It's Not a Rave, Officer, It's Performance Art:
Art as Defense from the Law and as Offense to Society
in the Break-In Era of Rave Culture

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[abstract]

Despite a contemporary understanding of rave culture as a hedonist, if not consumerist, capitalist, and escapist activity, the movement's early days were a strange brew of practices, from anarchism to squatting, performance art to bohemianism. Several groups, including Vancouver BC's performance-art and DJ collective <ST>, sought to investigate the nature of rave-politics through creating events that operated in a grey area between rave and performance art. <ST> explored the possibility of forming not only new artistic practices but new social relations through sonic *detournement*, often engaging in occupations of public land guided by the "carnival" aspects of the gathering. An investigation of these events and practices will lead us to consider the nexus of theoretical curiousities that guided the Collective, from Kristeva's *khõra* to Hakim Bey's Temporary Autonomous Zone, A.O. Spare's chaos magick to Deleuze and Guattari's chaosophies.

[<ST> Manifesto 1: Sonic Fictions]

It is 4am and the sun is dawning. On a public beach within site of the city, torches burn atop speakers and faintly glowing red spotlights still illuminate, in the remaining shadows, long, graceful red banners that drape the coniferous trees. The banners bear the graphic symbols of the event: a record, a DJ, a a dark red eye. In your ears are the sounds of a foreign and stripped techno, pounding decibels through transient space between forest and city. Tonight, the event has not been busted, the secretive and bandana-clad organisers not dragged off into police vans, you searching for keys and sobriety in a mad dash to illegally parked cars or flights down the beach on uncertain feet. No, tonight is peaceful, the Zone's boundaries perpetuating just long enough to allow the last track and a self-closure on the periphery of society's mediasphere. Perhaps it is as early as 1995 or as late as 1998, here on the liminal coast of the Pacific Ocean and the City of Vancouver.

[introduction]

That rave culture has been associated with rebellious pop culture, with carnival, with ecstasy (both the drug and the experience), if not a transcendental escape from a commodity culture—this is common enough. That rave culture has been the site of an elaboration of theoretical flights of autonomy put into practice is somewhat less common. And that rave culture engaged a moment of not only vulgar *praxis*, whatever its theory, but an affirmative mix of rhythms, a scratching beyond the surface of an atmosphere of carnival—as if "rave" were simply reducible to a long and continous historical chain of "festivities of the people" in a Western tradition—but to the persistent repetition of sonic sociality, in what amounts to an erasure of "rave" and "culture"—well, that's an *event*.

Or a similar sonic event, but a few weeks later. It's 2:30am and the police have arrived and in force. Truncheons and pepper spray. Above the trailhead are waiting paddy wagons. The organisers are standing back and surveying the moment. The needles screech to a halt. Re-wind, a memory flash, a warehouse just a few weeks ago, where a bust became violent, police storm, breaking cameras, fingers, and the law. Ravers publicly strip-searched, decks destroyed and beatings behind this industrial structure of cement and metal.

Tonight there is a strange turn in the air. An organiser is talking to the Constable. There is a pause in the proceedings. "It's not a rave," says the green-and-red fatigued DJ, "it's performance art." She says this clearly with the tone of one who is taking a measured stand.

The Constable is stunned. "But you're dancing!" he says. "No we're not," says the organiser, absolutely pokerface,"we're *performing bodily expression*. What is dancing?" The Constable, flabbergasted, wiggles his arms in exasperation. "Now that's dancing!" says the organiser.

Surprisingly, perhaps caught slightly off guard, the party—performance ?—is broken up peacefully. But not before the Constable tells the participants in an exasperated voice: "Why don't you just go to the big legal rave happening next week at UBC?!"

The raver needs no introduction to Foucault's body of power, for it is already incorporated and performed by the body that refuses the corporate dance, that measured and commodified march where every step has been sold. The corporate connections between a Legalised Rave Experience™ and the police, a complicity to contain the steps of "subculture" is a skipping record to the raver. The crashing of the corporate ball, in what amounts to an infusion of punch in the two-step, a *re-trait* or *gait* in the resistant body, is an exit to an unlikely, if not uncanny, "autonomy:" *art*. Spinning the album of art is a defense and an offense, it occupies one played-out space as it flees another. Here, in the moment *where*

a body verges, in a single gesture, art, politics, and an aurality that has apparently already been delimited as "rave" "culture," the contemporary conceptualizations of the trinity—art, music, politics, and its negative supplement, "rave"—collapse, not into indistinguishability, but a dance that takes place before the first step into the social.

