

**Orbital Transmissions:
Affect and Musical Public-Making in London**

Christabel Stirling

Wadham College

University of Oxford

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Abstract

This thesis is a multi-sited ethnography of live music audiences in London. Drawing insight from four broadly defined field sites—classical music, sound art, dub reggae, and electronic/dance music—the thesis investigates the role of affect in the formation of musical and sonic publics. Music’s affective propensities refer to its ability to generate visceral states and adrenal surges that elude obvious discursive representation, and that often seem pre-conscious. The importance of these somatic feelings lies in their ‘public-making’ capacities: their ability to bind us to or separate us from others in ways that can transform or reinforce broader social relations. The central contribution of the thesis is that it advances new empirically grounded ways of understanding the workings and potentials of musical and sonic affect, offering insight into the social and affective processes by which music and sound generate collectivities, the extent to which such collectivities endure, evolve, or evaporate over time, and the opportunities they present for putting existing social orders into question. Above all, the thesis demonstrates through rich ethnographic and historical research how musically incited affect has to be analysed by reference to social, cultural, historical and political conditions. I show that affect, as it is engendered by music and sound, is an ambivalent mechanism, able to strengthen as well as challenge dominant social orders.

On the basis of this ethnographic work, the thesis simultaneously develops a new theoretical framework to critique influential theories of affect derived from the humanities and social sciences that portray affect as pre-mediated and involuntary: as an emancipatory force operating autonomously from subjectivity and social identity. The thesis is thus committed to the generative effects of putting theory and empiricism in dialogue, employing a ‘post-positivist’ empiricist methodology (Born, 2010a) that moves constantly between speculative theory and historically informed ethnography. Arguing that an empirically grounded theorisation of affect is central to an understanding of musical and sonic experience, musical and sonic publics, and therefore also to a musical and sonic politics, the thesis acts as a rejoinder to theories of listening and live audiencing in musicology and sound studies, while also advancing several secondary themes that cut across the thesis as a whole. These themes include questions of genre and creativity, specifically the contingent relations between musical producers and their publics; music and community vis-à-vis wider critical discourses on community and inclusivity; theories of temporality and the aesthetic; and musical taste and social stratification. Finally, in the Conclusion, the thesis suggests possible new directions for thinking about the affective politics of music and sound, oriented around three logics: antagonism-agonism; community-collaboration; and emergence-divergence.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Methodology

In 2007, I left art college to pursue a degree in music. As I embarked upon three years of musical score analysis and Western art music history, my best friend, who had stayed on at art college to complete a BA in Painting, began a dissertation entitled ‘The Sociology of an Overhead Projector’—an essay exploring the sociology of technology, optical illusions, and acid light shows that, ultimately, had nothing to do with the medium of paint. The latter didn’t surprise me. If I’d learnt anything from my short spell at Camberwell College of Arts, it was that painting was normatively expanded in arts education: conceptual, performative, time-based, social and/or collective, and executed through media as diverse as film, photography, light, metalwork, and digital technologies. What I found more surprising was the extremity with which, in the institution in which I had chosen to study, music was music. More than this, music was pure, notated, instrumental art music of the so-called Western tradition, which, for all intents and purposes, was there to be listened to, analysed, and interpreted with a technicality and abstraction that outweighed any other experiential possibility.

At more or less this exact time, 2006-7, I also started attending FWD>>> and DMZ, two of London’s regular dubstep nights, which were what first plunged me into the thrilling, bass-driven, vibratory sonic environments of UK electronic/dance music.¹ Life-changing in many ways, these nights nonetheless engendered a sense of dissonance between the music I was studying in class, and my experiences of music in the world outside. By day, I was learning about Schenkerian analysis and Handel’s choral oratorios. By night, I was learning that sound could make your eyeballs shake, and that bass frequencies create rippling concentric patterns in a glass of water in the same way that the

¹ I follow Kembrew McLeod (2001) in his use of the term ‘electronic/dance music’ to refer to a heterogeneous group of musics made with electronic instruments, computers, and other technologies, which are most often, but not always, produced for dancing—hence the slash to depict an ‘and/or’ designation. I reject the initialism ‘EDM’ to describe this group of musics due to its recent associations with the American music industry and attempts to rebrand and commodify US rave culture.

T-Rex does in Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*. How were these two realms of music even related to each other? What did the physicality of sound, the collective sensorial pummelling that those early dubstep nights afforded, have to do with the stochastic techniques of Xenakis or the impressionism of early 20th century French music? What role did the contexts, sites, and spaces of listening—a brightly lit classroom with listeners sat at desks and an almost pitch-black nightclub with bodies bunched together in corners—play in mediating experiences of the different musics? And what would happen if those spaces of performance were reversed, if Stockhausen's *Licht* was put through a Funktion One sound system in Shoreditch and dubstep duo Digital Mystikz brought into the seminar room?

Going on to pursue an MA in Popular Music and Culture at a post-1992 university, I was exposed to a very different, consciously interdisciplinary approach to music. The effects of this were significant: while always indebted to the rigour and intellectualism of my undergraduate programme, I became increasingly reflexive with regard to the formalism of the training it had accorded me, and liberated by my acquisition of the necessary tools and vocabularies with which to begin thinking about some of the issues and methods that preoccupied me. Two projects from this time stand out as being deeply formative to the evolution of this thesis. One was my experience and documentation of two musical events that took place during the summer of 2011: a performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in a multi-storey car park in Peckham, South London; and an impromptu gig by the Afrobeat/jazz group United Vibrations in Windrush Square in Brixton during the 2011 London riots. In each case, I witnessed the transportation of music out of its regular performance sites and into unusual and/or highly contested urban spaces. And in each case, music was dramatically expanded, brought into association with the architectural, the socio-political, the site-specific, the multi-sensory and the sonic/non-musical. In my attempts to think about these events, a triangle of questions started to unfurl: how did the relocation of these particular genres of music to encultured urban spaces impact upon people's experiences of and responses to them? Who were the audiences, how were they drawn to the events, and (how) did they differ from audiences found at classical auditorium concerts or Afrobeat club events? What potential, if any, did these

musical performances harness to reconfigure socio-spatial relations—to intervene in the ‘publicness’ of public space and enhance or curtail access to the city? This was, as I see it now, the start of my inquiry into musical audiences in all their social and affective complexity.

The second inspiration at this time came from my MA dissertation, which was both an essay on sound installation art and an auto-ethnographic experiment into the non-discursive realms of sonic experience. Focusing on a site-specific sound work installed across the ex-military industrial complex Orford Ness, Suffolk, in 2012, I was concerned, in one sense, with the multiple mediations of listening. I wanted to understand how spaces and sites—with their specific histories, architectures, and materialities—influenced experiences of sound; while also probing whether sound, in turn, could engender a transformation of space, not just experientially but performatively too, by virtue of its individualising and collectivising capacities. In many ways, then, my questioning around this public sound installation paralleled that of the two musical events above. Both projects were concerned with music and sound’s potential to alter social and spatial relations: to spark moments of inter-subjective connection or disassociation that might instigate a transition between public and private experience. But in addition, I also became engrossed in what I started to call the *affective* qualities of sound: sound’s ability to modulate bodily state—to generate an adrenal surge, a shift in atmosphere, or an impressionistic glow about a place, person or thing. Specifically, I felt captivated by the way that a sound could not only produce an affective ‘shock’, seizing one into a state of suspense and heightened anticipation, but could also, by dint of this affective displacement, destabilise the continuity of the present, warping aural perception and unhinging semiotic interpretation. The degree to which sound could, in this sense, precipitate an aperture into disparity and uncertainty, a ‘vanishing of stabilities’ (MacFarlane, 2012), is what initially stimulated my interest in sound, music, and affect.

Together, these two projects—one relating to the relocation of music to urban space, the other to sound art, affect, and atmosphere—led to the initial proposal for this thesis, which was to investigate, through ethnography, music and sound’s role in the struggle over access to urban space

in London. I sought to ask: how do musical and sonic crowds materialise? By what affective processes and mechanisms do music and sound draw people together or drive them apart? What kinds of social spaces do different styles of music and sound make possible, and what role do these spaces play in the production of public life? Can the materialisation of a musical or sonic audience in urban space transform the public/private thresholds of that space? In what sense could this constitute a politics of music and sound? Some of these questions remain central to this thesis, but first, further elaboration of the project is required.

