, as an immersion in the sensual and the felt, the body and its fevers. Yet, I want to also understand revelry in a more general sense, as the passionate immersion within any form of engagement. The party, in this regard, may

be underscored as a pedagogy of revelry, a commitment to a form of indulgence that figures knowing, and the question of knowledge, in a state of festivity – a concentration that strays from the disciplinary operations of knowledge and instead captures what can be found or made beyond categorization. Here, one does not work at managing the terminology of discourse; rather, one revels in the dissolution of terms and the flow or flood of collaborative invention. The party is therefore posed not only as an object of study, a social and cultural field by which to consider questions about embodiment and community, felt experience and the violence of tribal affiliations, but equally as a pedagogical method itself: within the party, we may find ourselves participating in a collective scene of learning by doing, where time and space are cast as an experimental classroom by which to investigate sovereignty, philosophies of delirium and rapture, a musicology of the mix, as well as the social and spatial practices that work at the affective and vibratory laws of intoxication and the miraculous moment, as aligned with sensual contact, the delirious, and erotic knowing. That is, a scene of loving revolt.

It is from this view that the party, and the question of party studies, may be posed. And yet, I also want to move further, to suggest that the party, in showing us a certain approach to pedagogy, and the issue of learning by doing, may also teach about knowledge in general, suggesting an approach to any scene of studying. To revel might be the basis for any form of experimentation, especially with the aim of staying with the gaps and the delays, and the eclipse of knowledge. To study, in other words, must be *conductive*, fueling the joy and rigor of rhythms of invention and shared passion.

The model of poor pedagogy Masschelein outlines may figure within the scene of the party, as that collective undertaking by which we learn by (un)doing, by being in contact, and by

28 / <sup>9</sup> Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013).

29 <sup>10</sup> Ibid.

cultivating a sense for the emergent. This may include, as part of the concentration and engagement enacted together, a sense for having fun, a being-silly: for the party is both serious and stupid, tragic and comic at the same time. In its excessive drive and delirious joy, following the happy tears of sovereign life, the party is an arena of laughter. As such, it must be captured, as Avital Ronell suggests in her work on stupidity,<sup>11</sup> as a construct of foolery. For Ronell, the antics of foolishness, of idiocy and not-knowing, play havoc with regimes of intelligibility by drawing out the flesh, insisting on the guttural movements of the appetites, humors, bodily performance, the passionate delights. Held by the sway of stupidity, in which unintelligibility and nonunderstanding give way to a type of beautiful chaos, which drags knowledge down into the “lower regions” – which, in the upside down world of party going, is found at the top of the head (as second sight) – a pedagogy of revelry blocks out the sun in favor of the labyrinth of passion.

#### PARTY STUDIES (MUTATIONAL)

If I underscore the party as an unstable scene of get together, one shaped by the erotic, improvisation, the monsterring of form or identity, as a general state of revolt, what understandings of social practice as an art might emerge or be captured? If the party is directed by the joy of escape, in what ways might it give guidance to other forms of exit – from the poetic invention of new languages to the radical exit posed by The Invisible Committee aimed at countering “the police state”?<sup>12</sup> If the party is a scene of more-and-less-than-social experimentation, a wild collaboration with all types of matter, even one’s body as it becomes matter out of hand, wrecked, can partying inform a general perspective on “ecologies of sensuality” – the bonds with planetary life, with deep nature, that states of delirium often enable us to recover?

Returning to Dimitris Papadopoulos, and his notion of “ontological organizing” as found within social movements and scenes of autonomous politics and dispossession, from hacker labs to migrant camps, what Papadopoulos underscores as a worlding endeavor in support of diverse forms of life, I’m concerned with how the party affords a particular take on ontological organizing. Even within the more spontaneous and untamed version given expression by teenagers, partying might be said to be founded upon a principle of organizing – the party being the manifestation of a certain engagement with organization, a sense for the making of a scene of togetherness, to open one’s doors to the chaotic joy and which is fundamentally an ontological undertaking: entering the scene of the party is to surrender to the ecstatic remaking of oneself and the relationships that mostly ground identity in certain orientations. At the same time, it is clear that the party is explicitly *disorganized*: as an ontological scene, it is never so socially instrumental, never reliable as a meaningful semantic – it is guided less by a plan; rather, it may explicitly undo the ever-present obligation to be social, and to be organized. The party may appear to be a social gathering, but on the other hand, it is also that instant of anti-social expression: the turning upside down of the world and its meanings.<sup>13</sup> Ontologically speaking, what the party organizes is its own undoing, the undoing of being and behavior, of form and meaning. As a general state of revolt, it wants to get out of hand, beyond the grasp of a social or family program, an operational, obedient form. In this regard, it is more a manifestation of disorganizing – a spiraling construct of oblivion which gives way to a more-and-less-than-social formation by capturing the social as that which moves beyond or even against itself.

<sup>11</sup> Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> The Invisible Committee, *Now* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2017).

<sup>13</sup> For more on the carnivalesque, as a temporary rupture or inversion of the social order, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).



From a scene of tribal membership to the impossible community, from the wrecked body to the erotic pedagogy of revelry, I'm interested in the party as a proposition for a particular understanding of form and organization, being and becoming, of (under) common life: the party as a mutational principle. While parties are wrapped up in questions of identity, often circling around a politics of identity, of who enters and who is kept out, of who fits in and why, they are also fueled by their own disintegration—by a surplus of identity and desire, a monsterring that moves toward undoing itself and the relations by which identities become recognizable. The formal, ontological, and social narrative of the party is instead one of mutation and alienation – even while immersed in the vibratory pleasures of togetherness, of comingling and hospitality, one enters the party as a process of estranging oneself, as the miraculous lapse of productive being and recognizability. The party, in this regard, is an arena of losing, it appears as a *scene of losers*, a poor scene giving manifestation to a state of anti-social joy.

All things conspire to support the mutational drive of the party – this attempt at living in a state of revolt, of destituting the law of home and family, work and politics; from bottles to music, architecture to bodies, costumes to make-up – an arrangement that brings into play an elaborated material milieu prone to being trashed. Thus, as an organizational proposition, an ontological act, the party is a more-or-less-than-social machine: a generator of mutant formations, a going somewhere that is often too far, leading toward the unrecognizable, those happy tears through which one revels in unknowing. An emergent, wrecked form that extends beyond the social, the “subject” as Desideri and da Silva suggest, the political as such, drawing into play a milieu of actants or revoltants. The party, in this sense, is never a form of life; as an impossible community, it fails to stabilize around a set of beliefs, a language. In this way, the party is a social principle

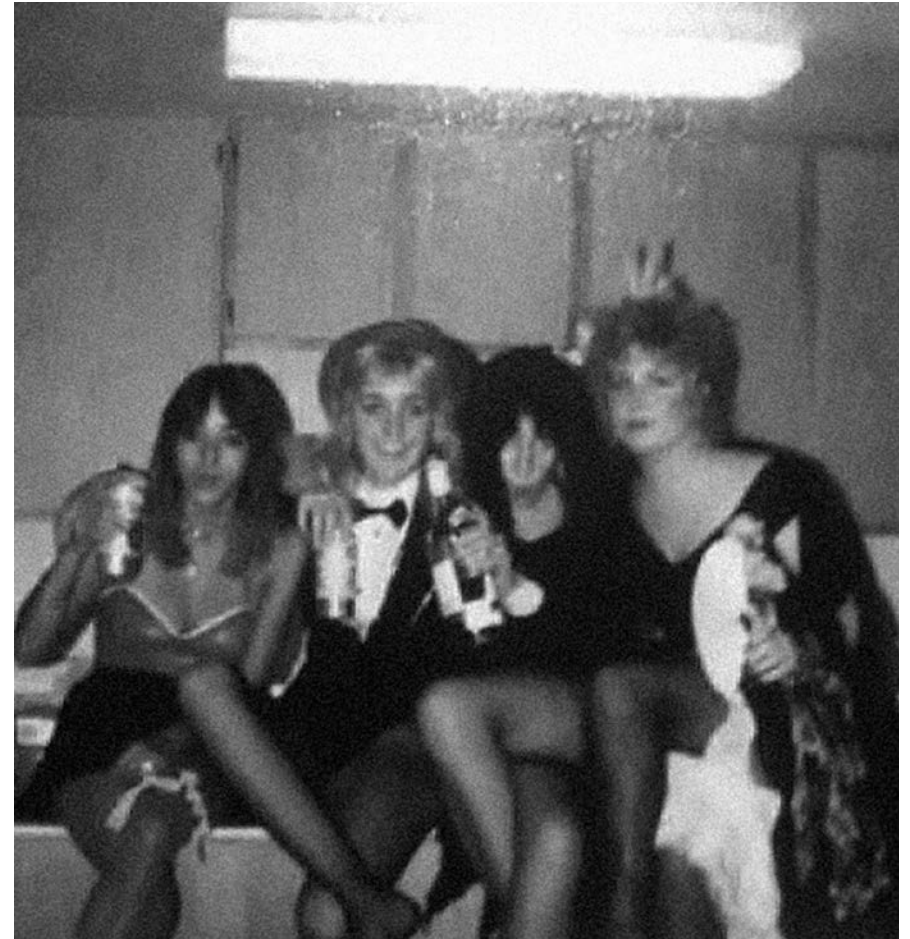
while being antithetical to the social. Rather than a form of life, it is life itself taking over, prolonging its erotic propensity. That is its beauty – a perpetually unstable articulation that grounds form and meaning in the noise of destituent togetherness.

*Lights turned down, someone is sleeping under the table – “Hey, what time is it?” – someone else decides to water the garden, tripping out over the colors, dreaming a teenage daydream, feeling stupid and forlorn, it doesn't matter it doesn't matter, “Braaaa...! Keep hangin'!” – that's it, with the lights turned down, to find the joy ...*

In tracking the party, I've been moving understandings of delirium, and loving by way of the crowd, as a general state of partying, toward other perspectives, applying such dizziness, and the excess of sovereign life, to a context of pedagogy: to articulate notions of study, a poor education, by integrating a sense for the improvisational expressions of invention, a following that which is breaking down: the party as an act of composing by way of wreckage. From the wrecked body to the impossible community, from learning to live out of control to how to love in the moment and through the crowd; to an erotic knowledge, as a form of learning by doing, by keeping knowledge close to the body and its limits, its affections, to the mutational as a principle of (dis)organizing – a poor order. Such perspectives further include, from out of the wreckage, an understanding of the party as what allows for a type of recovery, even healing. For the party carries the question: *will I survive?* As a ritual of losing control, the party allows one to test oneself and the limits of control – and to do this together.

Party studies, as a speculative framework of shared learning and unlearning, is imagined then as a way of thinking through (if not doing) the complexity of all these acts and gestures, scenes

and sites where festivity is played out, (dis)organized and experienced, made and shared and broken. If we are to approach the very question of social and political ordering, of what's at stake in the creative constructs of community and being-in-common, the party may allow for an array of perspectives, for staying close to the mutant potentiality of identity and disidentification, for breakdown and recovery. For the party provides a deeply experimental scene for rehearsing society's reinvention, supporting an art of revolt.





## Budapest flat concerts – past and present

LUCIA UDVARDYOVA

Writing about communal events and social gatherings at a time when any social get-together poses a potential risk is strange. Not a political risk, as could have been some forty, fifty years ago, but a biological risk due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The dwindling number of clubs in Budapest has been shrinking ever more, ailing from a lack of structural cultural funding, and a fledgling generation of youth that is once again turning into emigrées because of lack of opportunities and career prospects in their home country. Where clubs like Fekete Lyuk (Black Hole) and FMK (Young Artists' Club) offered a safe haven for non-conformist youth at the tail end of the Communist rule (though under the watchful eye of the authorities), venues like Gólya and Auróra have become temporary autonomous zones for those that oppose the NER (Orbán's system of national cooperation) hegemony nowadays.

I started the Noise N' Roses series in collaboration with Rozi Mákó in 2019 without any greater aspiration other than to organize private music events at off-spaces – these have been flats of our friends, offices, industrial courtyards, artist studios, workshop spaces. The project aims to bring together like-minded people in intimate settings for live experimental music and audiovisual happenings. The events are sometimes streamed online

in an attempt to sort of connect our bedrooms to yours, wherever you may be. Usually there's no existing infrastructure as such, we have to bring the sound system, fog machine, equipment, beers ...; turning someone's living room into an impromptu stage is sometimes no mean feat. We never know how many people will eventually turn up; they are largely shy in the beginning, entering someone's domesticity can be slightly intimidating. We are equally not sure whether a neighbor would complain or call the police. So far, we have been lucky (knock, knock). The most beautiful thing on the whole is how it has turned into a truly communal effort – everyone chips in, offering their home for the night, delivering the speakers, etc. And then, we immerse ourselves in the music and chatter. The last guest leaves and then we clean up. It was a good night.

\*

St. John McKay is a performer who moved to Budapest to be with his partner Anna Margit in late 2019. To live and work and host, they rented out a ground-floor corner space in one of the socially deprived, but vibrant areas of Budapest, the city's 8th district. Before moving to the Hungarian capital, they'd met in New York and both loved an underground art and community venue set in an old food diner, called The Sunview Luncheonette, so they came to Budapest with the aim of emulating this and continuing to host events in unusual surroundings. With this vision, they decided to use their space, called after the street they were located in – “Szeszgyár,” for hosting any kind of event people wanted to do, from fermentation workshops, to film screenings, to our own event, Noise N' Roses.

LUCIA UDVARDYOVA: What sort of events have you done in your space/flat in Budapest?



ST. JOHN MCKAY: At our opening night an Iranian woman did stand-up comedy. We've had a vegan dinner, where I did a vegan performance called Vegan Confessions, where I confessed the times that I've eaten meat in the last few weeks and how bad I was. We've had a movie screening about women in Afghanistan empowering themselves. And afterwards there was a talk with three feminists and a Q&A. We've had your event, Noise N' Roses, an experimental music underground get together. We had a Christmas tree exhibition where we gathered Christmas trees over a couple of weeks that were being thrown out after Christmas. We pulled all these dog-piss covered trees into our space, set them up and made a story for each tree, it was some sort of eco-capitalist consumerist action. And one person showed up for that. We never know what's going to happen. With Noise N' Roses you've got an established sort of group of people who come so like, 40 people, 50 people came. For that Christmas tree we put so much time and effort into and we literally got one person to show up. But that's how it is. I'm used to it, back in New York when I did my performances nobody showed up. It makes no difference to me.

LUCIA: What is the relationship with the people who come to your place? With Noise N' Roses we've always done it more or less in private spaces, which is a bit weird because you're entering somebody else's private sphere. They have their stuff there. They have their own vibe there. And then you suddenly sort of enter and there's more people entering.

MCKAY: The people transform the space as opposed to the space being that thing right from the start. But I'd be interested to know from you, as this is something that's hard for us to gauge. We've been living there like in a normal space. But when you

come inside, after all the furniture's sort of cleared out, does it still feel like this is a home to you?

LUCIA: I think the context changes because we've experienced and done an event there. So it's sort of instantly got this venue feel. Like when you enter you can sort of see. If you go there as a private visitor, it's different to going there to make an event. You go there, your "promoter" mind switches on: you check where to have the sound, the whole set up, how you could restructure the space. But you also probably want to keep some stuff private.

MCKAY: It's only the bedroom that we don't want to use as a space. In our ideal minds, what you enter into is this venue that's supposed to look like a grandma's house. It's supposed to have this sort of dichotomy: a venue that looks like a grandma's house. Because we live there, it's so hard for the grandma's place not to be actually what it really sort of is.