And yet—the caveat—never new, and always verging the very dangers the gesture attempts to escape. Such is the nature of what we may call, after Deleuze and Guattari, a line of flight, where "it is always *on* the most deterritorialized element that reterritorialization takes place" (221). Hardt and Negri make the point that it is Empire itself that is the most deterritorialized.[i] And there, at the moment of daring, is the possibility for the war machine, and its turn: creativity on the one hand, fascism on the other. It's always a gamble, a risk. What draws us to consider the work of <ST> is the spinning of this danger through sonic practice and thought, in a mixing of cultural movements and questions of microfascism—and not only in what Hakim Bey calls "cop culture" (90) but "*in*" *the actual and virtual*[ii] *sonic spaces of the rave*, in what amounts to a sampling of the ghost in the machine, a scratching of the sonic power of incorporated *phonos*.

...and someone hands you this piece of paper, similar to the simple flyer that brought you here tonight.

:: (I n f o r m) at i o n ::

....it says. Then: "<ST>". "<ST>" must be heard as a graphic symbol. It is written as such: "<ST>."[iii] The <ST> Manifesto, dated 1994 to 1999 reads:

> <ST> is nondefinable: past definition. In a non-world of hyperinformation where the Now is the Past and where the Past cannot be defined, out-of-context, an historical anomoly, <ST> does not define itself in this state of flux. <ST>

> <Side> projects: mission (o1): produce techno and experi-mental focused concept-events mainly in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Events are sonically focused upon experimentation and pushing the boundaries of what is defined as "musik".

["musik" here being spelt, perhaps we might conjecture after the influence of Windsor, Ontario's minimal techno guru, Plastikman, aka Richie Hawtin, with a "k."]

> "music" [note the "c"]: arcane definition

> (militant) techno are/is not the only focus (eye-stract); the sounds

range from drum n'bass to dub to minimal to abstract noize to ambient to .!>@. 'e'vents are designed with a focus and a vision in mind <ST> try to envelop the par/tic/ipant in a full habitat of audio, visual, tactile and olfactory stimulation.

If participant-driven experience does not make you think, sweat, cry, laugh or be left in a general disarray of confusion-malfunctions , mission (ob/sub)jectives have not been sufficiently assigned. we have not done our job.

<ST> is not a "rave" (~~denies~~)
we do not want to be bound by those restrictions.[iv]

[<ST> on In Partibus]

Now we are inside. The event is called "In Partibus," "in the land of the heathens." From the warehouse walls drape long, red banners—more directly now is the microfascism of rave culture re-presented in its brutality this evening. The walls are wrapped completely in black plastic dotted only by signs that say: "Warning: Conundrum." Lighting is present only as a single red spotlight and strobe. There is something evil in the corner, a figure, barely lit, what is this—a demonic-looking paper-mache model and later, there are members of <ST>, in the darkness, moving as foreign beings, wearing biological decontamination suits, or ancient masks of animals, their half-naked bodies moving as animals, becoming-animals at the heart of the most dangerous of gatherings, the dance *ritual*, but all that is lit now is the flashing strobe, and there is little choice but to *submit* to relentless and repetitive "mindfuck music"—for these are the minimalistic, futuristic, aggressive yet soulful beats of screaming pounding nothingness of Detroit Hard Techno. Absent is the predictable breakdown of beats into an Ecstasy-laden lull of "cheesy" synthesizer refrains, no this sound succumbs to forceful somnabulance, sound that cracks the black speakers with a whip, until one by one, the participants are forced to exhaustion, heads cradled by bassbins pounding now still bodies, and finally, with the cracking of a dawn, a stripped sound takes over the system: singular and solitary is minimal techno, maniacal in its silent space between beats. From submission to nothingness, rave is pushed by <ST> into a parody of itself where no-body is able to move, nevermind laugh.