Thinking Multiplicities

Writing my MA dissertation led to something else, too—namely, my discovery of contemporary affect theories. Initially through Brian Massumi's (1995) 'The Autonomy of Affect', and then through the work of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Nigel Thrift and others, I started to become familiar with the ways in which the concept of affect had been taken up by humanities and social science scholars over the past two decades. In particular, I was both struck and perturbed by the idea circulating among some of these scholars that affect was not only pre-conscious—occurring prior to awareness or conscious thought—but pre-*subjective*, existing beyond or before the individual subject and individuated identity (class, race, gender). Affect, as conceived by these theorists, then, was 'pre-personal', anomalous, unruly (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). More than this, it was, by virtue of its 'sub-personal' logic, disruptive, haphazard, wildly inventive, potentially calamitous—the force for an uncontrollable body. Where did it reside, this apparently autonomous intensity? For Deleuzians: right here. With us, in the present, like clouds or wind. Only not quite here. Not *actual*. Not yet. 'Real without being actual', then, it existed in the *virtual*. Like Proust's *mémoire involontaire*, it lay 'closer to the present moment than any past' (Seigworth, 2005: 163); except it had nothing to do with a past. It resided in the involuntary jolts of the body found in T. E. Lawrence's *The Mint*: an erection amidst torture and gang rape; mad laughter at the 'gestures of the dying', who 'limply raise their hands to show they are still alive' (Deleuze, 1993: 123). It resided in the 'spark of life' that the wicked rogue displays in the pause before his death in Charles

Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*; a life that is 'curiously separate' from the rogue himself, no longer *his* life, but simply 'a life playing with death': an 'impersonal yet singular life' (Deleuze, 1995a: 28-9). Affect, then, appeared to designate the body's capacity to act alone: its 'shattering ability to go its own way' (Hemmings, 2005: 552). More than this, it pointed towards a zone of neutrality and indistinction, an 'impersonal' life, that preceded subjective and social differentiation. Above all, its proximity to us in the virtual intimated that this other configuration of 'life', this immanent life, co-existed with 'this' one; that it was a real life.²

In describing the philosophical oeuvre of Alfred North Whitehead, the philosopher Isabelle Stengers uses the phrase 'odd and habit-disturbing' (Stengers, 2005: 165). Whitehead's concepts, she writes, were deliberately 'efficacious': 'openly speculative... neither true nor false', engineered purely to induce 'new lures for feeling' that might be acted upon and experimented with (ibid). This description is what comes closest to articulating my encounter with Deleuzian affect theories. Invigorated and disturbed in equal measure, the concept of affect and its iterations across disciplines provoked and enticed my thought. What could such a concept, and its uptake across so many different fields, hope to achieve? How did these theories of affect relate to what I understood to be music and sound's affective qualities? Was there any kind of environment, musical or otherwise, that could create the conditions for the kind of radical bodily autonomy or '*nonpersonal mode of individuation*' so apparently sought after by these affect theorists (Smith, in Deleuze, 1993: xx)? If so, what would be achieved? If not, what would be achieved? In either situation, what openings for social or political struggle might arise? Ultimately, as John Rajchman puts it, 'can we construct an empiricist or experimental relation to the persistence of this zone or plane of pre-subjective delirium and pre-individual singularity in our lives and in our relations with others?' (Rajchman, 2005: 13). What kinds of 'relations' would such an undifferentiated mode of existence give rise to? And, would they even be desirable?

² For an excellent explanation of the distinction, within the real, between the virtual and the actual in Deleuze and Guattari, see Grossberg, 2014.

In many ways, then, this thesis had two parallel motivations, and consequently, has two (or possibly more) layers. In one sense, it's an ethnographic study of the social and affective mechanisms by which musical and sonic collectivities come into being: it's about what these sonic social formations look and feel like, how stable or volatile they are, what histories and genealogies they grow out of, how they contribute to articulations of public life, and what opportunities they present for challenging power and putting existing urban social orders into question. In another sense, it's an experiment brought about by extracting an 'intrinsically speculative' concept (affect) and transplanting it across a specific set of historical and empirical contexts (Stengers, 2014: 190). This is what Deleuze and Guattari referred to as a revitalised empiricism. For them, philosophy was not just about the creation of concepts, but about the need for those concepts to enter into 'variable relations with other domains such as science, medicine and art', and thereby produce a 'connection' in which 'something' new is brought into existence—a relation between two multiplicities, a deviation of thought, an *effect* (Smith, in Deleuze, 1993: xii, Stengers, 2005). Philosophy, in this line of thinking—one which denies any 'either/or' binary, including disciplinary boundaries—is thus 'worth existing only if it accepts the risk of existing in the teeth of other practices' (Stengers, 2014: 195). Accordingly, concepts become tools to be deployed in interdisciplinary contexts. They are epistemological instruments that must be brought to bear upon, and tested against, specific concrete situations. This is one of the challenges that I see this thesis as having taken up: putting the concept of affect to work across a range of musical and sonic domains, trying to understand how it functions, and becoming open to the deviations that the meeting of such a concept with music's material realities and social complexities might produce.

There is, however, a small but significant difference between the empiricism that Deleuze and Guattari advocated, and the empirical method that I adopt in this thesis. The philosophical tradition that Deleuze and Guattari's 'transcendental empiricism' stems from is one that draws upon Hume, Nietzsche, and William James's (1896) 'The Will to Believe', and it begins from the point of view that an invented concept *can* be brought into being in the material world. It is rooted in the belief that the virtual *is* real: that there are other worlds in existence, and therefore that this world could

be otherwise. As such, the empirical method that they develop is oriented around using concepts as tools, but tools through which to convert theory into practice: what Deleuze called an ‘empiricist conversion’ (Deleuze, 1995a: 18). The ‘deviation’ that occurs thus does so in practice, as well as in theory. The question for them is: how can *life* be modified by an encounter with a concept? What material environment or ‘milieu’ does a particular concept require or create? What is the ‘habit’ that needs to be contracted in order to constitute this concept and actualise it (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 105-6)? The approach is, ultimately, a pragmatist one: the practice of adopting or ‘inhabiting’ a belief and continuing to act in the world as if that belief were real, all the while learning and/or creating the habits and actions that the belief requires (cf. James, 1896). As I elaborate in Chapter 2, the dangers of this approach are visible in the work of certain affect theorists who have taken up Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas. Rather than embracing the complexity of the empirical world and preparing for the possible failure or deviation of concepts as they intersect with the empirical, the tendency of these theorists is to assume that, in Lawrence Grossberg’s words, ‘complexity can be sorted out merely by deploying a set of concepts’ (Grossberg, 2014: 19). As such, concepts are treated not as tools whose utility ‘has to be constantly constructed and contested’, but as ‘the proverbial hammer... as if [they] could and should dictate what the world *must* be like’ (ibid: 13). As a consequence, the world is ‘denied the possibility of ever speaking back to us, of bearing witness to its own complexities [and] contradictions’ (ibid).

In contrast, the approach that I take draws inspiration from Georgina Born’s development of a revitalised Deleuzian empiricism—what she calls a ‘post-positivist empiricism’ (Born, 2010a). As Born notes, in reconceiving the relationship between the conceptual and the empirical such that the two are ‘contiguous’ or on the same plane, as Deleuze suggested, empiricism can or may serve as ‘a site for conceptual invention’ (ibid: 27)—for the development of concepts that ‘work’. This requires, however, becoming fully open to the complexity and inconsistency of the empirical and ‘testing’ the analytical power of a concept or theory therein, and not simply seeking out situations that appear to make the relevant concept ‘concrete and recursively self-legitimizing’ (Grossberg, 2014: 13). In the latter cases, as Grossberg puts it, ‘one inevitably finds what one looks for’, and

the world is, once again, reduced to the concept (ibid). Above all, then, this thesis is an attempt to think theory and ethnography together. Specifically, it is an attempt to put the concept of affect into dialogue with ethnographic work on music and sound's affective capacities. Undertaking such a project was, to say the least, a significant challenge. It demanded that I navigate, on the one hand, the bifurcating theoretical complexity of contemporary affect theories, which cannot even agree on a definition of 'affect' and which sometimes appear to depend upon the very nebulosity of the concept to give an impression of coherence; and, on the other hand, an ambitious comparative ethnography (more below), which brought with it the overwhelming complexity that any sustained period of time in 'the field' does. When it came to my attempts to make sense of each in relation to the other, I was, then, faced with a double complexity, which only appeared to multiply with time. As a consequence, there are some quite specific shortcomings, which I detail later. Nonetheless, it is my sincere hope that in pursuing this post-positivist empiricist method—in doing empirical and theoretical work together, in thinking (with) multiplicities, in not choosing one 'or' the other—I have been able to produce a series of chapters that not only do justice to the complexity of my field sites, but that also go some way to reimagining the concept of affect for a musical and sonic politics.

Stengers notes that the writer is 'in debt to what makes him or her write', and further, that 'debt must be honoured' (Stengers, 2005: 164). I want at this point to stress that however much the findings of this thesis deviate from Deleuzian affect theories, I am indebted to the concept of affect for the way it has forced my thinking; for the creative avenues it's opened up and for the significant periods of inertia or 'plateau' it's initiated—depriving me of answers, dissolving my clarity of thought, and reducing me (as I realise now!) to Deleuze's favourite conceptual persona, 'the idiot': the one who cannot make a judgment, who is unable to say with conviction, 'I think', but who, in this way, resists the rush towards consensual goals. In the end, Deleuze and Guattari opposed all absolutism, and it is testament to the power and efficacy of their concepts that long spells of writing this thesis passed without answers, without internal agreement between myself and myself, without transcendence or consensual thought processes; and that the solutions I eventually reached remain provisional, precarious, and incomplete.