LUCIA: How do you recollect our event that we organized in February 2020.

MCKAY: Running around, trying to get everything organized. I think I went and got like 50 billion beers and 60,000 wines.

LUCIA: We brought the sound.

MCKAY: You guys brought in sound because my sound setup is shit. You brought a smoke machine. And we've got a projector. And so it gives it a little bit of a venue feel. Once you've checked the sound and got the projector running and the beer's in the fridge, it's about waiting for people to show up.

LUCIA: In the beginning you have, like, three people and then you are not sure. And then suddenly, as if with some sort of magic trick, it's full. And you don't know how it happened.

MCKAY: We were thinking, Oh no, is it our place? Because we know you get like, a good 50 people coming to your events. We've had events with literally one person showing up and it's like, okay, so what? Why is that? Is it because we're sort of a little bit of a travel or because we're in this, you know, uh, scary neighborhood or is it because we're just totally uncool? We're not in a theatre scene or a music scene or any sort of art scene. But we believe in what we're doing.

We don't have the furniture for that many people. So everyone's sat in the main space on the floor and on our spiral staircase, and on this little balcony that's up outside the cave and people have their legs hanging through the bars of the balcony, there are people standing at the back and sitting on the little bits of furniture. It's very intimate because everyone's sort of crammed in there together. And then the first act, Roland Németh, starts playing his ambient stuff. And so everyone gets into this very meditative vibe.

And then we have a break where everyone spills outside. Luckily, we've got this empty parking lot across the street where one can smoke cigarettes. And then you came out, and said, OK, we're ready for the second performance. There was a Buddhist bowl used with coins to make music or audio, and a looped reverb, bits of voice. The performance artist, Syporca Whandal, with her partner who was focused on audio, performed and sewed things into a piece of bread. That was an intense performance. And then there was another break. And then there's this weirdo dude.

LUCIA: Who is sitting right next to me.

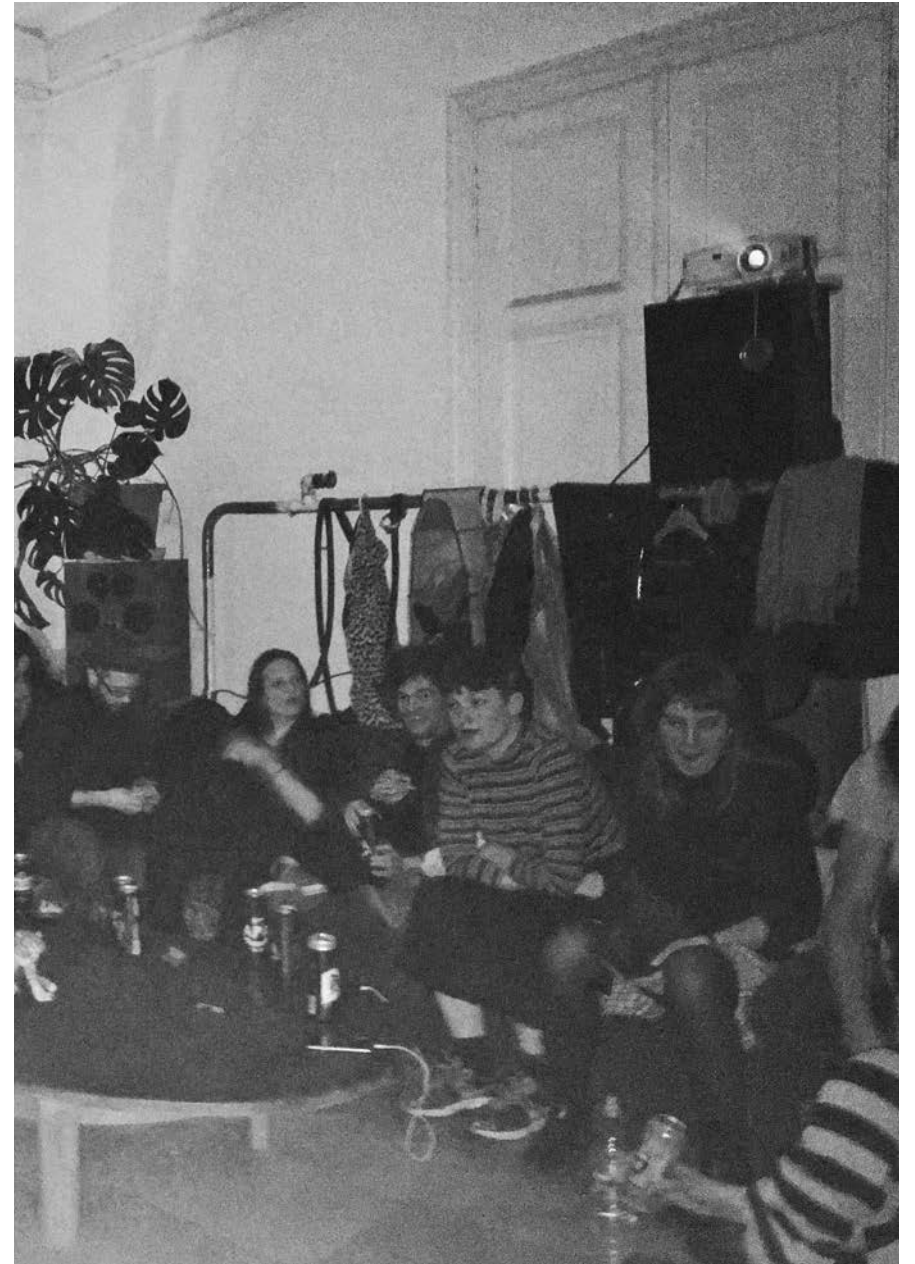
MCKAY: Who got asked to do a music thing or something audio when I'm not a music person. And it was funny how you asked me to do something and then I'm like, okay, what the fuck do I do? And I'm freaking out. All the stuff I do is so complicated. I put years and years into a piece of work and it is often so tech heavy. And for this one I just wanted to do something simple.

I put on a mike connected to the stereo and I turn off all the lights in the space. Everyone's in pitch black. And I go outside onto the street and I stand on this stool so I could see into the window. I put a light under my face. And for 20 minutes I just stand on the stool and look through the window with the sound of the outside being amplified into the room. It was basically a creepy guy looking through the window and everyone just sitting there.

LUCIA: And that was actually in the middle of the winter. And you were standing there in the cold. And we sat in your flat. How did it feel?

MCKAY: Any sort of performance is nerve-wracking. I put a light under my face and all I could see was my reflection in the window. And that was a bummer because I kind of wanted to be able to see everyone. I decided to do a 20 minute meditation. I was just breathing. Our corner is usually so busy... And then, of course, for the 20 minutes I was out there, there was like one person walking by. That's the nature of live performance. But what did happen is that people from inside started to come out and talk to me ...

LUCIA: And bring you beers. But at some point, you also mentioned something along the lines that "You're in my flat and I'm outside." We are sort of occupying your private space and you're out there in the cold winter.





MCKAY: How can I talk about this in art talk? It's about the evolution of the community space and the psychological barriers... I don't even really think in those terms. Yes, people have taken over my space. And I'm put outside. My original idea was that we pay attention to the sounds around us. But then there are also other elements. It's in the 8th district and there's the issue of gentrification. I've used this space and hear what's really going on in this neighborhood and projected that into what's now the sort of, the art space, which is a sort of gentrification.

LUCIA: How about the locals who live around your space? Are they interested in your events?

MCKAY: We didn't go knocking on the doors of everyone in the building saying, hey, we've got this space. But the original Sunview space in New York, we both found just by walking by and opening the door. And that's kind of how we'd like it to be. Even though we have to be on Facebook or no one would know about it. But if you're the kind of person who would walk by a place and be curious about what's going on, then absolutely, do come on in. Now that it's gotten summery and Anna has these seedlings that she has to put out into the sun every other day she's just started really interacting with the neighborhood that way. She has people stopping all the time and chatting with her about the plants and stuff. It would be lovely if it grew organically on its own.

LUCIA: That's also why we do our events semi-private, and not totally public. Because you have to have some sort of control over who comes, especially if it's a private space, someone's home. It's tricky. On the other hand, you don't want to be elitist.



alternative to the standard. Budapest itself is a very open place to this kind of venue, much more than New York City.

\*

MCKAY: It's a tough line, how much do we let it organically evolve and grow by itself. And how much do we put it out there. In the end, I think the only people who are really going to be interested in this kind of thing are the kind of people who are interested in this kind of thing. I think our biggest worry actually is not who is going to come, but will anybody come at all.

LUCIA: But you don't really want to do house parties as such, no?

MCKAY: The only problem with parties is noise and neighbors living upstairs. We don't want to dictate what the space is used for. The ideal is that it's not just us putting on events. It's that people are using the space. That's our dream. Activists, community, vegan, Syrian child refugees, weaving classes, sex parties. I honestly don't care as long as it's being used as a space for people doing what they believe in.

LUCIA: I've also noticed there have been other flat events in Budapest lately, lectures in flats, theatre shows ... There's a lack of independent spaces, lack of financial support for alternative arts in this country, on top of right-wing politics and other social and economic issues.

MCKAY: Anna has told me that they were really cracking down and stifling independent venues that don't sort of match up with the right-wing government, because Budapest was under the main right-wing party control until recently. We were a bit scared about that initially. But you can do it undergroundy and keep it under the radar. Just before we opened, the mayor of Budapest and some other districts, including ours, changed and you got some lefties in and they're all for this sort of stuff. Maybe this weird, private, public non-profit member-run space is a bit of an

Zoltán Gazsi (born 1957) has been involved in cinematography since the 1980s. He graduated from the Theatre and Film Academy in TV directing and camera. In the early 1980s, he documented underground artistic events in Budapest on video within the framework of the Kassák Video Club led by Béla Tarr. He later became Tarr's assistant on films including *Autumn Almanac* (1985), *Damnation* (1988) and *Satantango* (1994). He's been working for various Hungarian TV stations since 1996.

LUCIA UDVARDYOVA: What was the first event that was not in a club, but in a private place in Budapest, that you recollect?

ZOLTÁN GAZSI: There was once a house party in my flat. I'd just gotten back home from Paris, and someone had scored 20 LSD tabs, which were given out at the party. There were great musicians there, having prepared the piano with different metal cigarette boxes so that it became quieter and sonically idiosyncratic. At around 1:30am, one of the neighbors called and said, "Good evening, we've been listening to it till now, and don't get me wrong, it wasn't bad at all, but we'd like to sleep now." And then I closed the window, pulled down the shutters, and we continued a little quieter. The police never came.

LUCIA: Was it organized spontaneously?

ZOLTÁN: People love and play music everywhere. Perhaps in the countryside there are no neighbors and they can play a bit louder.

LUCIA: Who attended these sort of events?

ZOLTÁN: It has always been the case that a group of friends has an overview of who is welcome and who is not. We didn't like the bad guys. Once a guy showed me a gun in a pub that he had taken from a cop and I told him it was an incredibly stupid thing to do. And subsequently, all three of us who were at the table with him stood up and moved to the next table. We didn't want to be in his company, because it was a provocation. It was impossible to know if it's somebody really that reckless, or whether it was an agent with a certain task.

LUCIA: There were several underground figures in the former Czechoslovakia, for instance, about whom it later transpired that they were secret agents.

ZOLTÁN: There were all sorts of provocateurs around. Plenty were forced to become agents, but not all of them harmed their respective environments. They were hunting for talented people and their close ones, looking for their weak spots. These life paths should be judged on an individual basis.

LUCIA: You worked with Béla Tarr and we've also talked about the cult film director János Xantus, who also hosted house parties in his place. How did this cross-pollination between film, music and the underground look like?

ZOLTÁN: I had a friend who won an American NTSC video camera at a poker game and he asked me to shoot concerts. I really enjoyed doing this, but at that time we could only look ex post to



Photo 1: Mihály Víg and Zoltán Gazsi  
Flat of Jenő Menyhárt's family (member of Európa Kiadó underground rock band), Baranyai St, Budapest, Zoltán Gazsi archive

Photo 2: Új Látásmód Fúzió, mid-90s flat concert, Budapest

see what we've recorded, we couldn't even connect to a TV set. I thought this was ideal for documenting artistic events. With this concept I approached the Kassák Studio, which was led by Béla Tarr. I knew that they had just got a video recorder, and I presented my concept, Béla approved, and thus I would borrow it each weekend. I would prepare a compilation of video recordings of various events for him, whose protagonists later appeared in his films. As a filmmaker, he had an imaginary little closet in his mind full of little tags, and I placed a lot of little tags into many little drawers for him. I scouted actors and locations for Béla. Later, I became his assistant.

LUCIA: We talked about genres – you said you have a friend who's been doing free jazz events in his basement, we also mentioned someone who plays classical music at home.

ZOLTÁN: My friends were in the Balaton group [Hungarian alternative music group]. They once played a short gig in the flat of the filmmaker János Xantus. In addition to Balaton's Mihály Víg and Károly Hunyadi, Jenő Menyhárt [Európa Kiadó alternative music group] also performed at this concert. The reason why they did it was that there were also some older people around, such as György Konrád, Károly Makk and István Eörsi [leading protagonists of Hungarian literature and cinematography], who were curious and interested, but due to their age did not attend regular concerts. If I consider that they were around 50 then, and I am now 63 ... At that time, a person around 40 in the audience of a rock concert could only be a parent looking for his child. I had a large apartment and experimented with video. For example, János Baksa-Soós [artist and performer], the Balaton group, as well as Tamás Pajor [iconic singer of the Hungarian postpunk band Neurotic] also sang at my place. I have videos of Balaton and Tamás Pajor playing and singing in my apartment.

Peter Müller, a great poet, organizer, and rock musician, hosted a flat theatre, where he would perform. Once, he sang an Edith Piaf song at such an event. He grabbed a cigarette, lit it, threw the match brushing past his ear, and “accidentally” lit his hair on fire. His whole head burst into flames as he sang the last verse. The girls were already screaming, and as the music came to a close, he ran out of the door and I saw him press his head into winter coats and the flames were immediately extinguished. This wasn't improvised, the audience was partial to every little trick. I was also wondering whether he'd noticed he'd lit his own hair. He probably must have covered his hair with something flammable.

There was also a classical musician, Ádám Fellegi, a great showman, and a very good performer, who could talk brilliantly about music. He lived in a spacious apartment, where you'd have 120 chairs lined up for the audience, and he would be playing the piano for them. A friend named Lajos Wohner who lives here in Budafok [a Budapest suburb] regularly plays music with his friends every week. There would be two pieces of stripped-down pianos, turned sideways, and two trumpet players in between them. It was brilliant. These concerts continue until this day.

LUCIA: People were not afraid to organize such events in their own apartments?

ZOLTÁN: One was only afraid not to disturb the neighbors. Therefore, such an event would be organized in a place where it did not bother anyone, or one would discuss it beforehand with the neighbors, who agreed to the noise until the dawn. There were house parties where a police officer or a neighbor would ring the bell, but these were all weekday parties. These flat events happened not because a performer had no way to perform their

work on stage, but rather that they preferred to present their work to their friends and for their own pleasure.

LUCIA: Did these flat concerts also take place in the countryside?

ZOLTÁN: A rural band from a “Pol Pot” county – because there was a Hungarian county that was called that name – had a different leeway than a young person from the capital. I always knew that my ID mentioned the Eötvös József grammar school in Budapest, and I also had my downtown address noted there, so a policeman would probably think this is some apparatchik kid, so I could get away with much more than a suburban kid with a vocational school listed on his ID.