A raver's relation to masochism: not something that is often talked of in rave culture. In masochism we approach rave's dangerous dance with a sonic fascism, an aural passion for abolition, an obliteration by sound, a sacrifice to the to the speaker. <ST> played this relation between the DJ and the dancer as an abuse of power. The DJ's position as spinning sonic narratives amounts to an aural history physically interpreted by the body. At points, attempts were made to push this sonic response to the limit, to see how far a dancing body becomes its

relentless beats, embraces a militancy, becomes-intense in what can be seen as a dangerous escape. Seen from experience: the warehouse littered at 7am with the passed-out bodies of fallen dancers. The warehouse a battlefield. The potential for a *following* that operates through rules of engagement, of worship, of homage to a sonic deity, all the elements of a powerful microfascism that betray Don Juan's final warning: death (Castenada 56). Whereas Castenada's Don Juan sees the final fear as inertia, Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation views death as a *passion for abolition*. All the paradoxes of a tiredness only for life (229). And here, with the raver, the drugs pushing—"but so many things can be drugs," say Deleuze and Guattari (227)—life through a dance with passion, in the uncanny pursuit of a "living" beyond the confines of everyday life itself, here life is reconstituted at an intense level, where "living" becomes, in its own encounters with sonic virtuality, more real than real, and yet, in its actuality, a draining event, an inertia, a tiredness. And where capitalism deterritorializes—in its actuality as the rave economy, projected virtually as utopic gathering—it operates on a similar line, in fact, it assembles the line itself: here, where intensity is raised in life, so is its spectre of sonic exchange value.

—a contentious assertion for those who consider rave culture to be merely a celebration, a happy and usually innocent, although with all the usual pitfalls of youth, Ecstasy-induced carnival. Perhaps it is carnival—but played out on a different sound-system. *Carne vale*—throwing of the flesh. Bakhtin's reading, although much invoked in the context of rave culture, needs to be considered along the lines for its potential insurgency, where those in Carnival escape, become-other, escape that return of the Carnival to the established order, for it is a question of that laughter that escapes while the Carnival dances on, and the failing inertia before this laughter is reached that silences the speakers.

[voice]

And yet we are told that rave culture has no voice; it is pure dance, pure movement. In Kim Cascone, rave and dance cultures are implied as part of the "spectacle," and therefore it has no real "aura" or "authenticity," just another component of pop music[v] (Laptop 58). As if "rave" ever desired "aura" or "authenticity!"—be it the "produced demand" of the spectacle or the authentic acousmatic experience tied to so-called "real" performance that Cascone desires. (And as if rave never, on the sly, mixed the spectacle's punch bowl with a little something special while spectacle had its back turned, mixing as it was with its high-art chums). Or, we hear that techno is music without vocals, and therefore speech, and ultimately, meaning. For not only can techno not clear its breath, *it has nothing to say, anyways*: those drug-addled riddles of the Ecstasy-experience, mumbling platitudes to amphetamines and embracing a love that exists only during the high are nothing but the lost diatribes of a commodity culture or the archetypes of a carnival... Even in Michel Gaillot's post-structuralist account is the movement's apparent non-vocal hedonism asserted as if it were a joyous celebration of the death of the speaking-subject—in what amounts to a

silencing of an alternative speaking-machine, if not the question itself and of the subject: a gag order, a silence and a negation of the affirmative that leaves no breath for the "yes yes."