Scenes, Situations, and Moments: Initial Research Design

A key question in the early stages of devising this thesis was: how could I design rigorous fieldwork that would enable me to put a philosophical concept to work, while also addressing my research questions on the affective processes and socio-political potentials arising out of music and sound in their live forms? In planning the fieldwork for this research, I thus initially returned to the two events that had so inspired me during the summer of 2011. The performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in a multi-storey car park in Peckham seemed to bear certain similarities to a Debordian 'situation' (Debord, 1957)—a staged artistic intervention in urban public space—while the more spontaneous United Vibrations gig that occurred in Windrush Square during the 2011 riots appeared closer to a Lefebvrian 'moment' (Lefebvre, 1959)—an unforeseen aesthetic happening arising out of the conditions of everyday life. In both cases, an impulse towards music's wider social effects and capacity to reorganise socio-spatial relations seemed strongly present, so I took these two events as the scaffolding around which to construct my fieldwork.

Following this, my first idea was to pose the questions I wished to pose by setting up similar musical 'situations' in urban space. Using the car park performance as a blueprint, my intention was to collaborate with musical artists or groups working from within four different genres—popular music, classical music, electronic/dance music, and sound art—in order to set up musical interventions or 'situations' in different urban public spaces across London. Simultaneously, I planned to conduct ethnographic research on the wider 'scenes' in which these musical and sonic artists were embedded, so as to grasp the differences that might occur between 'scene' and 'situation' in the kinds of audiences that were drawn and the microsocial relations that emerged. Finally, as a third phase of fieldwork, I sought to capture some of the more spontaneous musical 'moments' that tend to arise in London by keeping my ear to the ground—following musical goings-on via social media, radio, and frequent exchanges with my contacts. With these more capricious 'moments', my idea was to then reverse the methodological technique: follow the

musicians and artists involved in such ‘moments’ back out to their wider ‘scenes’, where I would then carry out the same ethnographic work. In researching these three kinds of musical event—‘scene’, ‘situation’, and ‘moment’—it was my hope that I would be able to gain insight into the nature of the social relations brought into play by different constellations of music, sound and space, the social groups between whom such relations were enacted, and the potential alterations that might occur in extracting a particular music from its regular performance site and relocating it to urban public space.

I began fieldwork in September 2013. Approximately one month later, I reached the conclusion that my plans for fieldwork were neither viable nor appropriate. There were numerous reasons for this. On a practical level, the musicians, DJs, and sound artists who I had initially approached to work with were extremely time-limited: if they were DJs, they tended to have their calendars booked up months or years in advance, while the sound artists I spoke to either had plans to take up residencies outside of the UK or were engaged in other commissions. Turning my attention to less established artists also did not present a feasible option, since it was important—for the comparative work I had planned—that my collaborators had a significant degree of status and were embedded in a wider ‘scene’. A further practical issue arose from the bureaucratic complications surrounding my ability to ‘stage’ performances in urban public space. I quickly learnt from my sound artist interlocutors how difficult it was to obtain a license to install anything sound or music-related in public space. Meanwhile, the alternative—to set up musical ‘flashmobs’—ran the risk of police intervention, which, although potentially interesting in itself, seemed a precarious and unreliable option.

Beyond practicalities, however, the key issue with my proposed fieldwork was that my understanding of the urban social and cultural landscapes in which specific artists, musicians, and genres were embedded was nowhere near deep enough to be able to gauge what may or may not change when those genres and artists relocated to new urban contexts. I thus came to the realisation that if I wanted to understand how affect worked through music and sound, then I first needed to study music and sound art in their ‘natural’ settings, without jumping to conclusions about the

transformative socio-spatial effects of urban musical and sonic interventions. In turn, this reorientation towards the ‘milieu’—towards the empirical conditions and environments that orient particular sonic situations and experiences—brought to light the immense importance of history in comprehending and diagnosing the contemporary (Born, 2010a, 2010b). Indeed, not only did historical analysis prove crucial to my ability to identify relations of social reproduction and/or change across my field sites—both at the level of microsocial process, in terms of grasping the wider social and historical implications of a particular person’s antipathy for a specific musical event (Chapter 3); and at the level of the macrosocial, in terms of deducing the ‘cumulative outcome’ of such processes as ‘historical trajectories of variation or transformation, stability or stasis’ (Born, 2010b: 235) (Chapters 4 and 5). Historical work also turned out to be fundamental to an understanding of the actual workings of musical and sonic affect, in the sense that, as Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate, social and cultural history, and their infiltration of musical performance spaces over time, can be the primary channels through which certain kinds of atmosphere and affect travel.

Following this, the thesis took a turn towards a more conventional ethnographic project concerned with exploring the different kinds of social spaces that music and sound make possible in their ‘natural’ settings. Specifically, my focus shifted away from a desire to set up and compare urban musical ‘situations’ or ‘moments’ with what I perceived to be more enduring musical ‘scenes’, since not only was this idea lacking in historical rigour; it was also imbued with a naïve presupposition of social transformation, as if the relocation of music to urban space would necessarily engender change. Instead, my inquiry moved towards the more neutrally framed question of whether, and if so how, wider social hierarchies and identities might be reconfigured by varying combinations of music, sound, and space—including, but not limited to, performances and installations in urban public space. Only in undertaking the theoretical, historical, and empirical work of ‘mapping reality’ in this way, I realised, could I begin to think about how to ‘experiment’ with and build upon the social and political openings that music and sound art in their collective forms might afford (Grossberg, 2014: 17).

Comparison, Difference, and Multi-Sited Research

In re-designing my fieldwork, the first decision I took was to expand my ‘field’. Rather than working with one artist/DJ/ensemble from each of the four designated genres, I resolved to focus on a variety of initiatives and events occurring within and across these four genres. By adopting this looser conglomeration of musical/sonic spaces, I averted the potential problems associated with imposing a distinction between musical ‘situations’ or ‘moments’ and musical ‘scenes’, as well as dealing with the practical limitations of relying on only one artist or group from each genre. In a moment, I return to why I selected the specific genres that I did, but first: why *four* genres?

Comparison has always been at the heart of this project. A primary reason for this derives from the incongruence that I felt, and continue to feel, between the normalised modes of studying, listening to, and experiencing classical music, compared with almost any other music. To understand how such radically different ‘norms’ are sustained in music, and to assess the role of space and site in mediating these norms, it seemed to me only logical to undertake comparative work. More broadly, I wished to capture some of the social complexity I’d experienced in moving between various musical and sonic domains. Indeed, one does not need to have done fieldwork to recognise that the social formations that aggregate around different kinds of music are divergent in an extreme sense—not just demographically, but in terms of protocols, rituals, modes of interaction, and behaviour too. Just thinking about the multiple layers of difference that exist between a chamber music concert in an auditorium, a techno rave in a nightclub, and a sound installation on a London street, was enough to make me realise that in order to grasp the mechanisms and processes that enable disparate musical and sonic collectivities to materialise, I had to focus on more than just one or two genres.

On a more technical level, I saw two further advantages of comparative analysis. First, since my project was not ‘about’ a particular community, class, institution, or otherwise easily describable entity, but was rather constructed around more open questions about what might or might not be possible (musically, socially, spatially, politically) at a particular historical conjuncture

(contemporary London), it was important to draw difference into the ethnographic picture. Comparison, which, in my case, was built into the research through multiple field sites and ‘juxtapositions of locations’ (Marcus, 1995: 105), was an obvious solution, given its ability to situate the present as pluralistic and multi-faceted, rather than unitary. By traversing, discovering, and moving between an array of musical spaces—some relatively familiar, some strange, many placed at considerable distances from each other, others adjacent but oblivious to each other—comparison allowed me to build a map of the musical and sonic terrain in London that drew a huge amount of diversity into it. It enabled me, via the ‘mobile positioning’ (Haraway, 1988) that multi-sited research affords, to channel the close-up, local perspective of ethnography along multiple tributaries. While it was of course necessary to contain differentiation within my research, I contend that this employment of ‘difference’ as a methodological principle (Foucault, 1981) helped me to generate a richer, more complex, if necessarily partial, ethnographic and historical understanding of the present. Similarly, and secondly, with regard to my theoretical concerns, subjecting the concept of affect to analysis across diverse concrete situations allowed me to create what Foucault (1981) refers to as a ‘polyhedron’ of empirical information through which to understand the workings of this nebulous concept. Rather than replicating the theory-driven empiricism of many Deleuzian affect theorists, then, I put the concept of affect to the test through multiple differentiated field sites.

The genres that I initially chose to work across were classical music, electronic/dance music, sound installation art, and ambient music. A key reason for this selection was epistemological: in the musicological accounts of listening and sonic experience with which I was familiar, there tended to be a separation between classical, popular, electronic/dance music, and sound art, with seemingly insufficient attempts to bring these different musical and sonic spheres into a relation. While certain areas of music scholarship—notably, music psychology and music sociology—discussed a range of musics together, including classical and popular, they rarely if ever included sound art (see Chapter 2). This epistemological division appeared to legitimise and/or reflect the polarisation of musical ‘sub-disciplines’ within the academy, contributing, as I saw it, to the stark and sometimes

incommensurable differences within and between Music degree courses. I wanted, quite simply, to talk about these different genres of music and sound together: to understand what might be gained or compensated from doing so, and to attempt to open out differences and similarities with regard to the kinds of affective atmospheres, social alliances, and collective relations they make possible.