LUCIA: Why did you start to document these events?

ZOLTÁN: It was a completely different era, which is hard to imagine now. Taking photos itself was also pretty complicated. There is nothing more documentary than to have a continuous footage of something that is simultaneously image and simultaneously sound. I wanted to be a cameraman even back then, and I thought I could shoot from an infinite number of angles, and I have to decide which one was the best, and there was no way to rectify it later. With the camera, I have to guide the viewer’s eyes so that I always show what might interest them from a particular event. There was no better school than this. Plus it was definitely good for Tarr not to have to queue up and go to places because he could just sit down and watch my two-week art documentary collection.

LUCIA: Did you have any plans with this footage?

ZOLTÁN: Eventually I started to work in the film industry, and that interested me more than documenting events. What’s more, I also didn’t want to spend my own money and labor to put together a “things of interest that happened in Budapest in the last two months” video compilation, which we’d screen at a Balaton concert in the hall of our house of culture, for instance, but I wanted to do the same within the framework of the Béla Balázs Studio [legendary Hungarian film club, later film studio that operated both inside and outside the structure of Socialist state film production] infrastructure. Eventually, the concept of another person (which was more commercial, lighter than mine) got accepted and supported by the Béla Balázs Studio. This guy also reported to the secret service, and I actually have the reports concerning my person.

LUCIA: How many people are we talking about in this scene?

ZOLTÁN: There weren’t many sensitive people interested in the arts back in the day either. Probably enough to fill a room, and that is the same today. Unfortunately, in such a small country, these sensitive, curious people are too few to support the artists I love. In Hungary, dubbed “the happiest barracks,” there were few places that provided space for informal culture. Such places were FMK (Young Artists’ Club), Bercsényi Club, Studio K, Béla Balázs Studio, film clubs, jazz clubs, where those who were excluded from the official culture could express themselves. These people – from the architect to the rock musician – inevitably came into contact with each other. Representatives of various branches of art, as well as intellectuals interested in progressive art forms, got to know each other, influenced each other, and moved in the same circles. This practically ended with the regime change in

1989. Before the change of regime, it was much easier to find out about your contemporaries, because one could only exhibit in a few places that everyone knew. This community (scene) was both small and large at the same time, because it was quite wide. It's a generational thing, yet there were also those whose parents you'd know because they were interested. As things stand now, we might quickly return to the state of culture of my youth.

LUCIA: Was there anything specific, idiosyncratic at these events back then, that has been lost now?

ZOLTÁN: The way culture was organized was different. This can only exist in an oppressive society. There was one advantage to all of this – better orientation, and the fact that those progressive authors and performers could interact. There was a sort of realm that enabled us to bear it all. Throughout my life, I have watched such an oppressive society loosen up, and now we see the same process going backwards. Of course, everything is different, just the choking feeling remains the same.

LUCIA: Was there a special location you remember?

ZOLTÁN: I had known my friend Gyula Pauer from the age of 20. He had a huge studio apartment in an attic in the city center. He was a film, theatrical set designer, visual designer, visual artist. As a permanent costume and visual designer and artist of the József Katona Theatre and the Film Factory, he developed a workshop space and surrounded himself with a group of friends, different people with different mindsets mingled there. These days, I miss Gyula's personality the most from my environment. He held an open house every Friday, which often ended late on a Sunday afternoon. One had to sign up to get there, because he had regular guests. Gyula's apartment/workshop hosted the most

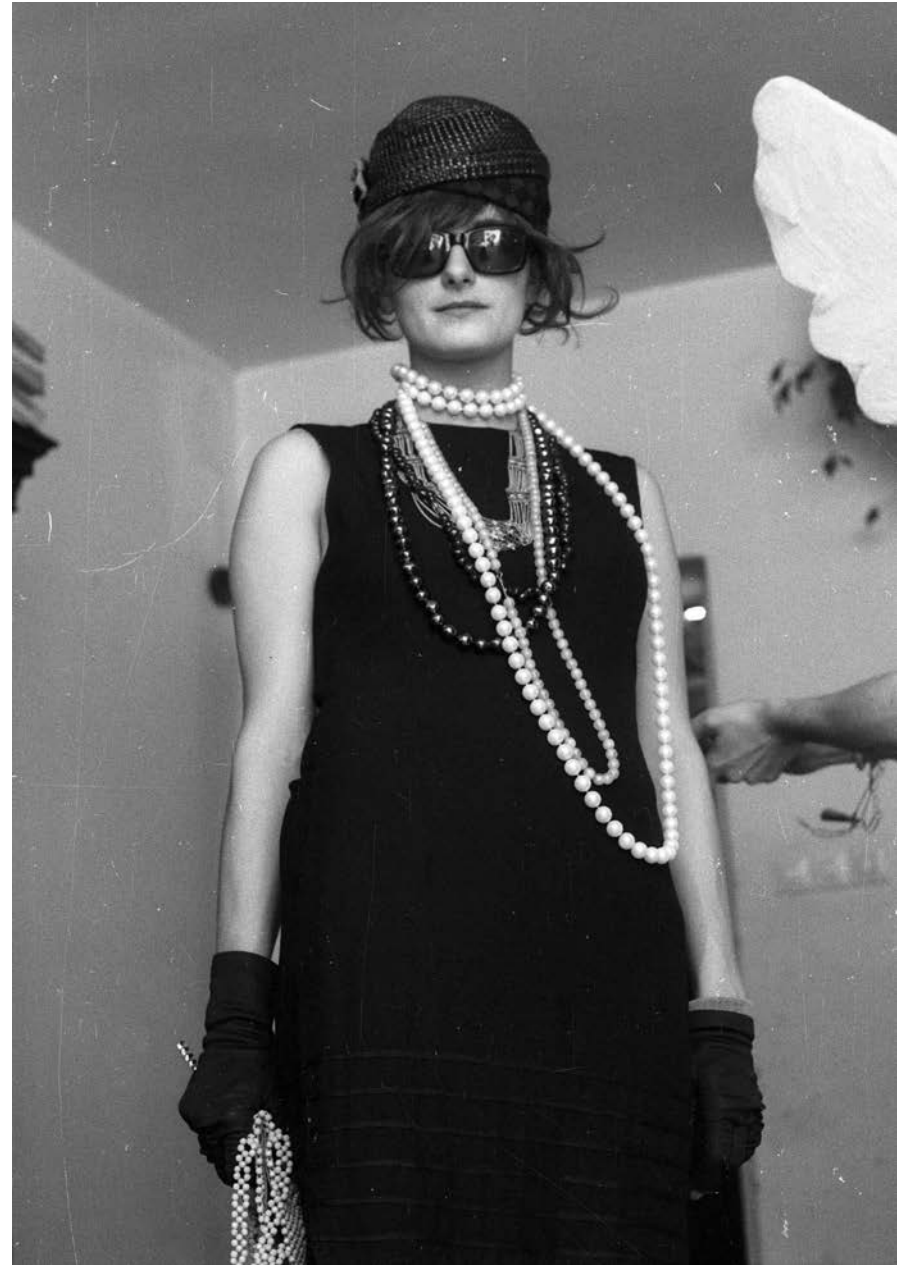
special cultural events. Péter Forgács presented his completed films there. In addition, in this apartment, Ferenc Darvas [composer, theatre musician] played such songs on the piano that we all knew, and these were the greatest musical experiences of my life. These melodic fragments well-known to us created a system of associations. These pieces of music were unrepeatable, they were born from the occasion.