Gaillot says that "If only because it has no words or text (the voice as pure sonority), being purely instrumental or electronic, techno does not constitute a music that delivers or propounds a message" (17-18). Gaillot quickly footnotes his comment on voice as pure sonority, as obviously there are vocals in many forms of electronic music: However, Gaillot says, "when they can be heard, they are mostly present as just another instrument, valued only for their musicality, to the point where sometimes *one cannot even understand what they mean*" (my italics, ibid.). What Gaillot is trying to draw is a distinction between the obvious centrality of voice in, for example, most rock and folk music, and the lack of such distinction to the voice in various forms of electronic music. Yet the lack of voice *means* much more for Gaillot than a simple aesthetic displacement. It assumes the iterability of *voice*, of *speech* in the first place, re-writing the collapse of medium into message through a requirement that iterability, in its strict delimitation as clear comprehension if not definability, must speak for both meaning *and* message if we are to witness their double collapse into the non-speech of techno that apparently brings us the positive escape from subjectivity. Apparently this is different from other forms of music, for according to Gaillot, the voice is not "a support for reflexivity and discursivity" but rather for its own "suspension or suppression; it is not a vehicle or medium for messages." *In electronic music, the voice speaks nothing, it means nothing, and its supposed absence, and absence of meaning, also means nothing*. This amounts to an imperative: do not listen for, or to, the voice or its peculiar absence, its uncanny rhythms of meaning; do not dance meaningfully.

What becomes of the voice then in the the great house chorus, "I wanna feel the music, I need the release" or "Everybody dance to the music"? Or, how about:

> In the beginning there was Jack and Jack had a Groove. Jack bawled and declared 'Let there be house.' And House Music was born. I am, you see, I am the Creator and this is my House... Once you enter my House it then becomes our House and our House music.

> (Eshun 098, from *Fingers Inc. featuring Chuck Roberts*)

Shall we write that off as hallucinating the home of Heidegger?

another event has already happened
Tonight you are in a parking garage in the dowtown Eastside of Vancouver, a massive complex formerly tied to the now abandoned Woodward's building. Power has been thieved from plugs, soundsystem and turntables hauled with a caravan of minivans. A nomadic trek from a house-party to an occupation of a parking garage. Slogans are pasted to poles

that read: "art to the people :: people as art," "listen
and read, read and listen," "P.M. = Police Mandate,"
"resistance is futile and everything," "a pocket of
resistance is better than a shirt of false dreams," "stop
and listen to the machine emanating from the speakers." A
long spool of paper is unravelled to draw upon and banners
are hung from the pipes. A few hundred gather here,
frightening away the security, to dance in the heart of a
city closed to cultural celebration, mapping a music
machine. What has this told us?

Gaillot posits a speculation that underlines his argument: "It is almost as if techno
were taking it as far as it will go what Deleuze and Guattari say of music, namely
that it is 'first of all a deterritorialization of that voice, which becomes less and
less language.'" But this does not amount to silence. John Cage knew well that
there is no actual silence—there is always sound. One cannot simply propose
the most extreme deterritorialization of voice, for it is here that deterritorialization
resincribes its return as simple yet dangerous negation. To hear the voice of
techno as speaking only as a component in the music machine, one organ
among many on the deterritorialized body of sound requires an attentive ear to
the transformations of language. We do not respond to the techno-voice as a
*dia*logue; we begin to hear differently, to hear the *other sounds*.

But Gaillot denies the very possibility that he desires when he says that that
techno and its culture have nothing to say in the first place. "Unlike rock music,
for example," he says, "the techno movement *was not based on any political
presuppositions*" (my italics, 17). As it is has no voice and nothing to say, it
likewise carries no ideology, says Gaillot, and indeed, it lacks even the prospect
of new meanings "capable of renewing the configurations of contemporary
community." Dare I say that for Gaillot, techno has become transcendental,
above and beyond all relations to the *polis*?

A quick sampling of sound-bytes will remix what I see as a hasty exclusion of the
potentiality of a voicing as a machinic *component* that plugs into the sonic
machine's political entanglements. The *potentiality of a voicing* should not
confused with a statement of clear enunciations from a speaking-subject or
community of subjects. To do so is to negate the voice completely and to simply
celebrate its position in the machine, rather than partaking in where that machine
plugs into others. That a fantasy of transcendentalism, a fantasy of complete
separation from the logocentrism of voice, indeed if not a clean break from
Western metaphysical traditions of art and culture, as we can see in Gaillot, is as
much a part of this voicing as its supposed presence outside of techno.

We must therefore keep in mind two events that are commonly bracketed in
contemporary academic analyses of rave culture.