More specifically to my project, it was important that the genres I selected had the propensity to occupy a range of spaces and neighbourhoods—not just collectively, but in and of themselves too, so as to allow for different levels of comparison. In 2013, the migration of classical music out of the concert hall and into unusual urban locations and venues was gaining particular traction. New orchestras and festivals forming off the back of the success of the Peckham car park performances—of which the one I attended in 2011 was the first—joined other already existing initiatives such as Nonclassical (est. 2004) to give the sense of a definite thrust towards change in the classical music sphere. As one field site, then, I sought to include events occurring within this ‘new music’ movement, as well as classical concerts taking place in traditional concert hall settings. As a second field site, I wished to elevate site-specific and installation-based sound art, both for the disciplinary reasons noted above, and because sound art is one of the only genres to consistently occupy urban public space in London. It thus seemed profitable to include this genre partly as a stable way of engaging with matters relating to urban geography and exploring the potentials of sonic artistic intervention to reconfigure urban public space. At the same time, sound art’s occupation of gallery spaces and arts cafés provided opportunity for comparison; and, as a genre, it offered a rich contrast to the other musical scenes and crowds I intended to prioritise.

Electronic/dance music, the third field site, seemed like an obvious choice for two reasons. First, it encompassed a hugely diverse range of events oriented around different musical aesthetics, venues, and scenes—e.g. house, techno, disco, bass music—and could thus potentially stimulate rich comparative work both in and of itself, and with other genres. And secondly, at the time of fieldwork (and still now), interesting transformations were taking place with regard to the status of electronic/dance music, including new forms of sponsorship and an increasing emphasis on certain

subgenres as intellectual ‘art’ forms to be consumed in concert halls and galleries as well as nightclubs. During fieldwork, for instance, I saw prominent techno and house DJs perform at the Southbank’s Festival Hall and the Barbican Centre, while ‘Late at Tate’, a monthly DJ/live performance night hosted by the Tate Galleries, is a key example of electronic/dance music’s growing occupation of gallery spaces. Finally, ambient music, which is defined by artists working with non-rhythmic sound whose concerts often last for long durations at extremely loud volumes, appealed to me as a fourth field site for the differences and similarities it posed to my other field sites. Just prior to fieldwork, for instance, an ambient concert series was launched in London with events hosted at spacious Georgian churches, as well as new cultural ‘hubs’, galleries, and arts cafés. As a field site, it thus provided both a spatial divergence from, and convergence with, classical music, sound art, and electronic/dance music.

Four months into fieldwork, however, I was faced with another complication, which resulted in me losing one of these field sites. It was December 2013. I’d conducted research on 27 different events and was *en route* to understanding, in greater depth, the social relations and affective atmospheres enveloping and mediating each field site. Yet, I was troubled by one factor, and that was the narrow social bandwidth of the scenes with regard to race. The field sites I had chosen were, in short, predominantly white. In some cases, I had expected this. I was aware, for instance, of the historic ‘whiteness’ of classical music and the perpetuation of this through time. But even across the electronic/dance music spectrum, which, in my memory of attending dubstep nights in 2006-7, had not been especially white, a definite ‘whiteness’ prevailed, with very few nights drawing racially mixed or predominantly black/minority ethnic crowds.³ Because of my interest in the social mediation of music, I deemed it necessary to broaden my field sites so as to include a range of musical styles whose audiences were differentiated by class, race, gender, sexuality, age, and their intersections. Indeed, it did not feel possible to proceed with the research questions I wished to pose

³ As I learnt later, the absence of a prominent black presence across the electronic/dance music field was partly residual of the excessive policing and near total suppression of grime in the mid-late 2000s (see Chapters 5 and 9).

when my field sites displayed such uneven social dynamics. I couldn't see, for example, how I would be able to obtain a representative picture of the workings of affect in drawing together different kinds of musical and sonic crowd if my field sites remained so white.

Pondering how to overcome this, I was at the Shoreditch nightclub Plastic People one night in late December when a group of my participants mentioned that they'd been to a Jah Shaka (reggae) dance the previous week, and that it had represented the most diverse crowd they'd ever been a part of. I was reminded of the dub reggae scene in London, having attended the monthly reggae night University of Dub some years previously, and like my participants, recalled it being considerably diverse with regard to race and other social differences. Over the next weeks, I therefore conducted some preliminary research on the dub reggae scene in London, and soon felt convinced that this would be an ideal field site to prioritise. For one thing, the range of dub reggae events that were operative at this time, including relatively 'mainstream' nights such as University of Dub, as well as smaller-scale events in non-gentrified neighbourhoods and community spaces, suited my desire to focus on multiple sites for comparative purposes. Further, dub reggae seemed to complement my other field sites particularly well, given both its historical embeddedness in London since the 1970s, and the huge impact of Jamaican music and culture on British electronic/dance music. Finally, the Notting Hill Carnival, which brings dub reggae and other African Caribbean musics onto the streets every August bank holiday, presented a prime opportunity for comparative work between indoor and outdoor sound system sessions and for further exploration of the socio-spatial potentials arising out of musical performance in urban space. From December 2013 onwards, I thus took up dub reggae as a central field site and gradually ceased researching the ambient music scene.

My fieldwork lasted from September 2013 through to December 2014, and during this time, I collected data from 115 events. Of these, 29 were classical and 'new music' concerts performed across traditional auditoriums and alternative urban locations, such as car parks and train stations; 36 were electronic/dance music events, ranging from regular DJ residencies to one-off line-ups and weekend festivals; 15 were public sound art works, installed on the streets, in public squares, on

housing estates, or in art galleries; and 18 were dub reggae events, including two outdoor carnivals, and indoor dances at both mainstream club venues and Caribbean cultural centres. In addition, I retained the research I'd conducted on 10 ambient concerts prior to losing this field site, and attended four jazz and three hip-hop nights, to enlarge my awareness of other scenes. The specifics of events will be introduced in detail as and when they appear throughout the thesis.

What, then, did comparison between these four specific field sites allow? Two points are worth drawing attention to in advance of reading the thesis. First, holding these genres together, as contiguous sites of urban musical activity with distinct histories and discourses, enabled both differences and surprising commonalities to come to the fore. For instance, while opposed in many ways, a number of striking similarities emerged between the dub reggae and classical music scenes, particularly with regard to the honing and enclaving of the historical and cultural spaces in which these musics exist in their live forms, and the disciplined forms of embodiment and listening that occur within and help produce these spaces (Chapters 4-6). Similarly, parallels surfaced between dub reggae and sound art, notably in the experimental aesthetic techniques shared by both genres—e.g. sound collage, spatial manipulation—and the creative trajectories and experiences of those who produced and participated in them (Chapter 7). On the other hand, thinking about the kinds of social relations that the different field sites give rise to, sound art's place-based, participatory, and collaborative potential, which enables artists to work in diverse urban neighbourhoods with various communities, affords very different forms of social engagement than, say, dub reggae or electronic/dance music (Chapters 6 and 9). At the same time, electronic/dance music incorporates a huge amount of difference in itself, particularly in terms of the affective bonds and social alliances that are brought into play by different subgenres (Chapter 8). Only through comparison was I able to trace these links between field sites, translating what in one site was comparable to or divergent from, similar but not necessarily equivalent to, another.

If holding the four field sites together and drawing out their similarities and differences counts as one level of comparison, another important vector of comparison was my ability to map the

movement of particular individuals across different musical collectivities, and in so doing, to understand why certain musical performance situations made more sense to them than others (Chapter 3, 7-8). In turn, this helped to illuminate why participants from one field site felt unable or unwilling to become fully integrated or involved in another field site, in spite of liking and listening to the music of that other field site (Chapter 8). Not only, then, did comparison allow me to grasp the particularities and differences between the genres themselves and their collective spaces of performance. It also enabled me to deduce the movement and distribution of individuals across those collective spaces, and thus to grasp the differing degrees of access and urban mobility that different people harbour in relation to diverse musical and sonic spaces. Comparison as a method and way of thinking thus helped me, in the words of Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, to ‘think in the space between individuals and groups’ (Gatens & Lloyd, 2002: 72); to realise the collective dimensions of selfhood, and to understand that, as individuals, we are ‘inserted into economies of affect and imagination which bind us to others in relations of joy and sadness, love and hate, co-operation and antagonism’ (ibid: 73). I do not believe that these insights would have come to fruition with single-sited research.

Research Themes and Chapter Overview

With the journey through fieldwork, the core research questions around which this thesis is organised both mutated and solidified. Broad and open in scope, the first three questions are oriented towards my ethnography and empirical findings, while the second three pertain to dialogues between theory and ethnography, and the conceptual and epistemological interventions I wish to make. These six questions stand as follows: *How does affect work through music and sound, what are its mechanisms of transmission, and what social and political power does it harness? What kinds of social spaces are brought into being by different constellations of musical genre, aesthetics, technology, spatiality, and sociality, and what role do these spaces play in the production of public life? Can music and sound catalyse social coalitions and associations that are emergent, and that simultaneously reorder existing urban social orders and modes of stratification?*

What are the most effective ways of researching affect empirically? How might an ethnographic account of musical and sonic affect affirm or challenge conceptualisations of affect within contemporary affect theories? Finally, how might an ethnographic account of musical and sonic affect enrich existing accounts of listening, musical taste, and live audiencing in musicology and sound studies?