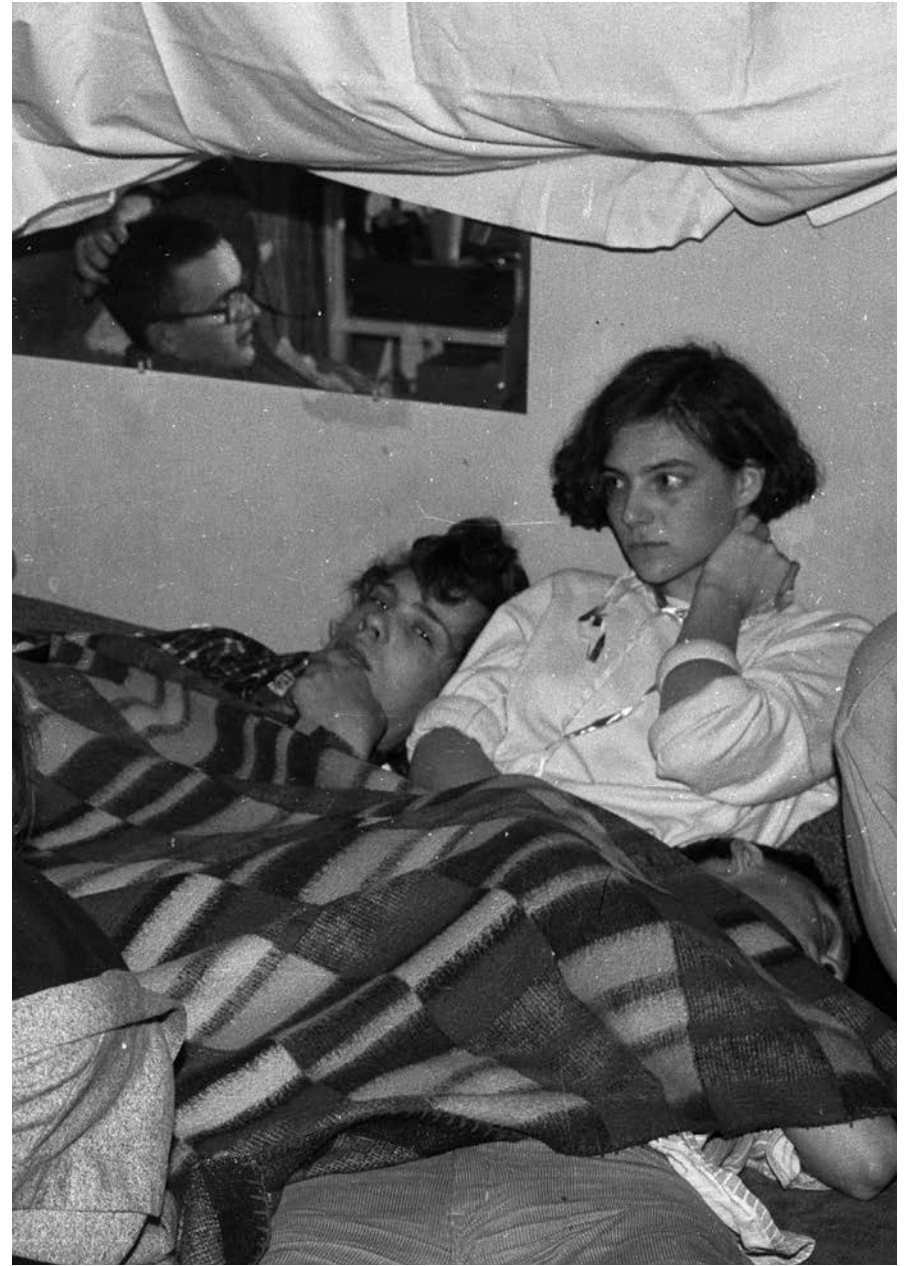
# Party Upon A Time

ISTVÁN JÁVOR

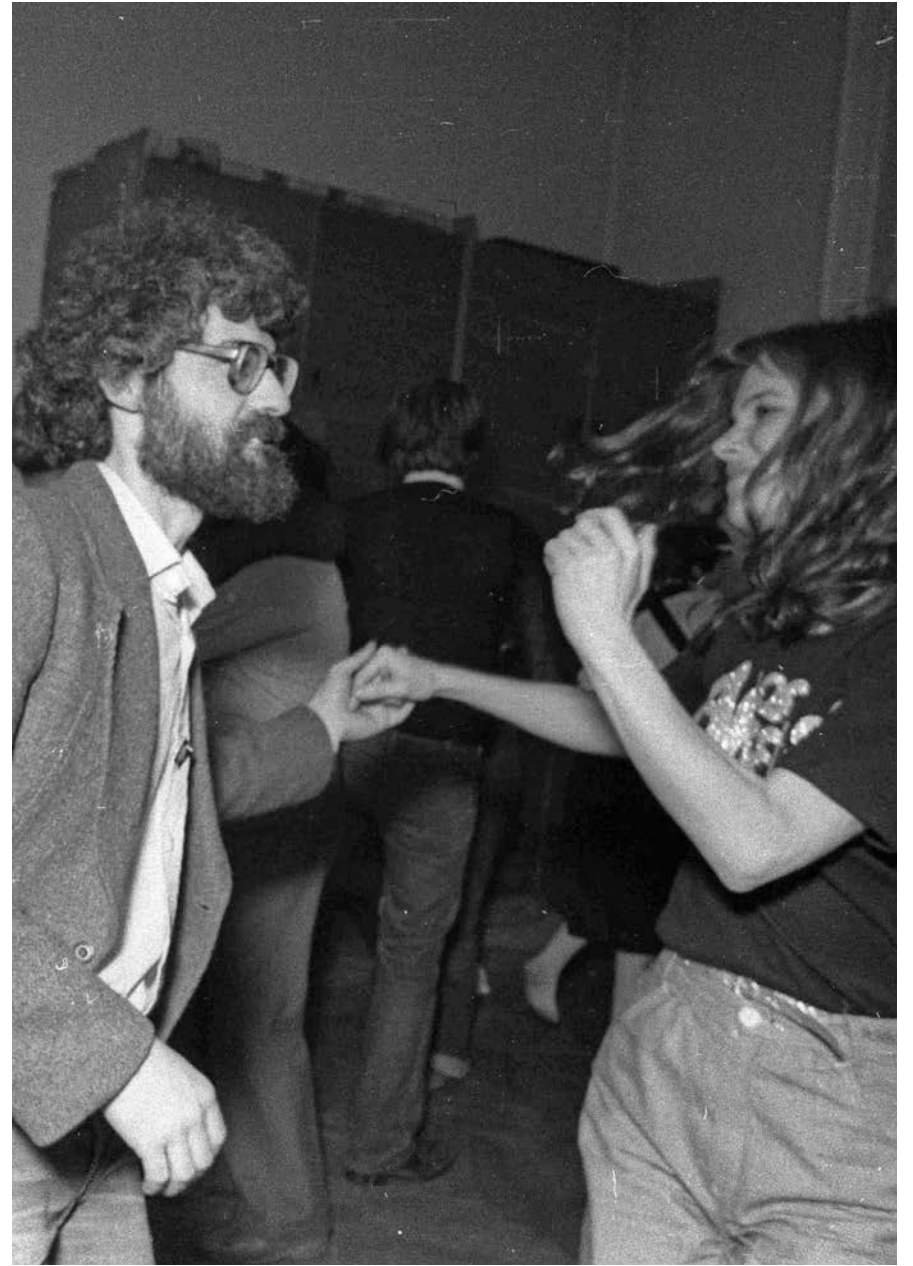


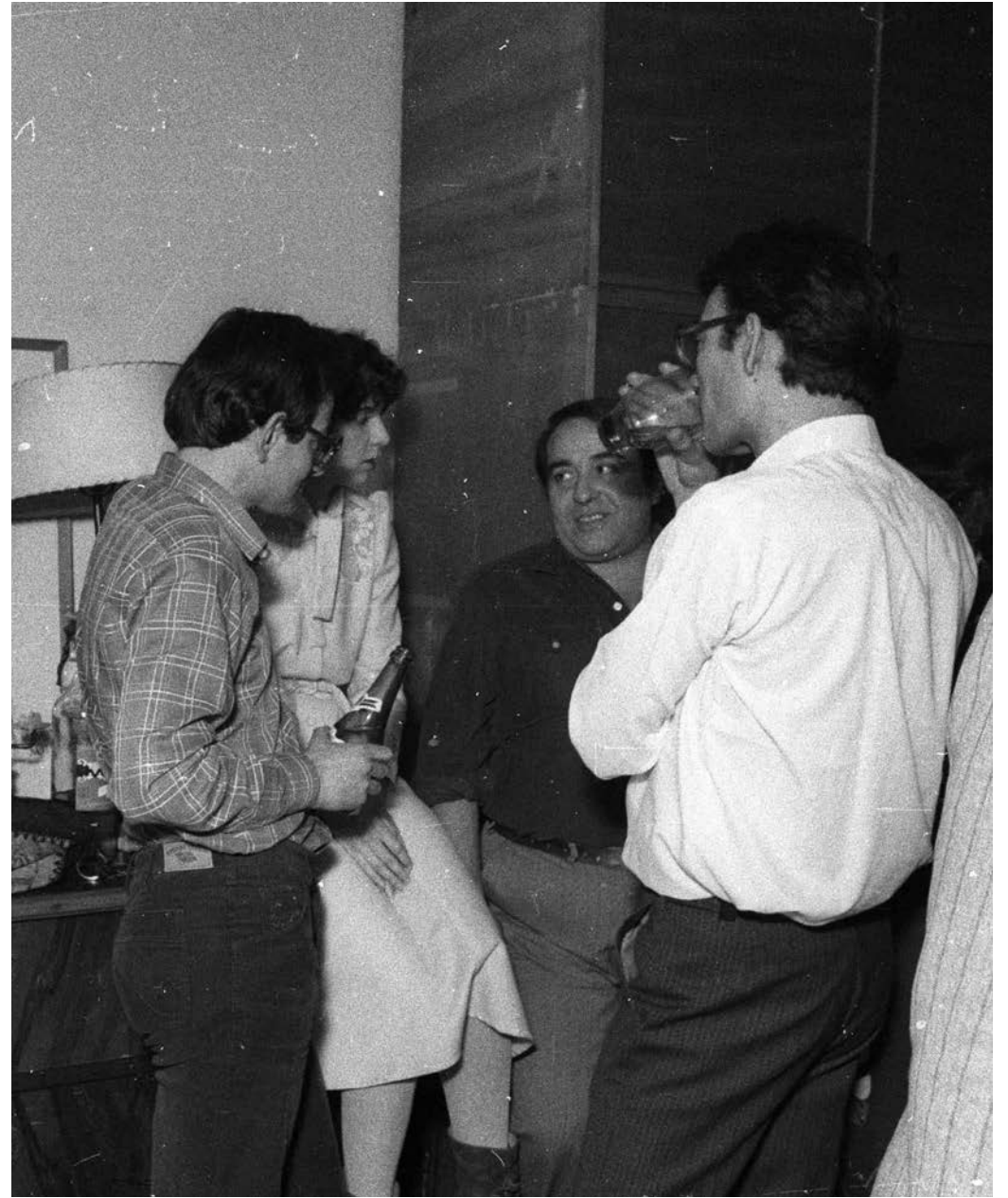
These photographs were taken at “home parties” in the eighties in Budapest. These parties were held at different apartments, either for New Year’s Eve or for no special occasion. In that period, you could find out when and where they would be taking place through the underground network. You could find a different party almost every week. At that time, there was no special entrance security needed at the front gate, the appointed houses were open, as well as the doors to the party itself. The minimum entry fee was a bottle of wine, but if you went there without one, nobody really cared. The “buli” (*party*, in Hungarian) was really popular for two main reasons: one was to find a new partner, and then to gather all of the needed information. As for me, I used my camera sometimes, because the situation seemed very attractive to me, since almost everybody knew me and nobody thought I worked for anyone else but myself. On the other hand, in this way I felt myself to be both inside and outside the situation at the same time. That is what I liked the most. I never thought that at any time in my life these photographs would ever be of interest to anybody except those who were in them. Many of the people in the photos, as it turned out, became quite well known artists, writers, editors, and philosophers. The majority – who are still alive – belonged to the dissident line under the communist era, and under the present regime live on the fringes of official acceptance.



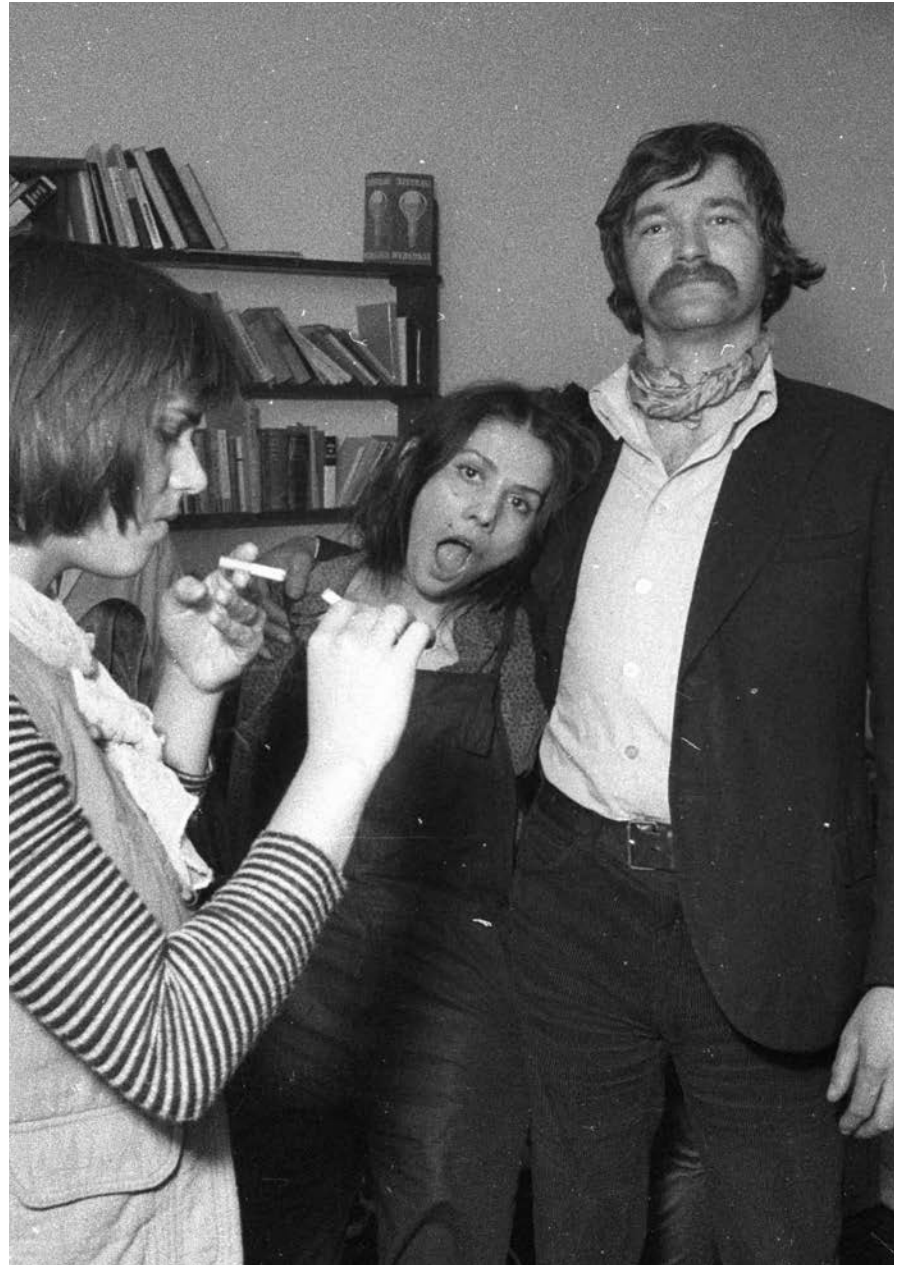
















## Our Heroes on the Wall – Irony and Distance

ANDRÁS KOVÁCS

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF  
FERENC KŐSZEG

Let me start with a quote by a poet who occasionally appeared among the handful of youngsters who, almost fifty years ago, by following the instructions of the graphic artist György Kemény, filled out the contours of the provocative painting on the wall of a downtown maid's room with vibrant colours.

*But this is not a time for anything.  
Here the sun blinds you, but you don't  
wake up,  
here the night may buzz, but you don't  
sleep,  
here you get ready, but you don't go  
anywhere,  
here you walk, but like a squirrel  
on a wheel.  
Because this is not a time for anything.*

(György Petri: Sandbank)

*They spurt their cock into thin air,  
All those who wanted the future.*

(György Petri: An Extant Poem of Viturbius Acer)

The participants of the event were undoubtedly among those who wanted the future. Was this colourful room then only a means for enduring the lack of a sense of future and time, for surviving complete hopelessness? Only the product of infertile self-indulgence? Does the painting on the wall only dissemble the feeling of depression by goofing around? Or are there signs hidden on the painting – but only for those who can discern them?

These years were indeed the most hopeless and depressing times for the generation you can see rock ‘n’ rolling in party photos, and who gathered in painting the maid’s room. We are in the year 1970.

As the theatre director and poet

István Bálint has written:

*Prague and Paris  
silence and dust  
sweat on the faces  
end of the marching column*

At the end of this column there were bringing up the rear the painters of the mural whose subversive dreams were built on logically transparent, pure, and compelling theories, and sequences of events verifying them, however, happening elsewhere in the world. Hence they have despised the world in which they were living, still, they did not give up their belief in a just and equal society. Their hope was not only fuelled by theory, namely by the original, uncompromised theory of the young Marx (not its prevalent Marxist-Leninist version) with its convincing logic, but also by the unlikely coincidences of the political upheavals of the year 1968, both in the East and the West. Was there still a chance for a society in which men can “do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, ... without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic”?

The euphoria did not last long. By the end of August 1968, as Soviet troops and tanks appeared on the streets of Prague the resurrection of Marxism from its clinical death did not seem possible anymore.

As György Petri wrote:

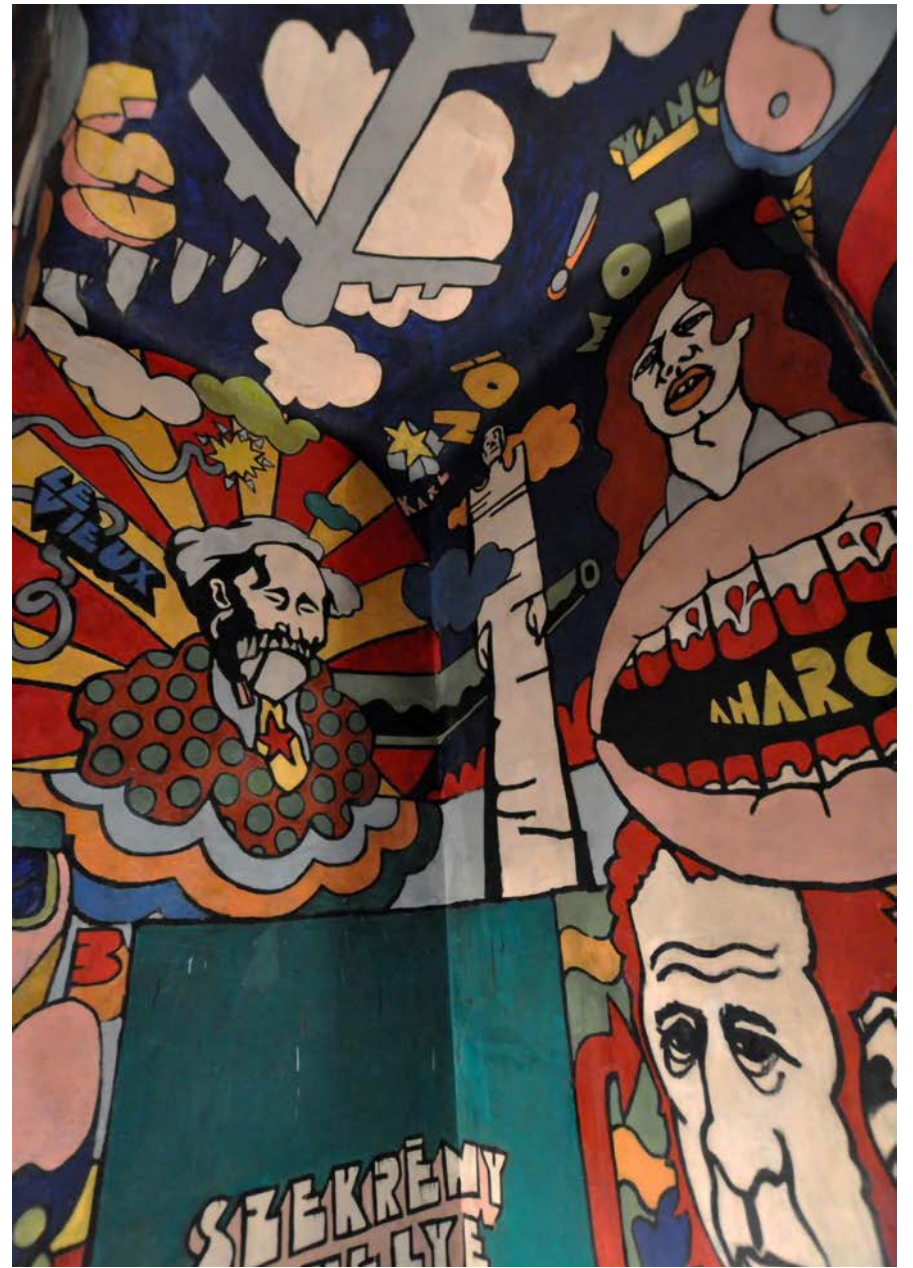
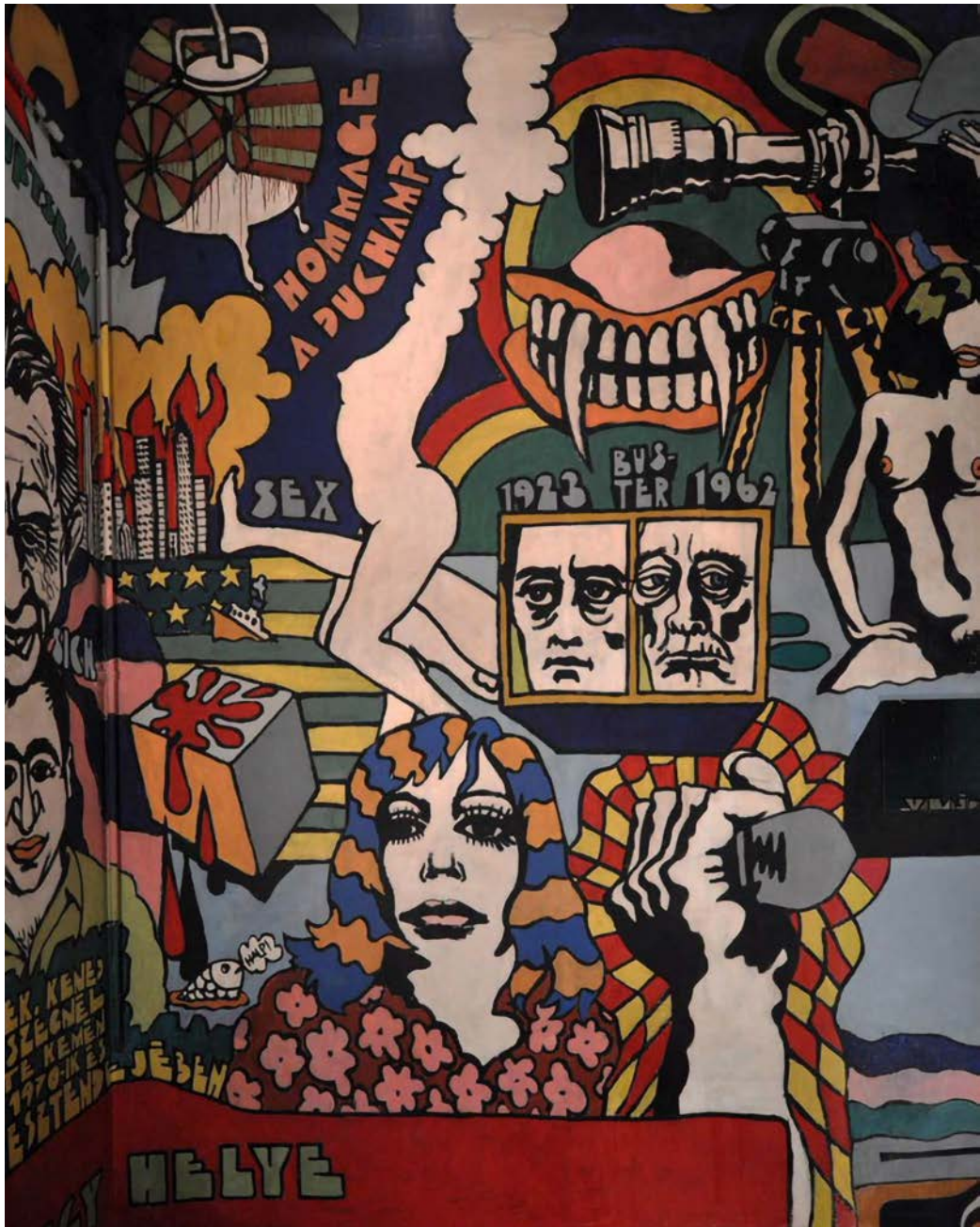
*In what I once believed,  
I don't believe anymore.  
But that I once believed,  
I remind myself every day*