1. That of the Afro-American and Afro-German resistance mythology of Detroit Techno that posits itself in a contradictory position to "black history" through its invisibility and collapse of racial music boundaries, a mission directive that broadcasts the collapse of high-art law that considers rhythm a lower form or a supplement at the same time that the Afro-Traditions are sampled yet shrugged-off. A turn to the posthuman through the futurist narratives of both the Assault DJ and the offworld producer. "And in sync with this posthuman perspective comes Black Atlantic Futurism," says Kodwo Eshun (-005) in *More Brilliant Than The Sun*. By focusing upon Detroit techno in an attempt to understand the Black Atlantic roots of rave culture at the same time that the dangers of black militancy were foregrounded, <ST> combatted elements that totalise "rave" culture as "just pop music" or as *lacking* "voice."

2. The positing of the Temporary Autonomous Zone, or TAZ, by Sufi anarchist Hakim Bey as a pragmatic and psychotopological crack or liminal space, both off the map of cop culture and the mediasphere on the one hand, and high-art performance on the other. The TAZ was investigated by rave collectives including Spiral Tribe in the UK, Transcendance in Toronto, and <ST> in Vancouver, giving rise to Reclaim The Streets. The TAZ also forms part of the milieu that drove anti-performance artists The KLF. "So," says Bey,

> Revolution is closed, but insurgency is open. [...] And—the map is closed, but the autonomous zone is open. Metaphorically it unfolds within the fractal dimensions invisible to the cartography of Control. And here we should introduce the concept of psychotopology (and –topography).
> (103)

"Psychotopology," explains Bey in his thieving of the concept from the Situationist International, "is the art of *dowsing* for potential TAZs." Although psychotopology cannot "control" territory—"because it is *virtually identical* with its territory" (my italics)—it can "*suggest*" spaces, temporalities, "(geographic, social, cultural, imaginal) with potential to flower as autonomous zones." With <ST>, we can outline a *drift* through differing occupational spaces, both inside and outside, as an actualised gesture of virtual dowsing that engages not only autonomous space, but the moments where the TAZ, and perhaps always, *fails to become, even virtually, identical to itself*. It is this *affirmative failure* that leaves open the possibility of excess or what remains, as the TAZ, contrary to Bey, is not identical to "itself," that propels <ST> just one step further and ahead of both law and the imploding tangets of rave culture. We find not "the" voice of rave culture nor even "a" voice, or to switch records, we find neither the signifier nor signified of rave culture[vi] as if there were a secret semiotics of <ST> or "rave culture," but rather we encounter a failure for the TAZ to become itself *as such*, leaving open its lines of escape. At such a limit, there is an engagement with what Kodwo Eshun calls "Sonic Fiction" (-003). We are not here to put music in its place; we are not here to rescue music with theory; we are here to dowse its virtual remains as the site of a ruinous collapse and to counter the prevailing

closed discourses that seek to imprison the virtual ruins in an archive that equates history with the negation of affirmative failure.

<ST> strove to encounter the TAZ and Detroit Techno resistance in several key events, including:

a) Musikal Resistance, MayDay 2000, which created an indeterminate space between activism and performance art, rave culture and music event, as <ST> members, dressed in full anarchist street warfare gear, occupied a Marxist coffee shop, sandbagging its doors, blacking out its windows, and covering the walls in posters and slogans and camoflauge netting. What actually occurred is as varied as Cage's infamous Black Mountain Event. A 5 hour performance of interactive events, including skits that bordered the humourous and the schizophrenic, such as DIY Revolution and Revolutionaries Anonymous, manifesto readings and ritual chanting of slogans, surveillance upon passing traffic and audience members, abstract post-DADA poetry assembled from secret messages handed out to the audience, sporadic and experimental dj sets, live music sets of breakcore and noise, live feedback video performance art, and agitations that culminated in a complete destruction of the situation at the finale to the immersion, as <ST> members, dressed in white chemical warfare suits, ripped down posters from the walls, handed out everything from the event to the audience, noise blaring from the speakers, bright halogen bulbs suddenly illuminated upon the stunned crowd, as the entire assemblage was distributed in a fury until the <ST> members fled, leaving the audience temporally and spatially dislocated.

b) The final event of <ST>, The Phoenix Ritual in 2001, which dissolved the collective through a ritual incantation of a deconstructed magick based upon the automatic magickal writings of Austin O. Spare. Dressed in druid robes, and carving circles of paradox into the earth at the Phoenix Festival—a Pacific NorthWest version of Burning Man—<ST> desemenated its solitary trajectory through a deconstruction of the passion for destruction, in the process, destroying its-selves through the ritual broadcast of chaos.