Affect is at the centre of each research question, and indeed, the key contribution of the thesis is its development of a revised theory of affect based on ethnographic accounts of people's affective experiences of music and sound. Each chapter develops an important dimension of this retheorisation. Chapters 3-5 focus on affect's tendency to entrench social relations of difference in music and sound, and thus to fix or reproduce wider social hierarchies and divisions, while Chapters 6-8 deal with musical and sonic affect's relationship to change and social transformation. Additionally, a number of secondary research themes traverse and develop out of the chapters. These include genre theory and related questions of creativity, including cultural producers' attempts to imagine and 'address' their audiences (Chapters 4-8); musical and sonic publics, how they are formed, and how they might be understood in relation to wider discourses on community and public intimacy (Chapter 6); theories of temporality and the aesthetic, specifically the bidirectional mediations of music and time (Chapter 7); and discourses on musical taste and the social stratification of consumption (Chapter 8).

The structure of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the key literatures required for the thesis and provides further methodological insight into the techniques and approaches developed during the course of fieldwork. Chapter 3 begins the ethnographic work of unpacking the affective dimensions of music and sound, illuminating how musical affective experiences are oriented by multiple social and historical mediations, and demonstrating, through a series of case studies, the capacity for sonically incited affect to fix or entrench a prior social identity or difference. Chapter 4 develops these insights, illustrating how affective responses to music and sound can manifest collectively and simultaneously, resulting in 'public feelings' of antagonism and bewilderment that

may challenge, as well as reproduce, wider social identities and hierarchies. Chapter 5 builds on Chapter 4, focusing once again on collective affective experiences, but going deeper into questions of history and temporality, illuminating how shared musical affects can have genealogical resonances, and can be transmitted intergenerationally, working to sustain proximities and distances between particular social groups and particular musical lineages over time.

Chapter 6 turns to the transformative effects of musical and sonic affect, demonstrating how habitual affective attachments can be creative and empowering in their capacity to bind an emergent social coalition and/or vulnerable community together. On this basis, the chapter argues for less reductive framings of habit when theorising affect, while also developing a politics of musically imagined community. Chapter 7 develops a theory of affective emergence by tracing the trajectories of individuals who have experienced profound moments of change in their musical/sonic lives and suggesting that these moments can partially be understood through the ‘retentions’ and ‘protentions’ enacted by existing or evolving genres. Chapter 8 builds on Chapter 7, arguing that moments of potential change and openness towards new musical and social spheres are not always experienced as ‘inhabitable’, and may therefore only take place at the level of the imaginary or ‘virtual’, rather than at the level of the intimate and co-present. This chapter thus reiterates the importance of theorising music’s different scales of sociality, while also acknowledging the different degrees of affective openness and flexibility that different people may experience. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by re-evaluating the core ethnographic and theoretical contributions of the chapters and outlining a new conceptual paradigm to address the complexities of musical and sonic affect. Moving beyond the chapters, it also delineates three ways in which music and sound, in their affective dimension, can potentialise a politics.

On a final note, it is necessary to explain the distribution of the four field sites across the chapters. As noted earlier, a major challenge of the thesis was learning to navigate a set of complex theories in conjunction with the complexity intrinsic to both ethnography and comparison as methods. Alternating perspective between these domains, magnifying the detail of individual genres, and

changing scale to make higher and lower order observations both between my field sites, and in relation to my theoretical concerns, generated an at times overwhelming profusion of information. It was therefore continuously necessary, after fieldwork, to step back and ‘look’ at my ethnography in an attempt to decipher which parts were the most effective for illuminating the conceptual points I wished to make. Since certain empirical situations appeared stronger than others for demonstrating certain arguments, this led to a disproportion between the four field sites in terms of the frequency with which they appear throughout the thesis. That said, each field site appears at least twice in depth: classical music in Chapters 4 and 8; sound installation art in Chapters 3 and 7; dub reggae in Chapters 3, 5-6 and 7; and electronic/dance music, in its many different guises and subgenres, in Chapters 3-8. All return in Chapter 9, the conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Methods

In its initial conception, the two areas of research underpinning this thesis were: musical audiences; and the role of affect in drawing and sustaining these audiences. Ethnography always spoke to me as the most suitable method of research for the precise reason that it would allow me to get right up close to the fleeting, sensory, and embodied aspects of musical practice and performance. By virtue of its situated, local perspective, ethnography afforded a unique insight into the dynamic workings of music and sound in their live forms. It facilitated detailed observation of, and intense proximity to, the movements, gestures, and actions of individuals within musical collectivities; the demographic make-up and nature of the social relations brought into play by such collectivities (convivial, hostile, apathetic...); and the elusive immaterial quality often referred to as atmosphere, vibe, or energy that circulates through a collective musical/sonic body.

A further advantage of researching music and sound ‘in action’ (DeNora, 2000: 46) was the opportunity it presented for grappling with the complexity and multi-dimensionality of live crowds. Indeed, in spite of the wealth of digital tools available for enhanced ethnographic crowd research, there remains a relative lack of qualitative inquiry into live audiencing. In particular, insubstantial attention has been paid to the threshold mechanisms that enable people to move between individual and collective experience in the presence of music and sound, and the degree to which identities and subjectivities are, or may be, transformed or sublimated within a musical/sonic collective. As such, ambiguity continues to abound around the question that has perplexed social theorists for over a century—that being the question, as Lisa Blackman frames it, of how the many can act as one, and how one can act as many (Blackman, 2012). Ethnography as a method allowed me to enact continual shifts in perspective between individual and group, between multiplicity and singularity, and, in so doing, to see how relations of difference and particularity co-exist with, and are crossed by, relations of unity and similarity. In this way, it offered a methodological approach that neither

reduced the musical public to a unitary totality or entity—the one rather than the many—nor permitted descent into bifurcating plurality, individualism, and heterogeneity. But more than this, when triangulated with comparative and diachronic analysis, an ethnographic stance enabled me to see how particular socio-musical formations exhibit far greater degrees of stability and continuity than others, and how relatedly, as Born puts it, certain genres are transmitted through time and space ‘much more successfully than others’ (Born, 2010b: 244). Understanding the practices that enable a specific musical milieu to endure and gain historical credence such that it may come to be seen as ‘natural’ or a ‘given’ is a key focus of Chapters 4 and 5.

As my engagement with contemporary affect theories deepened, it became increasingly apparent that ethnographic work on music, sound, and affect was much needed. Not only did there appear to be very few ethnographies of affect, either within or outside of music studies—albeit with some powerful exceptions, which I detail later. The lack of rigorous empirical work on affect also meant that appropriations of pragmatist philosophy and Deleuze-Guattarian ontology by new affect theorists could not be challenged or held to account. Indeed, as I discuss in due course, one of the key issues that I see with Deleuzian-inspired affect theories is that, by accepting the ‘virtual’ as real—by treating a speculative philosophical concept as empirical fact and using it to imagine a hopeful, affirmative politics—the complexity and intractability of the ‘actual’ is concealed or covered over, together with the long-standing forms of social reproduction, inequality, and hierarchy that indelibly mark it. By failing to offer viable ethnographic alternatives, not only do such epistemologies gain force, but our understanding of how affect actually operates in the social world, and how it might help to transform or reshape this world, remains rudimentary. Pursuing an ethnography of musical and sonic affect, then, allowed me to undertake the challenge of a post-positivist empiricism—of putting theory and fieldwork into dialogue (Born, 2010a)—not just for the purpose of affirming or amending theory, but for the sake of developing a working concept of affect that could potentially be deployed in the concrete (musical) world and used to fashion *realistic* social and political alternatives. This, then, is perhaps the most important reason for mobilising ethnography as my central method of research.

In the remainder of this chapter, I review the central literatures required for the development of this thesis, pointing to the limitations and strengths of particular discourses, and illustrating how I intend to build upon them. I begin by analysing existing theories of listening and sonic experience, arguing that these accounts provide some important insights but are ultimately insufficient for understanding the myriad ways in which music and sound's affective capacities might transform or translate to the collective, the social, and the political. I suggest that theories of musical mediation and the conceptualisation of music as an 'assemblage' go a considerable way to addressing these shortcomings; but in addition, I argue for the advantages of engaging with contemporary affect theories as a way of refining and developing an understanding of the visceral, non-discursive aspects of musical and sonic experience. After this, I address the work of those who have already brought new affect theories to bear upon music and sound, noting the productiveness of this work, but emphasising the limits of its largely non-empirical basis. This is followed by critique and reflection on contemporary affect theories, including the 'experimental' methods that those engaging with affect across social science and humanities disciplines have deployed. Finally, I point to ethnographies of affect from within ethnomusicology and anthropology, demonstrating the important effects this work has, and discuss the specific methods I used to research musical affect and other intangible subject matter.