Well then, what appears on the wall of the maid’s room is a memento. It reflects a transitory moment when, in the place of a previous belief, there is nothing but the experience of falling flat on the face. However, in that moment only the old language was at hand to tell what we had discovered: the old language became useless. And yet, is it possible to keep a distance from a language with the very same words from which you aim to distance yourself? It is a dangerous and depressing position. In this situation, irony is the only narrow pathway of survival. According to Rorty, we can only distance ourselves from a given, expandable, exceedable but not supplantable “final vocabulary”, that “is ‘final’ in the sense that if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as we can go with language; beyond them, there is only helpless passivity or resort to force. (...)”

As Petri writes:

*Either the liver, or the system*

It is as if in this wall painting Rorty’s instructions would be realized: “She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books









she has encountered; (2) she realizes that arguments phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power, not herself.” (Rorty, 1989: 73)

On the wall, you see Karl Marx, Lev Trotsky, György Lukács, Angela Davis, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. In a weird manner, surrounded by weird things and texts, forming a weird ensemble. Marx, the ancestor of all Marxists: Le Vieux – a broken antediluvian, with a bib around his neck, maybe to avoid dripping the baby porridge on himself. Lev is now not a fiery warrior leading the Bolshevik revolution to victory, but a young revolutionist toff (who will later end up with an ice axe plunged into his skull by the earthly governor of the antediluvian with the bib). The prophet and father figure György Lukács, whom neither version of the socialist systems could swallow or spit out. (Let’s just say he didn’t let either this or that.) And whose unreadable work, *Ontology of Social Being* that by the time of its completion has already been forgotten, was edited amongst these walls during the months of work on the mural by one of the dwellers of the room, namely by György Bence, a then-doctoral student of Lukács, who was well aware of the insignificance of the manuscript. The Master does not accidentally rise above his head in the image of a depressing superego. Yet, from the head of this Lukács on the wall not the ontology of social being is what hovers over us, but the *Klassenbewusstsein-für-sich*, – the key concept of his repeatedly cursed masterpiece “Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein” written fifty years earlier –, whose voltage in space should be discharged by colliding with an oppositely charged particle. Angela, the beautiful Afro-American revolutionist, one of the primary embodiments of the myth of ’68. She was a student of and an assistant to Herbert Marcuse, a fierce opponent of Soviet Marxism as well as one of the idols of the student movements. But she was also an active member of the Communist Party

USA, unshakingly loyal to the Soviet Union, and at the same time a militant supporter of the Black Panther movement opposed to every “white” party and not averse to terror either, and whose leader Huey Newton also made clear what is the exact role foreseen for the Soviet-type or Lukács-like white Marxists and communists in the revolutionary movement: “We’ve regained our mind that was taken away from us and we will decide the political as well as the practical stand that we’ll take. We’ll make the theory and we’ll carry out the practice. It’s the duty of the white revolutionary to aid us in this.”

Would that mean that *Klassenbewusstsein-für-sich* is the obedient servant of the revolution of the *Rassenbewusstsein-für-sich*? In the maid’s room at Kígyó Street, placing the hope of the future in the self-conscious revolutionary proletariat would have required already quite a breath. But to discover the subject of a revolution that liberates all human beings and emancipates of the mankind in a self-conscious racial minority, – well, that was a bit difficult to implement. But all this was unspeakable in the old language. There was nothing left but to blow it up.

And for all that, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the banned fresh Nobel Laureate who will be expelled from the Soviet Union in two years. This was partly my choice. I spent most of the previous university year in Leningrad, where I had the opportunity to get acquainted with the amazing figures of the cultural underworld there, who were similar to the heroes of Ulitskaya’s novel *The Big Green Tent*. I saw that for them Solzhenitsyn, the writer who positioned himself in another galaxy far outside of every system, was (as Leonard Cohen put it) the crack through which the light gets in, the external gaze, in which all the other figures on the wall reflected back as an embodiment of the total decline of humanity.

And finally, what also surrounds the well-known, even embarrassing prude and hypocritical revolutionaries and counter-



revolutionaries (and thus encloses them in great quotation marks), that was so foreign to them all: a Pop-Art-like plethora of eroticism and sex, recalling the sardonic gaze of Marquis de Sade: “And what’s the point of revolution, without general copulation”.

Everyone on the wall is different from his or her known position in the canon, forming a perplexing ensemble. Everyone is enclosed in quotation marks, in fact, enclosed in quotation marks by each other, and all the quotation marks are also enclosed within a gigantic quotation mark. Polysemic irony creates complete distance.

But did this ironic relationship to the old language offer some faint way out of total depression?

The ironic speech act creates a distance between literal and intended meaning. Therefore, there are also two kinds of receivers of it: the one who only understands the literal meaning, and the other, who also understands the intended message of the speech act. In other words, ironic speech divides the audience implicitly into two parts: to “Them”, who only have ears to the literal meaning, and to “Us”, who also understand the intended message. Thus irony draws a line between “from here” and “from there”. The susceptible receiver is capable of recognizing this line of demarcation. But when a statement is no longer understood from the perspective of Them, but from the perspective of the We, there is a strong temptation and pressure to add an actual meaning of this line beyond the ironic gesture. The language of the mural drew this line, and the painters of it positioned themselves to the side of the “We”. However, no content has been added to that side yet. Only a soft and hidden cry for help indicated that it would be needed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The author hints at a pun on the mural. There is a small fish painted in one corner of the room with a blurb written above, “Halp!” “Hal” in Hungarian means “fish”. “Halp” is a non-existing word in Hungarian but if you pronounce it in English it sounds like “help”.

# A Cataphoric Witness

VÍCTOR AGUADO

AND

MIGUEL BALLARÍN

How to say the “we” of a party? This text<sup>1</sup> is about that, about the possible and desirable relationalities within that word within that party, that is, when this word refers to gestures, bonds and attachments that belong to a dynamic of prefigurations and liminal precarious materialities, and that entail their own imminent expiration. This issue surfaces in many texts, particularly those in poetic form, as in these lines which tie the feeling of euphoria with the vulnerability and wearing down of bodies, “rocking with laughter / the young ones / strut without illusion / weathered extreme bodies / blossom in the singing night,” from the poem “Party Time” by Audre Lorde. Or when something in the night, though not necessarily always, compels one (a subject, a body) to be unprofitably but visibly happy or, almost its contrary, pervaded by a malaise that isn’t truly heartfelt: “y la bruma y el Sueño y la Muerte me estaban buscando (...) allí donde flota mi cuerpo entre los equilibrios contrarios” (“and the fog and Dream and Death were seeking me ... where my body floats between opposing fulcrums”) from Lorca’s *Poet in New York*. Or, in the words of a New York poet<sup>2</sup> who writes at age nineteen:

<sup>1</sup> Written by Víctor Aguado and Miguel Ballarín with contributions by Ramón del Buey around its edges, that is, during the first conversations and the last revisions, and with ideas originating from previous works in collaboration with Julia Morandeira about the semiotics of the nocturnal and politics of shine, related to the exhibition *Una imagen que no duele ni cuesta mirar* (A Painless, Effortless Image for the Eye), Madrid, 2020. Translated into English by Manuel Antonio Castro, this text would also not have been able without the conversations with him as well as with Coco Fitterman about her poems.

the body God gave me is too small

I was on Twitter DM last night

talking to C

who said he felt amazing

Lately

I                    feel ok

I                    only prayed to God once

                      asked Him to make me taller

to go to the party

to go to the cool party

from my bedroom it is

12:20 in new york on a friday

and you know the rest

mothers of America

i see you molding clay

because clay is a

universal

female

medium

A concomitance

working with the hands

welcome to the pull

welcome                    to the pool

welcome                    to the thing

that                            never fucking dies

This poem has a visibly happy opening, has an ambiguous mid-section, and, as we will see, two different versions (quoted below) of the same — but difficult to grasp — ending. Though it gives the impression of being a naive poem, where “hands” rhymes with “concomitance” or “pull” interlocks in a slant rhyme with “pool,” it shouldn’t be reduced to this aspect, because what it says differs considerably from what it entails by saying it in the way it says it. In an athenatic, technical, rhetorical sense, the poem is not written as a continuous progression but as a discrete string of events, themselves indistinct but separated through the process of depiction, weaved into the chronological timeline of a given party scene. The juxtaposition of those depicted events adopts a typical ordinal relationship of a stereotypical American house party. Yet the way the poem adopts this stereotype or reappraises stereotypical statements and forms of speech invites us to think that there is an underlying intent — or at least a principle of self-consciousness — about the stereotypical nature of the description of her experience of her reality or imagination.

The poem is not willing to distinguish reality from veracity, nor veracity from imagination. No line could claim for itself the value of experienced truth. There is a principle of individuation of experience, as well as of compartmentation in its perception. What we call “experience” is, in fact, only auto-personally accessible and only objectifiable (in language or in the body) as a substitute for the empirical content that stimulated it. The question about how to say the “we” of a party can now be posed as that of how to transfer a concrete experience (that is, a personal one) to the interior of the “we,” which is the same as asking how to objectify, how to make it accessible for, and thoroughly shared with. The only way of gaining entrance into an experiential meaning (not one’s own but not strange either) is by exchanging identical corporal or verbal *indicia* by way of which

<sup>2</sup> She is Coco Sofia Fitterman and the following lines, which arise from the affective, embodied understanding of going to a house party, come from the poem “that is not the right word for what you are trying to say” (2018).

sincere gestures might reveal themselves. And this required index of sincerity is what makes the homology possible between our experiences and those described in the poem, just as the feeling of euphoria between two euphorical partygoers would only become as homologous when what fundamentally constitutes the experience is a true fulfilment of such mood and not that of the empirical content from which the experience takes place, and, necessarily, when there is also a subsequent act of sentimental abstraction of said empirical content, which wouldn't be possible without a corporal and verbal externality through which the experience is to be objectified and conveyed, that is, without the distance between, and opened by, those surfaces and words of bodies upon which said *indicia* are revealed.

The first lines of the poem begin by alternatively voicing the feelings of “C” and “I.” They depict a DM conversation on Twitter where, at first thematic glance, the exchange seems to set up the expectancy for an encounter to follow. It's not that the house party creates these expectations in the abstract; what comes to be expected is the imminent contact with the others, in a singular but shared, common expectation for an anticipated encounter. The days before a party are charged with the prefigurations that we hold and make of others and of the encounter *with* — what is more, by the expectations that such prefigurations will take shape and be bodily negotiated at the party. The way this expectancy shifts between expectating bodies, topping them up with euphoria (“he felt amazing”) or tepid emotion (“I feel ok”), as the case may be, is what could come to explain the stress on the change in size of the body (“too small” at first and then “taller”) of the “I” of the poem. The pull of expectancy would lie more on the movement *between* than on the bodies it occupies, on the possibility of an anticipated relation which at the same time is an anticipatory relationality — a cataphoric witness, the prefiguration of a “we” which is lacking without the actual bodily event of

its literal celebration. But retrieving these nuances doesn't allow us to understand how this expectancy can gain a sense of agency to the point of being able to modify the self-perceived size of bodies and their traits.<sup>3</sup> The seemingly banal assertion that opens the poem (“the body God gave me is too small”) and its related prayer (“I only prayed to God once / asked Him to make me taller”) obviously denotes religiosity, but in its connotative underside these lines seem to come to say something like: first, I can presuppose the role that my body-prefigured-by-you plays in the party. So I feel too small. Then there's a moment of somatic change, which is passive, where the expectation of going to a party makes me feel AS IF at the party, which, later on, sometimes shortly after but never ipso facto, translates into another moment of *corporeality* change (= what is related to corporeality which is the quality of what is related to the body), which is active, in which I go on to behave AS IF at the party, so that the anticipated image that I have and I make of my own body at that party, after all, changes. My corporeality, different from my body, is what is othered or at least altered when my corporeal identity becomes almost an emblem within this semiotic operation according to which the expectancy has been charging polysemies — last night by you, lately by me — until it finally discharges itself in the literality of the party.

Another of the tensions of the poem takes place on the party's threshold of adjectivation, between the line where it is mentioned for the first time and the line where it appears again, this time adjectivated. The anaphoric repetition “to go to the” (x2) reaches the quality of the cliché not so much because of its banality as for the genuine universality of its expressed aspiration: “to go to the COOL PARTY”? And, given that the pulsional matter in the quoted segment is identified with the intercorporeality

<sup>3</sup> A possible interpretation: “it is not difficult to see how emotions are bound up with the securing of social hierarchy: emotions become attributes of bodies as a way of transforming what is ‘lower’ or ‘higher’ into bodily traits.” This is written by Sara Ahmed in the opening of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 4.

of expectancy, it isn't very difficult to obviate the pseudo-conclusive address which closes the scene: "and you know the rest". In truth "the rest" can't refer to any concrete object nor can it disappear from the poem: it can either stand as an implication whose function is powering the following lines with an extreme ambiguity (in a manner analogous to how the expectancy for the party increasingly charges up) or as a cataphora that paves the way for what is to come afterwards in the discourse, so that this hinted at "rest" would be deductible from what has been argued in the rest of the poem. This second option reveals a problematic structure where all the elements appear to be oriented towards a particular reading of the poem. An instance of a closed poem. In any case, closure is a fiction, one of the operations afforded by poetic writing. And this doesn't seem altogether compatible with the apparently scathing intimidation of this line's appellative: "you know" forces the reader to inhabit that "you" in order to close the poem from outside, it establishes with you a complicity by way of prefiguring you as a reader sensible enough to understand what "the rest" is actively *impliciting*, which is all the more uncanny when we consider that in order to fulfill that sensibility you have to know from the start certain things that the poem assumes as already known. As if it were to say: to you, who has already been to the party I'm speaking of, because you perfectly know its stereotype; you, who is already alluded by the "we" by way of inverted commas (= prefigured and precorpo-real), you don't need to be told anything else because you understand what's *implicated* – the range of embodied affectivity registered when one goes to a cool party.