I will not have the time today to return to these two significant events. Instead, I will turn to Cydonia, for it is in Cydonia that Afro-Anti-Histories (AAH) and the TAZ are encountered, and the groundwork laid for both Musikal Resistance and the Phoenix Ritual.

[<ST> on finding Cydonia]

A distant forest—a gravel pit set back into the trees and a radio transmission tower beaming red—north up Highway 99 on the way to Whistler—in torchlight—preparing for the red-robed figures to anoint your forehead with a geometric symbol painted in rusty ochre. They wear hoods and you cannot see

their faces as They lead you to a ritual circle of black monoliths. Slowly, those invited gather, and the music begins. As the dust and the gravel settles into your shoes, the flyer begins to make sense. "Cydonia" on a red background, that uncanny photo of the face on Mars. You've landed—but to what purpose?

Cydonia, Mars—a landing site for a conscientiously "white" interpretation of A Black Planet: Saturn. The black militant Detroit techno collective, Underground Resistance, carries on the prophecies of Saturn from the Afrodelic visionary Sun Ra into the techno-future. "No Hope, No Dreams, No Love, My Only Escape Is Underground" says the infamous black-and-white poster of a desolate street corner that bears the caption: "Somewhere in Detroit." A street corner overgrowing with weeds in the cracks of Detroit's failed modernist pavement.

"X-102 Discovers the Rings of Saturn," the second record put out by Underground Resistance in 1992, signals the recognition of the force of the collapse of medium into message, and therefore the potentiality of the orbit to launch a sonic assault against what UR—Underground Resistance—calls the "Programmers." "The Programmers control music on Earth, and through it the souls and minds of most human beings" (Brendan). In 2000, when a few cheesy trance DJs, under the direction of Sony music agent Dirk Dreyer, illegally "covered," tone-by-tone, UR Assault DJ Rolando's "Knights of the Jaguar" 12", UR's communiques to the public, calling for support in fighting violent corporate appropriation, never failed in identifying these homogenous musical giants as the Programmers. Refusing to communicate with the corporate music industry, UR spurned a massive and worldwide backlash against Sony and BMG that had the illegal remixes eventually revoked, but not before inscribing the event in Detroit mythology. This mythology is played out sonically from 12"s that use all angles of the surface to transmit messages of alien resistance: the cover, the sleeve, the liner notes, inscriptions in the run-out groove, the placement of the tracks and grooves themselves. The original Knights of the Jaguar 12" itself bore the following inscription on its sleeve:

> Please do not purchase this record from any large commercial chain store. These stores have never supported this type of musica nd only do so now so in order to appear cool and current. If you decide to buy this record please only purchase it from a knowledgeable specialty shop or a local Mom & Pop store or smaller business that have supported the music from its inception. Super chain stores have never had the time or focus to search out cutting edge underground music! They can only react once the specialty shops and underground labels have created a market for the music, then all of a sudden they and the major music labels start wanting the music because they know they can overpower the small labels and work their network of retailers that made this music possible with their massive advertising campaigns and prefab artists, that do weak imitations of what the music really is. And worst, it's 10 or 12 years late. We have two questions for you: 1. Would you watch or read news that was 12 years

old? 2. How long you gonna let them do this to you? Support your local retailers and specialty shops. Out — UR.

Here we have a voice that comes from the future of politics, 12 years ahead, before the advent of a politics based on this sound, we have direct sonic force.