Theories of Listening and Musical Experience

Music and sound's ability to alter our bodily states—to invade us physically in ways that first become perceptible as atmosphere, vibe, or sensation—is hard to ignore. As Steve Goodman puts it, sound has a 'seductive power to caress the skin, to immerse, to soothe, beckon and heal, to modulate brain waves and massage the release of certain hormones' (Goodman, 2010: 10). Yet, sound can also induce 'diminished intellectual capacity, accelerated respiration and heartbeat, hypertension [and] neurosis' (ibid). In this first and longest section, I engage with existing theories of listening in musicology and sound studies in order to demonstrate how musical and sonic

experience have been analysed and portrayed. Specifically, I focus on how notions of affect and the body have, or have not, been brought into the picture. This is followed by an overview of mediation and assemblage theories, which, I argue, enrich existing approaches to listening and theorising the musical/sonic event.

Musicology: From Structural Listening to Headbanging

Following Jeremy Gilbert's (2004) diagnosis of the linguistically oriented poststructuralist turn in cultural studies, the postmodern and poststructuralist turns in musicology might also be said to have elevated semiotics and representation over affect and sensation. This is not to minimise the importance of such work. Rose Rosengard Subotnik's essay on the deconstruction of 'structural listening' was a pivotal moment in destabilising the essentialist ideology of the 'music itself', demonstrating that music and sound can have multiple meanings (Subotnik, 1988). Similarly, Andrew Dell'Antonio's edited collection, *Beyond Structural Listening*, delineates listening as a political and ethical act constituted by a 'diversity of interpretative approaches', while also acknowledging the need to reflect upon the physicality of musical experience (Dell'Antonio, 2004: 11, 8). The emergence of feminist musicology in the 1980s also drew attention to important issues, including Western music scholarship's suppression of bodies, feelings, and emotions due to their association with 'feminine matters', and thus their supposed opposition to the 'masculine virtues' of rationality, universality, and objectivity (Koskoff, 1987; Zaimont, 1984; McClary, 1991). Arguing for the need to redress this latter point, Susan McClary wrote in *Feminine Endings* that:

Given its centrality in the manipulation of affect, social formation, and the constitution of identity, music is far too important a phenomenon not to talk about... For music is always a political activity, and to inhibit criticism of its effects is likewise a political act (McClary, 1991: 26).

A distinct awareness of the need to address music's relationship to the body, affect, and the social thus permeated postmodern and poststructuralist-inspired musicology of the 1980s and '90s, but such issues nonetheless remained peripheral to a focus on semiotics, discourse, and textual meaning. Indeed, it is only relatively recently that musicologists have begun fully to engage with what music

and sound *feel like* as well as what they mean.⁴ An important example in this respect is Robert Walser's (1993) study of gender and power in heavy metal. Pointing both to the neglect of rhythm and the 'denial of the body' in music scholarship, Walser notes how rhythm and musical motion in heavy metal literally *become* physical, rousing collective participation in the form of 'headbanging', while also articulating a sense of control over time and energy through the kind of 'monolithic, inexorable pulse' found in Van Halen's 'Runnin' With the Devil' (Walser, 1993: 48-9). More recently, musicologist Suzanne Cusick has produced important work on the (ab)uses of music and sound at Guantánamo, Bagram, and other US detention facilities established during the global war on terror. As Cusick describes, music, as a 'sensory experience, a site of [religious] belief, and a medium of cultural practice', was woefully exploited by interrogators to inflict psychic and physical pain on detainees in the form of sensory overload, sleep deprivation, and enforced profanity or 'assault on the soul' (Cusick, 2008: 12-14).

Emotion, Entrainment, and Empathy: Perspectives from Music Psychology

Complementing such work, certain areas of interdisciplinary music research have paid close attention to questions of affect and the body, albeit in different terms to new affect theories. Particularly notable are the sub-disciplines of music psychology and music and consciousness studies, which have explored physiological processes such as mimetic desire and rhythmic entrainment (Clarke & Clarke, 2011; Clarke et al., 2010), music and emotion (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001, 2011), and trancing and altered states of consciousness (Becker, 2004; Herbert, 2011). Eric Clarke, Nicola Dibben and Stephanie Pitts offer a particularly useful overview of work pertaining to music perception and cognition, noting music's use in therapeutic contexts, theories of emotional contagion, and music's relationship to mood and action including its capacity to 'unwittingly

⁴ This is not to suggest that musicology has not produced any work on the body, emotions, and affect. In the 17th and 18th centuries, music was primarily understood in terms of affect and rhetoric, and this has been a concern of scholars specialising in this period. Similarly, music's use in political protest due to its ability to stir passions has 'ancient resonances' (Thompson and Biddle, 2012: 12-13). What I refer to, rather, is the fact that from the 19th century to approximately the 1980s, musicology, which primarily denotes the history and analysis of musical texts, largely excluded the body and physicality from its discourses owing to the dominant ideology of absolute music and musical 'autonomy'.

influence movements’ (Clarke et al., 2010: 103). Extending this work, Ruth Herbert adopts a phenomenological approach to listening, attempting to tap the ‘moment-by-moment feel of individual music listening experiences’ in everyday contexts before putting her findings into dialogue with existing theories of trancing, absorption, and dissociation (Herbert, 2011: 8). Moving from the individual to the collective, Ian Cross (2014) explores music as a communicative medium through the concept of ‘floating intentionality’—music’s purported ability to have basic physiological pre-cognitive effects—while Andrew McGuinness and Katie Overy suggest that so-called ‘subpersonal processes’ such as entrainment give rise to a level of response to musical gesture that is immediate and ‘universal’, providing a ‘neural basis for affective, shared, musical experiences’ (McGuinness & Overy, 2011: 248). This body of work provides some starting points for thinking about music, sound, and affect. Where it is limited is that either the focus remains on individual experiences, neglecting how music and sound operate in social and collective realms of living, or collective experiences of music are reduced to biology and attributed to innate, universal responses, with no sense of the social, historical, and cultural location of the music and/or the listeners, and with research often carried out in controlled conditions that are removed from reality.

Music and Emotion in Philosophy

Other interdisciplinary approaches to musical experience include theories of affect and emotion in music philosophy, which are primarily attentive to the relationships between musical aesthetics and emotional expressivity (Kivy, 1989; Langer, 1942; Meyer, 1956). Leonard B. Meyer’s classic thesis, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, exhibited a preoccupation not just with mood and emotion, but with what he described as ‘undifferentiated feelings’—the ‘intangible, non-referential affective states experienced in response to music’ (Meyer, 1956: 20)—while his conjecture that emotional responses to music were particularly strong when generated by ‘deviations’ from stylistic norms and the frustration of listeners’ expectations could be seen as a precursor to my discussion in Chapter 4. At the same time, philosophical work on music and emotion is explicitly *not* concerned with the social and cultural histories of listeners, nor indeed with the wider social and political

effects of music's affective and emotional power, expressing much more concern with the music 'itself' and how, or through what features and properties, music can be emotionally expressive when experienced by particular 'qualified listeners' (Davies, 2011; Robinson, 2005).⁵ This work thus has little resonance with my own approach.

Popular Music Studies: Physical Sympathy, Whole Body Eroticism

More relevant to this thesis are those in popular music studies who have attended to the social dimensions of listening. Simon Frith's concept of 'physical sympathy', referring to the ways in which physical feelings seem to escape from singers' bodies when vocalising 'between and around their notes', is significant here, signalling his close attention to music as a site of social and empathic connection (Frith, 1996a: 192). As he notes, live music performances draw us into 'emotional alliances with the performers and... other fans', offering an 'immediate experience of collective identity' (Frith, 1996b: 109, 121). At the same time, following Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Frith is also attuned to how music divides and differentiates, working '*materially* to give people different identities, to place them in different social groups' (ibid: 124. Emphasis original). This work is thus an important forerunner to my own, most notably in its attention to music's ability to embody and engender social differences—a theme I elaborate on later. Similar to Frith, those working on electronic/dance music have also concerned themselves with music's corporeal and tactile-acoustic pleasures, and the role that these play in the construction of social and political identities. A particularly strong example is Richard Dyer's (1979) essay on 'whole body eroticism' in disco, which presents the disco dancefloor as a site of radical possibility for the deconstruction of gender binaries and the reconstruction of subjectivity and identity along sexually subversive lines. Taking up Dyer's work, Walter Hughes (1994) and Jaap Kooijman (2005: 260) argue for disco's continuing ability to act as a 'boundary-defying cultural practice' that liberates the body and creates space for

⁵ As Stephen Davies (2011) admits, 'the philosopher of music is interested in the listener's states and responses mainly for the light they shed on the music'.

diverse sexual identities through its emphasis on romantic eroticism, pulsating rhythm, social dance, and physicality.