It isn't difficult to miss the trivial connection between the pseudoconclusive line "and you know the rest" with the preceding loco-descriptive lines ("12:20 in new york on a friday" is, in fact, a phrase precise enough as to insinuate that the intention with which the exact time is mentioned is none other than to

locate the party scene and therefore the party stereotype in New York), nor is it difficult to note, at first glance, the disparity between these lines and the ones following them: upon re-reading ("mothers of America / i see you molding clay / because clay is a / universal / female / medium / A concomitance // working with the hands // welcome to the pull / welcome to the pool / welcome to the thing / that never fucking dies") one understands that the last line can mean many things in the context of the poem, all of them of unquestioned negative impact in terms of semantic certainty. It so happens that when we semantically loosen words in their referential function ("the thing"), the one-sidedness of a meaning built upon an estimation of plausible eventualities becomes weakened. By analogy, the party that the poem imagines tends, on its own, to discharge itself of certainty, which is to say, to get charged with ambiguity: the anaphore "welcome to the" (x3) reveals a pattern extremely conscious of this, that the house party entails a string of actions of self-affirmation within an open structure, reared towards a field of possible relational events, perhaps even probable, but never ensured. That is why it would no longer be possible to predict a projected experience but rather an openness to the common condition that the party is to be in the senses and modes that those who participate in it make it to be. You find yourself partying, suddenly, collectively. Thus, a second moment of being with emerges, which would again be cataphoric, in its turn a self-anticipating condition so that what's anticipated becomes a constant, immanent invitation to know and make together what will take place by taking part of the party.

What we are lacking is the characterisation but not the phenomenology. The poem would validate the characterisation of the house party as a performative device endowed with resources, times, moods and affects where a processual reality is



meant to be given with a great degree of inhibition of the judgment combined with an also prominent volatility of experience. And this is what makes a party such as this to appear as desirable while at the same time risky. THE ISSUE WOULD THEN BE NOT TO MATERIALISE ONE'S INTENTIONS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE BUT AS FAR AS IT IS PREFERABLE AND DESIRABLE. It is understood that what the metaphor "mothers of America ... molding clay" is conjuring up is a transcendental fear towards what the party can internally become, the point towards which it may point from the inside. The expectancy is connected now to the need to indicate what is menacing. For American mothers, the party the poem speaks of entails the twinning of ambiguity and evil — that correspondence so dear to Baudelaire ("u want a love poem / go read baudelaire" she says in another poem<sup>4</sup>). Mothers can't know with accuracy the final realisation of a party but they can deduce it from the stereotype that the party fits in; they can have the preconception of its resulting choreography and the prejudice of the final experience one may derive from it — without even having had beforehand a party experience of one's own — from the accepted image of a house party that all mothers of America have.

As the reading progresses through the lines, there would be an initial moment of perception and then a gaining of awareness ("I SEE YOU molding clay / BECAUSE clay is a"). It would be almost redundant to make explicit that there would be a second moment where one — *a she* —, who would identitarily coincide with the given universal quality ("female"), moves from seeing someone molding clay to the act of molding it oneself (herself). But what is left as a suggestion later on (when she says "universal / female / medium / A concomitance") is that such step depends not on the rapport or empathetic correspondence that the on-looking subject might have (for instance, that sensible enough reader who is prefigured by the "you know the rest") but rather on the coincidence or concomitance of the subject that looks with

the given universal quality. The term "medium" would come to highlight here that this dynamic is not immediate nor spontaneous. It is necessary to inhabit the mediating processes of access to the universal, and it is very insightful and precise and positive to employ the term "female" (= adjectivation of a material quality, 'belonging to the sex') instead of "feminine" (= adjectivation of a formal quality, 'showing the qualities of a woman'), because it posits the question on the *materiality* of the access to an identity (in this case, 'American motherhood') with which the "I" — a woman's I — of the poem has a potential, but very material, continuity or coincidence or concomitance.

A first draft of the poem<sup>5</sup> used to bear this ending: "once T drank ten beers / after track practice / then he raped A / T is a texture / A is centering / A is still centering / A is aligned / in perfect arabesque / there was something else / i was going to say / but then I turned 20 / in public I put on / my art world for you / for all of you / when I was 19 / i am still 19 / in my heart / in my soul / you are my best friend / i am only as strong as my weakest / pill / poem / promise / i am hurt / in the way / a ballerina / gets hurt." These final lines speak of the fragility of the festive, of the expiring quality of the "we" of a party, of the vulnerability and wearing down of bodies involved in the described scene when euphoria erupts. The poem doesn't pick up here on the stereotype of the party as writing material to be problematised or intervened upon but rather evinces a clearer purpose: to voice how painful the festive experience can be if clear and healthy boundaries are not established from the outset. In phenomenological terms, "T" and "A" make their entrance in the poem and the festive quality is shattered: "he (T's gender is now emphasized) raped A." Being witness of the event as one reads the phrase means to see yourself touched by what the phrase represents, which is not the same as saying that everyone is affected in the same manner. A few lines

96 / 4 "Prelude," published in Brooklyn Rail (November, 2018).

97 5 Published in The West 4th Street Review (October, 18, 2018).

down and the description subtly jumps from the third to the first and second person. In “there was something else / i was going to say / but ...” there is an *implicitation* that works just like “you know the rest” and which is already immanent to the party. Just when the “I” of the poem was about to say something about the incident between “T” and “A,” it seems as if the “I” transforms herself into “A.” There’s once again a moment of identificative concomitance whose access to the universal is *materially* mediated. At the same time, in saying “then I turned 20” it seems clear that the author is identifying herself with the consciousness of the “I” of the poem, which renders it impossible for the evaluative point of view to be located anywhere else or in any other body but hers, hence forcing the reader to negotiate an homologous relation with what they are reading, judging, being and thinking they understand.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, the author substituted that ending with a different version,<sup>7</sup> less autobiographical but more raw in semantic terms: “under the paving stones / in the maw of a stupid and failed revolution / we will be united in death see u in hell / I’m trying to work on myself / everybody is.” It may sound conventionally allegorical on first perusal, but its rawness doesn’t imply an absence of emotion but a different evaluation in relation to the same event. Both versions of the ending coincide in their avoiding the need to formulate their effective resolution; both describe an event that is upsetting and disheartening because, in following the way it is staged in the two cases, it seems as if it couldn’t have been any other way. In the second draft one is moreover struck by the feeling of frustration about being incapable of even imagining what could have *not been*, materially speaking. In fact, the connotative hyperbole of the “we” (this word crops up here for the first time: “we will be united in death see u in hell”), added to the reference to May 68 and its young revolutionary passion, ultimately incapable of transforming itself into

substantial political changes, uncovers a possible interpretation in this very regard — frustration added to bitterness. The second version changes the terms of the problem raising it to a different — narratively semi-anonymous, semantically more undefined — level which would come to underscore that the effects of damage at the party are not waiting to be interpreted nor attributed: they simply *are*. And everything that can be done is to accept them as a principle of work on oneself. In the first draft, this was translated in an evaluation of the internal anachronisms (“but then I turned 20” vs. “i am still 19”) and in the assumption of said anachronisms under the light of one’s own strengths and weaknesses in a relation of paradoxical reciprocity: to sincerely state “i am only as strong as my weakest / pill / poem / promise,” and to accept it, means to take as premise an immanent predicament, which would entail — at least in illocutionary terms — that one is *already* working on oneself, whereas the phrase in the second version “I’m trying to work on myself” would actually dissipate in the very moment it is pronounced — it is a locutionary act.

How can one work on oneself when the emotional residue of a party and of the “we” still clings to one’s body the morning after? Another poem by the same author<sup>8</sup> contains a scene on how to settle the very last party:

there are things  
you can’t buy online  
but when you dream  
you can find them  
in other people

<sup>6</sup> This is what Lauren Berlant says (more or less, cf.) at the beginning of *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, p.26, when she speaks about the apostrophe as is conceptualised and elaborated by Barbara Johnson.

<sup>7</sup> Published in *Brooklyn Rail* (November, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> The following lines are the two first stanzas, and later on the third, of the poem “uncle’s house II” (2018), by Coco Sofia Fitterman.

sometimes  
i dream about a castle  
six white horses  
what was that poem  
about horses in the ocean  
something about AIDS

i hate AIDS  
i miss my gay uncle  
eastern european grandeur  
st. petersburg's version  
of The Cock on a friday  
i forgot what this party is called  
i left my phone  
in a place  
where older dykes cruise  
i shook Eileen's hand  
i don't care about anything

Perhaps the most reassuring way to read these lines is to take them as an experience of the author's reality, but the degree of formal and thematic transitivity between all those details and examples — apparently digressive, dissimilar, arbitrary — is not entirely compatible with a reader-response phenomenology. Reading papers and theoretical writings has acquainted us all with the experience of relief that comes when abstract reasoning is interrupted by examples, when the general approach finds a bit of clarity under the light of certain particular cases. The examples given in these lines, however, do not take for granted the legitimacy of their enlightening powers. Nor do they contradict it. Their use in the poem introduces you to an attention regime that doesn't allow anymore the kind of close reading with which we approached the previous poem. And it isn't as if we have at our disposal any other

attention register: it's these lines that call for a different degree of detail.<sup>9</sup> It gives the impression that the "I" of the poem presents these examples as if contemplating fragments of herself in order to turn them into a relic or a precarious symbol, since it doesn't come to substitute the particular with the general but to multiply the meaning of the "I" of the poem, and by extension of the entire poem, as a game of opposing mirrors — a cross-reflecting operation with contingent, unpredictable facts.

Perhaps after the party a new space of equivocity could appear, one that would leave room for a third cataphoric moment, anticipatory of the retrojection that one could do regarding last night. What becomes paradoxically expectant the morning after is how to settle last night's party: WE HAVE TO MAKE A RELIC OF SPENDING TIME TOGETHER. After all, feeling hungover isn't but being corporeally affected by what one has spent, forgotten, lost, left behind and to resist it linguistically and sentimentally (see from "i forgot what this party is called" to "i don't care about anything"). The hangover would be that emotional-somatic state when — regardless of how precarious the materiality of the party was — the body still retains what the party has been without being *materially* present in it anymore. The poem continues: "i can't afford / the new iPhone / i have to look at your pics / on a smaller screen / tears smudge my cursive / reading Lorca / in the Hamptons / at my married friend's lake house." What opens itself at the party is an indexical semiotics, a space for remembering that is no longer auto-personal, since the relic of last night is created from the *indicia* of the "we" of the party. The structure of remembrance is specular and, seemingly, the limit that separates one from the object of oneself is an iPhone's screen. As an

<sup>9</sup> Lyn Hejinian wrote a work, "a sequence of elegies, mourning public as well as personal loss," in which she tackled the degree of formal and thematic transitivity that lines of poetry can have between themselves to impact, to a greater or lesser degree, the flow of reading and the comprehension of poems: *The Unfollowing*. Oakland: Omnidawn Publishing, 2016. By analogy, we could describe the house party as a regime of sequencing that makes a diegesis from the anecdotal: it is precisely the festive frame that makes the unfollowing to be followed — that mosaic of facts, devoid of meaning without it, inside the facticity of the party.

experiential subject, but above all else as an experiential body, one becomes at the same time a reflecting and reflective index; that is why it's a bugger when the screen is too small.

We could assume that in every party there is a principle of exogenous intimacy, that there's an experiential dimension that is not positivisable from itself but rather requires a space of internal speculation from alterity. Inner introspection is acquired from one's outside reflection: I have to bounce my experience outside of myself to reach that part of me. The specular structure is, then, diachronic and not synchronic: the processes of auto-representation of the experience of reality (of the party) are given after (sometimes shortly after but never ipso facto) the sensible encounter with the empirical content it arose from. E.g. you haven't lost the iPhone until you feel its loss; and this is, in *corporealitary* terms, absolutely the case. But the specular structure is triangular and not symmetric: the relic of the very last party is formed when a trigonal catoptric operation comes about, according to which the configuration of the settlement belonging to an experience is made by means of evaluating the reciprocal settlement that someone else is making of themselves from you. The lines "tears smudge my cursive / reading Lorca / in the Hamptons" are an instance of such trigonal catoptrics for a current Spanish-language poetry reader, contemplating one's own fragments as precarious symbols for the other. The personal experience is settled from one's own expectation of the experiences had — and already objectified — by others, the cataphoric "having been with" becomes then a "continuing being with" which is no longer corporeal, that is, a verbal conjugation of a precedent for an(other) imminent witness — and this can work as a definition of "community." It is in that moment, and not before, that it makes sense to say the "we" of a party.



## Sala 603 – community of friends

OCTAVIO CAMARGO

The idea that Sala 603 is a house where parties happen all the time as some people say, is partly true, but not completely. Actually a party, in a formalized way, with a beforehand invitation or a specific date for celebration almost never happened in the house.

It is more related to a certain way of life and a certain mode of artistic production.

The house at Atilio Borio, 603, in Curitiba, was built in the early 60s or so. My father, Gilson Camargo, bought it from its former owner, Salomão Soifer, in 1970, and the family came to live in the house by this year. My father died of a heart disease at an early age, in 1975. We kept on living in the house until 1987. By this time my mother, Maria Celi, my brother, Gilson and my sister, Giceli, who had recently had a child, Francisco, moved to Florianopolis and the house was put up for rent. I stayed in Curitiba to keep on with my studies. I had just started to study music at the University and had a job as an English teacher.

After some years, I think it was 1993, my family moved back to Curitiba, and we all returned to live in the house again, except my sister, who was married and lived in an apartment nearby. By this time I was in my 20s, and already had a circle of friends, mainly musicians, actors and artists from the University. My brother, who was a little younger, started to work as a photographer.

This same year my brother Gilson arranged a small photo lab in the back part of the house, where there is an extra built area, for development of films and to print copies for his personal use. By this time the movement in the house started to become more intense. The lab was a good place for the gathering of people involved in photographic work and also for my friends from school, artists and musicians. My mother was very receptive to our friends and also prepared wonderful snacks for us. So it was a perfect environment to stay as much as we liked, hang around and develop work.

In 1999 I started the process of staging the complete cycle of the Homeric poems of the Iliad with a group of 24 actors. Most of these theatre performances were developed and rehearsed in the house, as well as other theatre pieces and artistic activities in the meantime.

In this period, around the year 2000, Gilson became involved as a partner with the opening of a successful bar in Curitiba in the neighborhood of Alto da XV, called “Beto Batata,” which had an active program of music and photographic exhibitions. This somehow collaborated with the development of a “mystical aura” around the house and its gatherings.

This productive environment lasted for some years until around 2005, when my brother moved to his own apartment. In 2007 my mother also moved to an apartment near Gilson, and my nephew, Francisco, who had recently married, stayed in the house with his wife, Adriana, and children, Daniele and Gabriel. At this time I was also living outside the house.

In 2008, in September, my nephew divorced from his wife and I came back to the house to live with him. Unfortunately, he died in a terrible car crash that same year, in December.