Saturn. The rings are the grooves of the record; X-102 is the code name for UR Assault DJ Jeff Mills.[vii] The record is Saturn: the rings are the grooves: the record is the myth and the actuality as its physical shape takes on meaning that seeps into the sounds. Its future and its past are played out sonically in every context the record is set to the platter. Interstellar rotation. The vinyl record is the virtual record of this black micropolitics that calls all sonic undergrounds, regardless of race, "black"—the disc, the wax, the DJ, UR. To spin the record is to actualise its force. Yet—here is where <ST> enters on Cydonia: always with the dangerous potential of unleashing a power; given the wrong Universe, the wrong DJ—this record may wreck havoc. Take The Face On Mars supposedly seen in the Mars landscape of Cydonia: a better telescopic picture and it disappears. That's power in the actualisation of myth through a scoping of technology. But is the Face gone, or have we just ceased to see it properly? The face has become-invisible, it has disappeared; yet we can still occupy that site, Cydonia, create its space and temporality by spinning the Rings of Saturn. In the actualisation of the virtual myth of Saturn, not only is a black micropolitics spun out of orbit like an asteriod, affecting force that destabilise sound, setting into motion black rings, but its power is given potential. A "black" power—a potential for creation, and yet, a dangerous militancy in what Eshun recognizes as the "Dark Side" to the Futurhythmachine.

We must take a quick detour to avoid confusion—a mission back to Mars, the Red Planet. Underground Resistance released a series of 12"s under the moniker of Red Planet, and it is to Mars that <ST> turns in an attempt to unravel force from power. The discovery of Mars is the discovery of differentiation and particularity in the force/power relation. This differs from Foucault's more well-known elaboration of power. In Brian Massumi's elaboration of Deleuze, force is primarily a phenomenon of desire, which operates as the "contextual impulsion...immanent to language" and not as a personal phenomenon, whereas power is always "a network of elaborated forces operating in a certain impulsive mode" (161). And most importantly for our purposes, resistance, becoming-other, is not a "derived response" to power but is rather primary to it. Power is always particular to a machine, and resistance is always-already the force of desire.[viii]

Here—in the gravel pit, <ST> encounter potentials for microfascism at the limit of leaving the commercial overcodings of rave culture far behind, both geographically and through a psychotopology that is utterly foreign: Mars. When that which is excluded—the commercial element—is pushed to its furthest distance, it returns to haunt as the Face on Mars. In the deepest of the Underground Resistance is not innocent. The love of the Vanishing Act is flirting

with the dangers of a solitary escape where no one else Takes The Ticket. And here, at the translation of Saturn to Mars—a conscious move to not appropriate black mythologies but to intersect the asteroid, at the apogee of its flight-plan to Earth and its militancy, to offer resistance to power as becoming-black-*and-red*, becoming-alien, becoming-druid—here, the Dark Side plays itself out. That of black militancy on the one hand, and that of a different sort, of a commercial underbelly in rave culture, a set of ever-tightening cultural codes dominated by the overcoded rave rules of PLUR—Peace Love Unity Respect. PLUR that serves to sell tickets and the thrill of a weekend's "subculture" through the creation of exclusionary "community." The "rave community" embodies itself as a homogenous body, even of difference. To become-outside of rave culture, to encounter the micro-faciality of Cydonia, the "Face of Mars," is to realise the necessity of a certain dissociation that risks its complete disjuncture at the same time that a community is formed through dark exodus, through an invisibility to the mainstream rave scene. "Once you grant some privilege to gathering," says Derrida

> and not to dissociating then you leave no room for the other, for the radical otherness of the other, for the radical similarity of the other. I think that separation, dissociation is not an obstacle to society or to community, it is the condition. (*Villanova* 2)

To pursue a condition of community in a risky transformation of Saturn to Mars, an attempt to transform Darkness and Invisibility as the possibility for a new community in-between planetary orbits: these are interpretations of the actions necessary to create a Temporary Autonomous Zone. *Transtellar travel* where the process of Mars becoming-Saturn and Saturn becoming-Mars becomes a de-programming on Earth. [ix]

From its beginnings rave culture crystallised its corporate hierarchies of promoter, financial backer—usually a criminal or corporate drug dealer, small time drug dealer, DJ, right down to the dancers themselves; and in an Earthly proximity Detroit techno embrace a mythological alien purity that draws it ever closer to the exclusionary community of a Black Panther, at the same time that it shrugs off a public role in the creation of exclusionary community. Performing the risk of dissociation and the myth of alien community, here we are, in Cydonia, where the performance has become its own movement of moments, no longer enacting a mythology that strives to meet the dangers in a dangerous moment of cultural critique through the creation of ritual and mythology, but becoming its tangents through a moment where magick becomes virtualised, and forces are conjured from the psychotopography of the aggregate earths. The dangers are as real as the event.