From a different perspective, Luis-Manuel Garcia offers a valuable discussion of beats, timbre, and grain in house and techno music, noting the tactile and haptic impact of these different sonic parameters. Tweaking the attack-decay-sustain-release (ADSR) envelope of a kick drum, for example, can generate ‘sonic spikes [that] *strike* the body in a very concrete way’, while the timbre of electronic music often ‘dramatizes’ this corporeality by sampling the physical sounds of the body in handclaps, breathing, humming, and cracking (Garcia, 2016: 62-4). Meanwhile, ‘grain’ is conceptualised via Pierre Schaeffer’s notion of granular sound—the microstructure of a sound-object, perceived as its surface or texture—and discussed with reference to theories of ‘affordance’ and the perceptual proximity between sonic grain or texture, sensation, and action (ibid: 68-72; Sedgwick, 2002). Such insights are significant for the theory of musical affect that I develop, and, as I note shortly, have been taken further by sociologists of music such as Tia DeNora. Notwithstanding these contributions, much of the literature on electronic/dance music—particularly that pertaining to acid house and rave of the early ‘90s—is limited to reductive accounts of collective experience framed primarily through Lacanian *jouissance* (see Gilbert & Pearson, 1999: 107). Universalising comments, such as that techno and house engender a ‘shared experience of surrender [that] effaces everyday social stratifications on the darkened dance floor’ (Rietveld, 2011: 8), or that ‘one becomes all, and the distinction between one and all disappears’ in the ‘sacrifice of the self to the dance’ (Martin, 1999: 93-5), are common in this literature, and exemplify a tendency to treat the musical collective as a ‘mass entity’, with no empirical grounding beyond the personal experiences of the author. While this work has some important attributes, then, particularly in its privileging of musical corporeality and attention to the disciplining and regulation of the body in Western history, it is limited as an account of musical experience.

Moving into sound studies, philosopher of sound Christoph Cox suggests that sound art has not only opened up a new domain of sound, but a ‘new experience of sound’ too (Cox, 2009: 25). By explicitly foregrounding background noise—the ‘ceaseless sonic flux’ that normally acts as the backdrop to conscious perception—sound art renders fully audible a ‘virtual’ domain of sound that would otherwise likely remain unheard or unconscious (ibid: 20). In so doing, Cox argues, sound art engenders an expanded field of perception, allowing the listener to embrace sonic minutiae that, without technical aid, would continue to lie below or above the threshold of perception. Extending this, Marcel Cobussen, Vincent Meelberg and Barry Truax note that ‘sounding art’ and sound walks in particular further expand the sensorial dimension of listening, generating experiences of sound that are simultaneously tactile, kinaesthetic, olfactory and gustatory, as well as socio-cultural and situated (Cobussen et al., 2016: 6). Most significantly for this thesis, a number of sound studies scholars have recently made these ideas about listening the core subject of their inquiry. Using methods such as auto-ethnography and aural psycho-geography, such scholars have explored ‘what is going on in sound art’ from the point of view of the doubtful, fanciful, subjective listener (Voegelin, 2010: xiii; Pinder, 2001); what it means to undertake a situated, ‘embodied listening’ of body-based sound installations, and how, in ‘reviving the corporeal’ of sonic experience, the body’s ‘very personal’ histories and biases are revealed (Ouzounian, 2006: 70); and how we might rewrite the processes of listening to include the ‘highly idiosyncratic and deeply situated, corporeal differentials of sensing and experiencing’ (Schulze, 2018). Building upon this work, I have further analysed how different people going about their lives respond to and experience sound installation art, in an attempt to move beyond auto-ethnography (Stirling, 2016a).

What draws this recent reception-focused work together is its orientation towards what Seth Kim-Cohen (2009) has called a ‘non-cochlear’ sonic art—a sonic art in which the most important outcomes of the sound work are not necessarily those pertaining to the ‘sound’, but may rather have to do with the personal and social experiences that a particular sound work affords, or the renewed

senses of place and space it enables. Although Kim-Cohen's theorisation of a 'non-cochlear' sonic art is in fact quite logocentric, built around Jacques Derrida's semiotic concept of *différance* and Charles Peirce's 'thirdness' with scarce mention of the body or affect, his underlying emphasis on the social and political *effects* of sound installation art resonates with my own approach, as well as with the work of action-oriented sociologists of music, to whom I turn next.

Affordance and Action: Sociological Perspectives

In the context of this thesis, some of the most innovative work on musical and sonic experience comes from the sociologist Tia DeNora in her book, *Music in Everyday Life*. Working ethnographically, DeNora finds highly original ways to talk about music and sound's physical, social, and emotional effects, although again in terms that are different to new affect theories. Specifically, she focuses on music as a practical resource or 'technology of the self', tracking how 'people mobilize music for the doing, being and feeling that is social experience' across a range of public and private settings (DeNora, 2000: 46, 49). Rooting her analysis firmly in music's affective agency—its power to modulate states of mood, energy, and action—DeNora thus critiques semiotic musicology. Moreover, to avoid any reincarnation of the 'music itself', she invokes James J. Gibson's (1966) concept of 'affordance' as a means of highlighting 'the collaborative dimension of how music's effectiveness is achieved' (DeNora, 2000: 96). For DeNora, music's ability to move us from one bodily state to another is, then, not 'caused' by musical sound, but results from the relational 'partnership' that arises between music's acoustic ingredients on the one hand, and the potentials that such ingredients 'afford' to particular 'situated users' on the other (ibid: 96).

The uptake of Gibson's 'affordance' by music scholars such as DeNora as well as Eric Clarke (2005) provides two key tenets for a theory of musical and sonic affect. First, 'affordance' offers a way of thinking about music and sound's physical properties as agential, but not essential: not reducible to the 'object itself'. In this way, musical and sonic materials can be seen to 'afford' particular affective and practical 'potentials', while the manner in which those 'potentials' are

actualised remains contingent upon the encultured listening subject and the context of their encounter, and thus open to radical variation (see also Born, 2005, 2010c). Second, ‘affordance’ opens up unprecedented routes in the music disciplines for thinking about how sonic properties such as rhythm, pitch, texture, and timbre can inspire and modulate a body’s capacity to *act, do* and *become*. By stressing musical and sonic materiality, ‘affordance’ thus shifts focus away from any semiotic probing for immanent meanings to the sensory, tactile, and textural motivators of affect, practice, and performance. It is, then, the closeness of the relations between touching, feeling, and doing/acting that makes ‘affordance’ such a useful concept (see Sedgwick, 2002).

Where ‘affordance’ is less effective conceptually is as a basis for understanding musical and sonic socialities and collectivities. Although DeNora does attend to group uses of music—in aerobics classes, for instance—her primary concern is with how music functions as a resource for modulating psychological states of being in everyday life: that is, with music’s links to subjectivity and identity at an individual level (DeNora, 2000: 130). Affordance is highly enriching to such an analysis, taking as its locus the contingent relations between encultured subject, aesthetic object, and environmental situation. But, like DeNora’s work itself, it is less useful for understanding the socio-political implications of musically animated affective contagion and transmission, or for examining how music and sound can entrench or destabilise wider social hierarchies and historical trajectories via the collective affective experiences they make possible. For all its significance, then, it is necessary to look beyond this sociological work to models that better account for the collective and socio-historical implications of musical and sonic experience.

Histories of Live Audiencing

One area of research that attends to musical collectivities in their historical dimension is the social history of live music. Not only is this work valuable for its rigorous approach to collective cultural practices; it also proffers a rich historical understanding of the musical present, detailing how and why certain modes of perception and behaviour ‘became available’ at particular historical moments,

what kinds of cultural institutions and taste publics emerged as a consequence, and the extent to which such institutions achieved stability over time. As noted earlier, diachronic analysis is key to the insights of this thesis, since it is only by triangulating history with ethnography that degrees of stasis or change with respect to the genres that I study can be grasped. But more than this, as I show in Chapters 5 and 6, musically incited affects can themselves have historical and genealogical resonances. As such, various histories of live audiencing become prominent throughout the chapters. Writers such as James Johnson (1995), William Weber (1975), and Lawrence Levine (1988), who have documented the history of classical concert life in Europe and America, are crucial to my discussion of contemporary classical music audiences in Chapter 4. Analysing the revolutionary changes that occurred during the 18th and 19th centuries, including the transition from jubilant disorder through subjective *sensibilité* to silence and privacy inside the concert hall, these historical accounts illuminate the continuities and breaks between past and present-day audiences in terms of affect, social structure, taste, and ideology, and bring home the point that things have not always been the way they are now, despite the apparent immutability of the classical music milieu.

Equally useful is Tim Lawrence's (2003) history of American dance music, which paints a vivid picture of the new social alliances that emerged with the discotheques, rent parties, drag shows, and political street protests of 1960s and '70s New York. Particularly notable is Lawrence's attention to the lived experiences of dancers: drawing upon oral histories, he describes the distribution of different subjectivities and sexual identities across different downtown venues, the 'antiphonal' relationship between DJ and crowd that blossomed at this time, and the feeling of security and belonging afforded by particular combinations of décor, space, music, drugs, lighting, and 'the sheer density of bodies' on the dancefloor (Lawrence, 2003: 111, 38, 25). This work provides a crucial historical bedrock for my electronic/dance music fieldwork, specifically the London Lucky Cloud parties, which I introduce in Chapter 3. Likewise, the historical-journalistic insights of Simon Reynolds (1992, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2013), Matthew Collin (2010), and Lloyd Bradley (2013), who, together, trace the explosive rise of British electronic/dance music from the 1980s through to the

2010s, are invaluable for the focus that they bring to audience demographics and dancefloor ‘vibes’, as well as for their questioning of ‘what exactly is at stake for fans’ in returning week after week to experience ‘the same thing, over and over again’, as Reynolds put it in a 1996 article on jungle. As if in response, Collin’s assertion that dance music culture constituted the most ‘diverse and long-lasting youth movement that Britain had ever seen’, changing ‘the way we felt, the way we thought, [and] the way we lived’, indicates the extent to which electronic/dance music was felt to bring radically new forms of public life into being (Collin, 2010). Even more revealing for my purposes are these writers’ reflections upon the race, class, and gender dynamics of different dance music crowds in relation to changing musical aesthetics. While wary of the essentialism with which certain musical sounds are labelled as ‘femme’ or ‘whiteboy’ by these authors, their insights are nonetheless crucial both to the genealogy of genre and affect that I trace in Chapter 5 and to my analysis of musical taste and participation in Chapter 8.