From 2009 until now Chiris Gomes and I live in the house, with the two dogs, Tyson and Lelo, that we inherited from Chico (Francisco). Tyson just passed away, in August 2020, and Lelo is still with us. He is a senior dog now, 18 years old!













In these last 12 years the house has maintained an activity in theatre, music and performance, mainly due to the art work and agency of Chiris Gomes, my wife and life long friend. All the images and testimonies shared in this article are fruit of her love, artistic activism and tireless commitment. Among these were the rehearsals of different theatre pieces, the composition of songs with partners and poets of the city, the deaf theatre group organized by Chiris and the “Bloco de Carnaval Encafifados,” a group of friends that gather together to share authoral sambas during carnival. The house has also held a few workshops, such as the “Oficina de Autonomia”, short artistic residencies and eventually, small performances open for the public. We never made a commercial use of the house in terms of charging fees or renting the space for rehearsals.<sup>1</sup>

So the “parties” which the house is known for in some circles were always derived from the activities of the house. We almost never planned a party. People who came to rehearse could stay longer on many occasions, and also a few friends happened to come around unannounced when they felt there was some movement inside.

Now, in times of the corona virus the house is empty of visitors. That fills our hearts with longing and memories ...

\*

Editor’s note: As a way to further document the special situation at the house of Octavio Camargo, a set of questions were sent to him and those who are regularly taking part in gatherings at the house.

*How do you experience the gatherings at Sala 603?*

The way Octavio and Chiris receive people at home is very special. We feel comfortable to be ourselves freely and to

share whatever we want. I don't see this space so much as "Sala 603," but as the home of Octavio and Chiris, a space that is completely different from all other spaces that I know. It is open, receptive, bohemian, chaotic and inspiring, where a real politics of art takes place, accepting all people in a state of freedom, pluralism, anarchism and love. The Open House of Chiris and Octavio has Always influenced me positively, with their style of life, which is completely different from the way I live at home. (Eliane Campelli)

*How would you describe the community around Sala 603 – does it have a particular quality, or way of expressing itself? Is there a kind of "politics" embedded in the community there?*

The community is compounded with artists from different areas, artists who understand art as a force that is able to rescue human beings from the limited frame of the day to day dealings that society tries to impose. We know that at Sala 603 we can have moments of light, joy, sorrow, love and art. Another important theme reflected in the house, in its profound diversity, is politics. Here we can be rescued by our humanity. (Raquel Rizzo)

*In the face of current lockdowns and restrictios, will there be any meetings at Sala 603?*

Maybe. Presential or not, the encounters will continue. It is a deep need of all of us, as human beings, and also of the animals. We are animals and we need a space to be together, to meet. And we should not confuse the act of being together with that of being in accordance. Plurality emerges from these confrontations, it is a form of social

proof, of a conflict of souls, of incongruences. And we have to live with them, so that we can feel, at least, the possibility of a world. Not so new, because the world is an old creature. The "New World" is just 500 years old. But it can be different.

We are in search of something that we can not access yet. To yearn for the new is to be in community and to believe. Community emerges from differences, and a cultural space, which can be as simple as a roof and walls. Sala 603 is a space generative of enchantments. A new melody can spring from its corners anytime, sharing unheard rhythms of superposed sounds, of inspired singers, and maybe, after request, some poetry. Music and theatre are the fundamentals of this flow of feelings and eagerness of expression. To be relational is to be in contact with a musical note lifted in the space, among the nothing that is around us and that is all, that sometimes crashes with looking faces of reproach, of diverse histories and infinite reverberations, beyond that space, of that architecture, where some people come for a few hours and some stay longer.

Though we can still imagine some other riches. As those who pass by chance, accidental visitors that may transport the graffitied walls to somewhere else, to other communities. A place for being together, Sala 603 is a mutable place with disobedient chairs, a few that still resist to walk alone and to move beyond their placement on the table. (Fernando Marés)

*In 2019 you were part of presenting the Deaf theatre play "Surdo, logo existo" (Deaf, ergo sum) in Curitiba. How did Sala 603 participate in this event?*

LIBRAS (Brazilian Sign Language) is the language of the Deaf communities in Brazil. It is a form of resistance against the model of “medical rehabilitation” imposed by oralist practices. It is a poetical language, which is powerful in art, though it is invisibilized and erased in many social spaces.

I met actress Chiris Gomes and the theatre director Octavio Camargo through Sueli Fernandes, who first put us in contact. They live in the city and work with music, theatre and contemporary art. Chiris once invited me to translate and teach a short theatre text in Libras to a small group of actors and actresses. After this first encounter we developed a friendship full of sharing of knowledges about the Deaf communities. As our friendship progressed, Chiris and Octavio presented to me many interesting aspects about theatre and literature. Octavio also challenged me to translate poems by Leminski, Camões, James Joyce, and even Homer. Our friendship created occasions for a series of meetings with Deaf friends, who felt comfortable at Sala 603, or “Casa da Chica” (Chiris’s house) as it was baptized by the Deaf guests later. Amid Deaf friends, translators and signed friendships, we established a meeting point for Libras, Portuguese and poetry. These encounters to share text and poetry attracted the attention of Deaf and hearing friends to exchange their narratives and poetics in meetings where music, signed poetry and literature were mixed. Encounters inhabited by sound, image and movement. From this context, we were able to produce, in the course of eight years, theatre pieces with the participation of Deaf artists and other works that value Libras as an important element of dramatic narrative.

Sala 603 was the space of the insurgence of Libras in the art scene of Curitiba. While the colonialistic view frames Libras as a mere instrument of accessibility, in Sala 603 Libras is valued for its own characteristics, its visual and spatial elements.

The production of “Surdo, logo existo” (Deaf, ergo sum), a theatre piece created and performed by a group of Deaf actors, is a result of this active movement in the city. This work represents the world in inverted order, a world where accessibility is directed towards the hearing audience. Its narrative aims to deconstruct the myth of positivistic modernity, where the bodies that don’t fit into the concept of normality become mere objects of scientific experimentation socially produced through narratives of stigmatization. The theatre play is based on ideas borrowed from the “theatre of the oppressed” of Augusto Boal, and is a reaction to the hearer-oriented social structure. It dialogues with Descartes’ idea of “cogito ergo sum,” as well as Aristotle and the institutions of control that were discussed by Foucault. It is an exhortation and a complaint about the meta-narratives related to Deaf bodies.

These subtle memories inhabit and weave my interest about Deaf art and poetry, and contributed, in a profound way, to many of my practices and reflections about Deaf art, in theatre as an audiovisual art. And not only myself, Sala 603 made it possible to expand and amplify the perception of artistic practice in Libras. It is the space where Gabriela Grigolom, the first Deaf theatre director of Curitiba was established. The house helped support Deaf men and women as actors and actresses, it served as a scenario for audiovisual productions of Deaf filmmakers and was the stage for many poems to be translated to Libras, theatre pieces in Libras, and especially, it promoted the encounter Deaf-Deaf with art. The house is a territory of resistance and a Deaf artistic residency. It is a breath taken with the hands, a flourishing poetical deaf environment, bilingual and activist. (Jonathas Medeiros)



# Politics of Sleep – A Text for the Right to Rest<sup>1</sup>

JULIA MORANDEIRA

The history of sleep and rest has not been a homogeneous narrative, nor have their modes and discourses been homogeneous. We have not always slept in the same manner, let alone in a consistent manner; the eight continuous hours of sleep is a relatively recent assumption. Sleep, just like night, was domesticated in the 18th century by way of a progressive lighting of the world and the establishment of the 8 to 12 workday. Before that, throughout the European continent people would sleep in two or more intervals spread across the 24 hours of the day, particularly at night. Periods of sleeplessness were devoted to prayer, to thought, to conversation, to intimacy, to house work or to some petty criminal activity; it was an ambivalent time that combined comfort with the terrors of the nocturnal.<sup>2</sup> If the night's first need was rest, the second was work. Throughout the European Middle Ages,<sup>3</sup> the night represented a legal territory regulated by the chiming of bells at twilight, which signalled the extinguishing of fires and

<sup>1</sup> This text appeared in its first form as “Políticas del sueño - Un texto por el derecho al descanso,” in *Werker Editions* (December, 2018), in connection to *Werker 10 -Community Darkroom*, an itinerant school of radical documentary photography initiated by the Werker Collective and activated in 2018 at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, involving several collectives in Barcelona (Dar Chabab, a day centre for migrant teenagers in vulnerable situations; the Susoespai Association, a creation centre focused on people living with a mental disorder; Baixem al Carrer, an organization that sets up cultural activities for elderly people with reduced mobility; and La Mesa en Defensa de los Derechos de las Trabajadoras del Hogar y de Cuidados, a self-organised coalition of four collectives that fight for the rights of migrant domestic workers). The text connects the themes of exhaustion and burnout

the prohibition to work under candlelight; and by the chiming of bells in the morning, which proclaimed the call to work. These bells wouldn't toll at the same time all year round but changed with the seasons, matching the natural and treasured light which presided over the plough hand's labor. However, with the advent of capitalism in the early modern period, the pace of labor in larger cities became independent from the rising and setting of the sun, and towards the late 17th century, merchants and officials in several parts of Europe set the beginning of the working day at 7am. This included several long breaks and concluded around 7 or 10pm, though work extensions were now possible after sunset thanks to artificial lighting. There were multiple and varied reasons justifying night-time work (harvests couldn't wait, particularly if threatened by bad weather or theft; once turned on, the heat of furnaces and foundries was used as much as possible; not to mention domestic work carried out around the clock by women and servants)<sup>4</sup> and time for rest was scattered across the remaining disposable hours. Colonial trade moreover introduced the use of spices and of new stimulating substances such as coffee, tea, sugar or cocoa, which boosted productivity and exploitation both in the colonies as in the metropolis, contributing to the consolidation of the dialectic definition between night-time rest and day-time labor.

Hence, torn by the tension between the developments of capitalism and the conquests within the class struggles, the workday was first expanded in the 18th century, then restrained in the first half of the 20th century, and expanded again from the 70s onward with the advent of what Murray Melbin termed as "incessant" institutions:<sup>5</sup> services available 24/7 enabled by the rise in night shifts. This logic seemed to predict that the 90s would see a definitive colonization of sleep by labor. But service industries relocated themselves to other parts of the planet instead, with different schedules and labor regulations, so as to preserve the

diurnal workday and the established sleep pattern of the Western world. This formula didn't last very long however, since with the arrival of the Internet, of automatization and of technology, the colonization of labor and rest has increased to the point of absorbing the night, our lives and our time. For some time now the world has become a place permanently illuminated where labor and consumption are displayed uninterruptedly. Jonathan Crary dubs it as "24/7 capitalism":<sup>6</sup> a style of incessant production where we are permanently exposed (to be surveyed and captured) and permanently connected (to systems of communication, devices and interfaces of the most varied kind). 24/7 capitalism dreams with the end of sleep, with a restless efficiency and a luminous transparency; a time where shadows and laziness leave room for a flat, homogenous and seamless idea of time and experience.

A 24/7 world represents a time of indifference, insensibility and amnesia. A world populated by "passionate" doers depleted by burnout who survive by way of medication; by precarious

with the tiring activity that night-time partying embodies. Festive activities break the binary labor/rest, pierce it and blend it with its celebratory dimension, the strenuous and unproductive use of energy, the deflagration of strengths in the construction of something immaterial. The festive activity implies also the ostentation of a privilege, the power to act uselessly, and the incentive for a risk, that others may act uselessly at your expense. That is why it is relevant and crucial and crucial to think also about the underside of a house party, that which substitutes and deprives (sleep), that which displaces and colonizes (the domestic sphere), thus the inclusion in this publication of a text for the right to rest. Translated into English by Manuel Antonio Castro.

2 Koslofsky, Craig. *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 6.

3 Verdon, Jean. *La nuit au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2009, p. 10.

4 Koslofsky, Craig. *Evening's Empire*, p. 7.

5 Melbin, Murray. *Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World After Dark*. New York: The Free Press. 1987.

6 Crary, Jonathan. *24/7. Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. London / New York: Verso, 2014.

and not particularly fervent workers but lacking any other obvious alternative; by invisibilized unpaid female workers, labor deaths,<sup>7</sup> and numb electric ants.<sup>8</sup> In this schizophrenic system, defined by extenuation and permanent efficiency, rest has been relegated to the status of being either a nuisance or a social luxury. Thomas Edison — an industrial colossus who modeled the 20th century with his inventions, his business model and beliefs — foresaw this model of the working superman when he boasted that his success was due to sleep deprivation. In 1921 he wrote: “For myself I never found need of more than four or five hours’ sleep in the twenty-four. I never dream. It’s real sleep. When by chance I have taken more I wake dull and indolent. We are always hearing people talk about ‘loss of sleep’ as a calamity. They better call it loss of time, vitality and opportunities.”<sup>9</sup> Edison stands as a precursor of 24/7 capitalism. In line with Crary, it isn’t coincidental that the inventor of the electric bulb, which changed the face of the labor market, was preaching a century before against rest and sleep. And not only that: in his pragmatic defense of endless productivity, he imposed a surveillance system over his employees aimed to coerce them to never stop or take a break from working.<sup>10</sup> Notwithstanding his vainglorious claims about not sleeping, Edison would nap throughout the day using the spoon technique, like Dalí or Einstein — a fact that feeds the popular belief that little night-time sleep punctuated with various “power naps” is a sign and a habit common to genius. This myth stands in sync with the programs of current companies such as Google or Nike, which, in following the advice of human resource consultants, allow for napping intervals at work and include areas devoted to rest, games and socializing — everything necessary to recharge one’s batteries just enough to never leave the workplace.

The dialectic work/rest, unproductivity/productivity, is both constituent and generative. Even more so in the case of

workers’ self-organization, the night appears as a privileged territory while exhaustion stands as the main condition from which to articulate the struggle and organize subaltern forms of learning. Workers’ night schools or the history of organized struggle and proletarian cooperation are exemplary of the building of solidarities, self-directed learning and other possibilities than those imposed by capitalist extenuation. However, in the labor regime of 24/7 capitalism, rest is represented as an avoidable weakness, whereas constant productivity and flexibility are glorified to the detriment of workers’ health and security. As labor and health historian Alan Derickson has shown,<sup>11</sup> the over-esteemed and masculinized notion of being awake rests its case on cultural and political arguments established in the Western world from the late 19th century. Exhaustion is minimized and even lionized by entrepreneurial logic, encouraging workers to

7 In her article “Forced to Love the Grind,” Miya Tokumitsu describes the rise of the “ceaselessly productive worker, with little time for rest, let alone any need or desire for it”, crowned as an exemplary figure, as well as its dangers and consequences: the deaths caused by extenuation, such as that of a 21-year-old intern at the London branch of Bank of America Merrill Lynch after three consecutive days of work, or that of a truck driver who crashed and ran over several people after 24 hours without sleep. Tokumitsu, Miya, et al. “Forced to Love the Grind.” *Jacobin*. Web. 13 Aug. 2015.

8 In 1969, Philip K. Dick foresaw the evolution towards the medicalised, automatised and interconnected robot-worker in the short story “The Electric Ant.” It isn’t coincidental: Dick lived his whole life in California, where science fiction was a key element in the milieu which saw the rise of so-called Californian Ideology, essential to the emergence of IT industries in Silicon Valley. Dick, Philip K. “The Electric Ant,” in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (October, 1969), pp. 100-15.