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[i] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001.

[ii] The virtual are in reciprocal presupposition to the thing's "actuality, [which] is its duration as a process" (37). By asking a question of the virtual, we open the abyssal past and its attendant dangers of origin and truth which, at the same time, set forth a destination, a trajectory, without certainty, its future, its promise. Brian Massumi sets forth the two presuppositions of the "virtual" as follows: "'existence' is not a static presence (being is a fractalization, the present an abyss), and that a potential is not a possibility" (*User's* 35). In fact, perhaps I should say a *virtual micropolitics*, in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari say that "moleculat movements do not complement but rather thwart and break through the great worldwide organization" (*Mille Plateaux* 216).

[iii] Of interest. When inserted in HTML code—and the importance of the Internet cannot be backgrounded here in the rise, organisation, dissemination, and representation, if not the *virtual actuality* of groups such as <ST> (and "virtual" here plays between the sense in which the Internet is both archive and promise, in its failed linkage as much as its repository)—"<ST>" does not appear on the webpage, for the "< >" brackets denote code. The web browser, finding no appropriate code in the brackets, simply dismisses the characters. Hence, often in web documents that speak of <ST>, the *name itself is absent*; *technology effaces its presence automatically* unless an effort is made to re-code "<ST>" with the properly coded denotations for the triangular brackets. This remains to be spoken of in greater detail in conjunction with the strategies, deceptions, understandings and uses, expressions and covert-operations, of the Internet.

[iv] From the collection of tV.

[v] "Since many of the current musicians have come to electronic music through their involvement in the spectacle-oriented sub-cultures of DJ and dance music, the codes are transferred [those of "pop spectacle—tV] to serve as a safe and familiar framework in which to operate" (58). Besides bracketting the involvement of post-African musical traditions of composition, performance, participation, and audience—as if they had nothing to do with DJ or dance culture—Cascone also equates *all reception of music that involves participation, such as dancing* as "spectacle" and therefore *only a symptom of product-demand* produced by an economy of pop music; therefore, it is *not authentic* and *nor does it have aura*. Clear distinctions between "pop music" and "subcultural music," "aura/authenticity" and "counterfeit aura" construct Cascone's reading of contemporary "post-digital" music that ultimately reduces itself to a sender-receiver telematics. That such a one-to-one telematics of "authentic" identification and representation, of aura and counterfeit, is irreconcilable to a supposed investment in Deleuze and Guattarian considerations of networked-sound and an essentially rhizomatic "aesthetics of failure" is dealt with elsewhere (see "Laptops & Loops: The Advent of New Forms of Experimentation and the Question of Technology in Experimental Music and Performance," Paper delivered at UACC 2002 National Conference).

[vi] "As long as the theoretical *power* implications of media music remain unthought, it appears that one will continue to endow music with *meaning*—as in the interminable theorizations equating pop with rebellion—to see it as a signifier of a force that is actualized in it, whether as an expression of a subject's truth, or as the collective subversive force of social groups" (my italics, Szepanski, Digital 25).

[vii] Jeff Mills: "You have to visually describe it on the vinyl – that's what constitutes an X project. The label itself is the actual planet, the grooves are the actual rings, so in a certain way you can give the impression that the grooves are the rings of Saturn." (Quoted in Eshun 133).

[viii] There is, perhaps, a Heideggerean connection that I will not belabour except to note that the question of enframing, although in a different context, has once again been raised, and indeed, "where the danger lies, the saving power grows also"—that phrase so tossed around since Holderlin—nevertheless comes into play. Of what species the saving power has become may prove to become an escaping resistance, *en-devenir*, rather than the rooted salvation of the gods-to-come.

[ix] (There is a Sonic Fiction link to be made between Underground Resistance and Thomas Pynchon's elaboration of the Schwarzkommando in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the Doctrine of the Final Zero, but I am not the one to voice that possibility).