9 Taken from *Diary and Sundry Observations of Thomas Alva Edison* (edited by Dagobert R Runes, Greenwood Publishing House, 2002); quoted in Popova, Maria. “Thomas Edison, Power-Napper: The Great Inventor on Sleep and Success.” *Brain Pickings*. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

10 Khazan, Olga. “Thomas Edison and the Cult of Sleep Deprivation.” *The Atlantic*. Web. 19 May 2014.

11 Derickson, Alan. *Dangerously ASleep: Overworked Americans and the Cult of Manly Wakefulness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.



deny their biological needs in favor of labor efficiency, and thus applying a logic of toxic masculinity where success is measured by virtue of strength, competition and resistance.

But sleep remains a vital need that never abandons us. It is a moment of affective replenishing and a reparation of the perceptive capacities that have been undone during the day; it is the place where our sensibility and mundanity lay their roots. It coincides with the metabolization of the day (of what has been ingested and experienced), with neurological reorganization, and with memory consolidation. In its monotonous repetition, day in day out, it becomes a central function of quotidian life, enabling the possibility of learning and attention. It is a moment of suspension, of disconnection from the media and devices we operate with, a moment of inactivity and uselessness. And it is, also, “one of the few remaining experiences where, knowingly or not, we abandon ourselves to the care of others.”<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Crary defines it aptly: “As solitary and private as sleep may seem, it is not yet severed from an interhuman tracery of mutual support and trust, however damaged many of these links may be. It is also a periodic release from individuation — a nightly unraveling of the loosely woven tangle of the shallow subjectivities one inhabits and manages by day. In the depersonalisation of slumber, the sleeper inhabits a world in common, a shared enactment of withdrawal from the calamitous nullity and waste of 24/7 praxis. However, for all the ways in which sleep is unexploitable and unassimilable, it is hardly an enclave outside the existing global order. Sleep has always been porous, suffused with the flows of waking activity, though today it is more unshielded than ever from assaults that corrode and diminish it. In spite of these degradations, sleep is the recurrence in our lives of a waiting, of a pause. ... Sleep is a remission, a release from the ‘constant continuity’ of all the threads in which one is enmeshed while waking. ... Located somewhere on the border between the social and the

natural, sleep ensures the presence in the world of the phasic and cyclical patterns essential to life and incompatible with capitalism. Sleep’s anomalous persistence has to be understood in relation to the ongoing destruction of the processes that sustain existence on the planet. Because capitalism cannot limit itself, the notion of preservation or conservation is a systemic impossibility. Against this background, the restorative inertness of sleep counters the deathliness of all the accumulation, financialisation, and waste that have devastated anything once held in common.”<sup>15</sup>

Many studies and even the very work of the Werker Collective show that rest is not the same for everyone. It is distributed along the lines of race, class, functional and neurological diversity, age, gender and sexuality: communities rendered subaltern by these dividing lines — which contribute to a naturalization of what is “normal,” “acceptable” and “healthy” — sleep less and sleep worse. Particularly dramatic is the “sleep gap” for racialized and black people,<sup>14</sup> which evinces the direct correlation between the erosion of rest and discrimination (entailing stress, insecurity — both physical as economical — inner-city problems or issues of surveillance) just as the effects that this bad sleep entails for people’s health<sup>15</sup> — at the personal, community, social and economic level. Another fact worth pointing out, which worsens the extreme conditions of vulnerability and fatigue, is the housing problem. Evicted and homeless people have been left defenceless in an atrocious situation of alienation, vulnerability and urgency, where the very possibility of rest is at risk.

Rest is, then, an index to the intersection of forms of dispossession and privilege that shape us as subjects. It is a political

12 Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, p. 125.

13 Ibid., pp. 125 - 8.

14 Resnick, Brian. “Why Sleep Is a Matter of Racial Justice.” *The Atlantic*. Web. 29 Oct. 2015.

15 Sustained lack of sleep is the cause of diabetes, obesity, and heart failure, among other things.

condition, which comes to show the crucial import of the logics of preservation that care politics bring. Under this prism, Audre Lorde's words in *A Burst of Light* gain renewed strengths: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." She writes these lines after learning that cancer is eating up her liver and with her mind on how privilege is a corrosive vector that organizes the management and reproduction of life, death, care and, above all else, self-care. The exhaustion induced by sleep deprivation related to dispossession similarly provokes a state of vulnerability, unprotection and malaise.<sup>16</sup> Against this backdrop, the question about the right to rest gains urgency. Who holds the right to sleep today, and in what manner? Who has the right to such basic rights as rest, and why? How can we collectively take care of each other and face this political war?

And notwithstanding this, there have always been "all those who sleep *otherwise*: night workers who sleep through the day, parents who nap while their children do the same, rebellious sleepers of all sorts, as well as all those who sleep in a more disorderly fashion: insomniacs, narcoleptics, and their kin."<sup>17</sup> Slumber is steeped in questions of intimacy, chemistry, biology and politics, defined by conceptions of the normal, the ideal and the pathological. Its perception has changed throughout time, influenced by scientific discourses and popular representations, producing and establishing conceptions of what is a normal or disordered sleep pattern. Ultimately there is no formula more "natural" than others; there are only partial and instrumentalized approaches. Studies of sleep developed in an exponential manner throughout the 20th century, providing increasingly more precise definitions of "good sleep." In parallel sleep-inducing drugs have existed everywhere from time immemorial, but since the 90s the consumption and industry of pharmaceutical sleep inducers has boomed, in tight correlation with the period's

neoliberal logic and its attached cultural expectations. From then on, this profitable business has done nothing but multiply, thanks to the exponential medical identification of physical and psychological states (emotional fluctuating moods such as shyness, anxiety, distraction, sadness and variable sexual desire, to name a few), and the subsequent creation of individual pseudo-needs with their allotted chemical treatments. An equation where the support offered by collective tools and social structures to palliate and manage these affects is totally dismissed, reinforcing the modern ideology that confines emotions to the private and psychologic realm. As recently shown by thinkers such as Mark Fisher and Sara Ahmed, to name two, affects and states of emotion are subjective and social constructs, impossible to disentangle from the exchanges and interdependencies of the (social) world. They function like economies, circulating between bodies and growing in value as they circulate, feeding social and political causes (the expectations of class or the migrant condition, for instance). Thus, the consequences of this systematic denial of the public nature of emotions and affects only exacerbate the forms of general discontent, whose management ought to be shared by the collective more than by the single medicalized individual.

Sleeping is a social act: society cannot exist without rest, nor can the latter exist without social expectations. Sleep is one of the liaisons that tie individuals to the various institutions where we inscribe ourselves (family, society, work, etc.) and when an alteration of sleep breaks one of these bonds, medicine is called to rearrange the tissue. The case of slumber is paradigmatic: individuals seek to sleep the recommended eight hours a day, which structure the institutional uses of time and shape the basis for pharmaceutical treatments. As Wolf-Meyer noted,

<sup>16</sup> We are thinking about the use of sleep deprivation as torture, such as it is practised in Guantánamo.

<sup>17</sup> Wolf-Meyer, Matthew J. *The Slumbering Masses. Sleep, Medicine and Modern American Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, p. 3.

each factor “reinforces the others, thereby producing a robust cultural logic of sleep, spatiotemporal rhythm, and normalcy”<sup>18</sup> which consolidate a normative “universal”<sup>19</sup> model of “correct” sleep. What stands outside of that definition, is disqualified and medicalized.

It would seem as if 24/7 capitalism produces only forms of staying incessantly awake. But instead it is intensifying the awake/sleep cycles: we have to be alert when we are awake, and we have to be profoundly asleep when we rest. It is not the insomniac who provides a model for these incessant forms of life, but the narcoleptic, who requires medication both to stay awake during the day and to peacefully sleep at night.<sup>20</sup> A model which clearly corresponds to the data of elevated consumption of benzodiazepines (Rohypnol, Flurazepam/Dalmadorm, Lormetazepam/Noctamid, Lorazepam) that induce sleep and of drugs without recipes (Doxylamine) combined with the ingestion of caffeinated drinks and legal and illegal stimulants.

The horizon sketched by the analysis of the current policing of sleep draws a distressing picture, to say the least. On the one hand, the sick celebration and representation of exhaustion by the contemporary logic of labor are worsening a necro-political regime that plunders subalternized and dispossessed communities. On the other hand, the capitalist medicalization of life has enabled new forms of intervention upon bodies, reinforcing increasingly sophisticated forms of control and profit. In its turn, the colonization of affects, memory and time imposed by these regimes aggravate the confiscation of collective time and the impossibility of articulating sustainable alternatives. But far from laying down our arms, this situation compels us to call for the right to rest. The right to a sleep that restores our shared structures, our collective care and defenses, our elan to cooperate and strive for mutuality. A mundane and *mundanizing* rest, which restores the creation of worlds in common. A defense of sleep

that isn't institutionalized but hedonist, that is not untied from the demand for leisure, for pleasure, for laziness and well-being. And a representation of work and rest that isn't guilt-ridden, dogmatic or normative, but approachable, caring and transformative of shared imaginaries. Let this text be a manifesto for this cause, since our lives depend upon it.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> In this sense Wolf-Meyer has studied the disappearance of the siesta in Spain against the pressure of management models of production and labor such as the French, the English or the German, and the way in which “the United States, especially, and the European Union syncopate the rhythms of other societies to produce global temporal intensities and rests, metonymic coordinations of workers and work.” Wolf-Meyer. *The Slumbering Masses*, p. 182.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

## BIOGRAPHIES:

JULIA MORANDEIRA ARRIZABALAGA is a researcher and curator based in Madrid. Her work focuses on the problematization of the epistemological foundations of eurocentric modernity through the body and the imagination and activation of forms of institutionality, with projects such as Canibalia, Escuelita, Night Studies, or Social Choreographies. She holds a degree in the Humanities from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and an MA in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths College.

MIGUEL BALLARÍN BARRACHINA is a choreographer and dance researcher from Madrid engaged in the study of the semiotical and political power of non-gestural movement specializing in so-called urban dances. His work has been presented at Teatros del Canal, Naves Matadero, Tandem Paris-Madrid, B.Motion-Operaestate Festival in Bassano del Grappa, and Tanzkongress in Dresden. He has an MA degree in Advanced Philosophical Studies and is a PhD candidate in Aesthetic Theory.

OCTAVIO CAMARGO is a composer and theatre director from Curitiba, Brazil. He is also Professor of Composition and Aesthetics at the School of Music and Fine Arts of Parana since 1992. He holds a Master in Literary Studies from Universidade Federal do Parana. He has presented a number of performances of the

Iliad, developing a unique approach to the work, including a 24-hour performance at the Festival de Curitiba in 2016. Camargo has also presented installations, site-specific and social activism works, including Surface Tension Curitiba, 2006, A day in a life, Munich, 2008, We Live in the Samecity, Los Angeles, 2011, The Imaginary Republic / The Autonomous Odyssey (with Brandon LaBelle), Bergen, 2018.

RAMÓN DEL BUEY CAÑAS is a predoctoral fellow in the Department of Philosophy at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, where he organizes seminars on Philosophical Anthropology, Posthumanities and Marxist Literary Criticism. His doctoral research is devoted to the history, poetics, and criticism of social forms in the work of Fredric Jameson. He is a curator and member of the AMEE boarding team.

ISTVÁN JÁVOR Between 1972 and 1986 he worked as a unit stills photographer at the Film Factory together with cinematographers such as Lajos Koltai, Elemér Ragályi, Sándor Kardos. Documenting the activities of the democratic opposition, he photographed those who suffered during the Kádár-regime, and the situation of ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary. In the 1980s he made documentaries at Balázs Béla Film Studio, then in 1987 together with his friends he founded Fekete Doboz (Black Box), the first independent video journal in Hungary to document the change of political system. Between 1996 and 2000 he worked for the Associated Press as Central European correspondent. Since 1996 he has taught media and cinematography studies at the Lauder Javne Jewish Community School. In 2004 he initiated the foundation of the Association ÓVÁS! aiming to defend old buildings, in which he has played an active role. Curently he organizes free debate courses at the Bibó István Szabadegyetem (CEU) based upon Black Box documentaries on different social issues.

ANDRÁS KOVÁCS is professor at the Nationalism Studies Program and the academic director of the Jewish Studies at the Central European University in Budapest/Vienna. He studied philosophy, history and sociology, and defended his PhD thesis in sociology. Between 1977 and 1990 due to illegal (samizdat) publications and activity as member of the democratic dissident movement in Hungary he was banned from professional activity in Hungary. After 1990 he taught at the Institute of Sociology at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest and worked as senior researcher at the Institute for Ethnic and Minority Research at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2004–2012). In 2006 he became Doctor of Sciences at the Hungarian Academy of Science. In 2013 he received the Széchenyi Prize, a Hungarian state distinction acknowledging outstanding scholarly achievement, the most prestigious scholarly award in Hungary. In the last decades, he served as visiting professor and researcher at several universities and research institutes, among them as Humboldt-fellow at the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung at the TU Berlin, at the Moses Mendelssohn Center for Jewish Studies in Potsdam, and as Ustinov-Professor of the City of Vienna at the Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna, Austria.

BRANDON LABELLE is an artist, writer and theorist working with sound culture, voice, and questions of agency. He develops and presents artistic projects and performances within a range of international contexts, often working collaboratively and in public. He is the author of Acoustic Justice (2021), The Other Citizen (2020), Sonic Agency (2018), Lexicon of the Mouth (2014), Diary of an Imaginary Egyptian (2012), Acoustic Territories (2010; 2019), and Background Noise (2006; 2015). He lives in Berlin and is Professor at the Department of Contemporary Art, University of Bergen.

VÍCTOR AGUADO MACHUCA is an artist, researcher and curator from Madrid interested in the ways in which opacity is encoded in language and listening. His work has been exhibited at Roulette Intermedium Brooklyn, The Graduate Center of CUNY, ArtCenter/South Florida, Instituto Cervantes of Berlin, Matadero Madrid, Medialab-Prado, and other venues. He is an architect and a PhD candidate in Philosophy and Literary Theory, and the Head of the AMEE.

LUCIA UDVARDYOVÁ is a music journalist and organizer. In 2010, together with Peter Gonda, she co-founded Easterndaze, a project that aims to document and interconnect the emerging underground scenes in Central and Eastern Europe. Together Udvardyová and Gonda run a music label called Baba Vanga. In 2015, she curated an exhibition series of events presenting the visual aesthetics of underground labels from Central and Eastern Europe at the OFF Biennale in Budapest. Since 2016, she's been curating the Easterndaze x Berlin event that aims to bring together collectives from Berlin and the CEE region. She is also a research associate at Unearthing the Music, a historical project that aims to explore the legacy of experimental and underground music in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Portugal and Spain, and she is one of the coordinators of the sound art programme at the Budapest Art Residency. She occasionally plays and performs music.

Party Studies, vol. 1

Edited: Víctor Aguado, Ramón del Buey, Brandon LaBelle  
Published: Errant Bodies Press, Berlin / AMEE, Madrid, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-9978744-9-5

Design: fliegende Teilchen, Berlin  
Printing: druckhaus Köthen  
Distribution: les presses du réel, Dijon / DAP, New York

Inside cover photo: Mihály Vig at a Bécsi Road panel block flat  
in Budapest, 1978-80, photo by Zoltán Gazsi

Developed in the context of Communities in Movement, an  
artistic research project based at the Art Academy, University  
of Bergen.

[www.communitiesinmovement.net](http://www.communitiesinmovement.net)

Funding support: Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design,  
University of Bergen & the Norwegian Artistic Research Program