The historical literature on dub reggae also plays a central role in this thesis. Contributing to Chapter 5 on the gendering of the dub-dubstep-bass music continuum, Bradley’s (2000) history of roots reggae in Jamaica and the UK together with the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) offer a wealth of anecdotes regarding the political and social atmosphere of reggae dances during the 1970s and the changing mood of the music across various post-war, post-Jamaican independence phases. Meanwhile Carolyn Cooper (2004) sheds light upon the historical gender relations of Jamaican popular music from a Caribbean perspective, arguing for the need to interpret the gendering of the dancehall along intersectional lines. In relation to Chapter 6, Michael Veal’s (2007) aesthetic and social history of dub, together with Les Back’s (1996) socio-historical work on sound systems and urban multiculturalism in 1970s London, and Sarah Daynes’s (2010) on time and millenarianism in Jamaican reggae, enable me to build a picture of the affect-laden cultural historical space of the reggae dance today, and to realise its continuing political significance.

Notably, there is not much literature on the historical reception of my fourth field site, sound art. This is partly because it is a relatively ‘young’ genre. An important exception is Claire Bishop’s

(2012) *Artificial Hells*. Other notable work pertains to those who have foregrounded the social and the corporeal in sound art as an historical point of reference. Tara Rodgers (2010) and Vadim Keylin (2015), for example, both note the centrality of the body, affect, and tactility for early sound sculptors such as Léon Theremin and Harry Partch in imagining the reception of their works. Genealogies of sound art become central in Chapter 7, albeit less in relation to audience experience and more with respect to theories of temporality and the aesthetic.

Musical Participation and Musical Taste

One of the core strengths of the above historical work is its documentation of musical collectivities, experiences, and atmospheres in the context of wider social and political conditions. That is, across the literature just cited, the rituals, rites, and sites adopted by particular audiences and socio-musical constituencies at particular historical moments are understood to be inextricably connected to and oriented by, as well as potentially transformative of, social and political events taking place outside of the concert hall, the discotheque, or the blues party.

In this sense, social histories of live audiencing are more closely aligned with my own approach than the recent work on audiences carried out by Stephanie Pitts and others connected to the Sheffield Performer and Audience Research Centre (SPARC). Working across different subgenres of classical music, SPARC have conducted numerous studies of audiences using qualitative research methods such as questionnaires and interviews. While this work is methodologically interesting, with Jonathan Gross and Pitts (2016) mobilising an ‘audience exchange’ in which participants are invited to attend performances they would not normally go to, and while close attention is paid to the microsocialities of live concert performances, analyses are near-devoid of historical and social perspective. This is clear from the emphasis that these authors place on moving ‘[away from] the demographic segmentation of audiences towards a deeper understanding of their lived experience’ (Dearn et al., 2017), as if the two realms of sociality had no bearing upon each other; or from the same authors’ insistence upon studying ‘today’s audiences, rather than their

historical counterparts' (ibid). The complexity of live audience research is thus reduced to an asocial and ahistorical snapshot of the microsocial relations occurring inside the present-day concert hall. As Pitts argues, defending this position, the pleasure and fulfilment gained from attending live classical concerts and hearing 'much loved repertory... in the presence of like-minded listeners' confirms the 'value' of musical participation for both individuals and society as a whole, indicating the need for musical approaches to policy-making and education (Pitts, 2005: 268, 2004). Yet, amidst this affirmative account of classical concert-going, questions of social class, history, and cultural exclusion remain unanswered and barely addressed.

In contrast, the now broad sociological literature on the stratification of musical consumption, which stems from the pathbreaking work of Bourdieu (1984), is acutely attentive to the relationships between social class, cultural capital, and musical taste, and has put forward numerous theories to conceptualise such relationships, most famously the 'omnivore' thesis (Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Bennett et al., 2009; Savage & Gayo, 2011; Savage, 2015). Nonetheless, rarely in this literature is 'taste' seen to incorporate anything more than a particular mode of relating to a particular musical genre or object, with no significant focus given to the spaces and contexts of listening or to the microsocial atmospheres of live musical events. This again seems reductive, since, in my ethnography, the 'extra-musical' features that envelop and constitute music in its live forms often played a considerable role in attracting or deterring particular social groups to or from musical events, even if they enjoyed listening to that music privately. This argument is developed fully in Chapter 8. For now, what is important is to point out the limits of both of these audience-based literatures: the social-psychological work on musical 'participation' for reducing live music audiences to their microsocial characteristics; and the sociological work on musical consumption for making deductions about the social stratification of musical taste without addressing musical 'participation' or music as a live event, and with an overarching emphasis on class at the expense of other demographic variables. It is on these grounds that I now turn to theories of musical mediation.

Earlier, I reviewed DeNora's work on the uses of music in everyday life, noting her adaptation of 'affordance' to theorise the sound-subject-context 'partnership' by which musical experience is constituted. In emphasising the agency of not only the musical object, with its particular aesthetic ingredients and potentials, but also the encultured subject, who actively appropriates musical materials for specific tailored uses across a range of environments, DeNora moves towards an analysis of music's *mediations*. Most significantly, she acknowledges that with the changing combination of interrelations between musical object and socially located subject(s), music can have diverse and ambivalent social effects. In particular, music can enhance confidence, intimacy, and socialisation, empowering individuals and acting as a prosthetic technology for the management of everyday life, even as it may also be appropriated by marketeers and other institutional actors for the purpose of attracting certain kinds of social activity and excluding others (DeNora, 2000: 103, 125, 111). Antoine Hennion takes a similar approach to DeNora. Responding to the 'over-socialisation' of music in sociology (see also Prior, 2011), Hennion advocates the need to focus on music's deployment across a 'continuum of mediations'—instruments, scores, repertoires, sounds, styles, musicians, media, recording techniques, audiences, and more (Hennion, 2003, 2005). As he notes, critiquing Bourdieu-influenced studies of musical consumption in particular, 'taste' is not simply a marker of social identity and difference but is first and foremost a 'performance': a 'reflexive activity', through which both music and music lover are perpetually transformed or co-formed (Hennion, 2005). Similar to DeNora, then, Hennion sees our attachments to music as active and productive, capable of altering social reality, rather than simply reflecting the 'play of social differentiation' (ibid).

In spite of its rigour, I also suggested that DeNora's work is not significantly attentive to the historical and socio-political dimensions of music's affective agency, remaining primarily at the level of individual subjectivity and identity. The same could be said of Hennion, whose list of

musical mediations is primarily comprised of microsocial elements.⁶ It is on this basis that I turn to the work of Georgina Born, who has offered the most insightful theory of musical mediation. In a 2005 article, Born elevated the work of DeNora and Hennion for recognising that ‘music exists in and through its complex and shifting mediations’ (Born, 2005: 33). But in a crucial extension of her predecessors, Born argued that music takes ‘myriad social forms’, which reflect and embody different ‘orders’ of social mediation that cannot be reduced to one another (ibid: 7). Music, for instance, does not only produce its own social relations through practices of performance, taste, and ensemble, as DeNora and Hennion cogently argue; it also ‘inflects’ existing social relations of class, race, and gender; and involves the mediation of wider institutional forces by dint of its continual production and reproduction (ibid). Born’s key point, then, is that the microsocialities of musical practice and performance do not amount to ‘the entire socio-musical reality’ (ibid: 14). Rather, as her own ethnography of IRCAM indicates (Born, 1995), higher ‘macrosocial’ forces encompassing economic and institutional power are at work, which may result in musical formations becoming stabilised, achieving a kind of ‘reproduction or closure over the long term’ (Born, 2005: 15). Accordingly, Born insists upon the need to draw questions of temporality and history into music’s mediational framework. In this way, she argues, the microsocial can be ‘reconnected’ with the macrosocial and the historical, allowing us to ‘trace the historical trajectories of musical assemblages’ (ibid: 34). In relation to the theories of listening reviewed thus far, the implication is that microsocial analyses such as DeNora’s are not in themselves enough, but must be brought into dialogue with historicised sociological perspectives on musical taste such as Bourdieu’s, historical accounts of live audiencing such as Johnson’s or Lawrence’s, and institutional ethnographies such as Born’s, in order to recombine microsocial questions of affect and aesthetic expression with the ‘macro-dynamics of cultural history and technological change’ (ibid).

⁶ Hennion’s starting point for a theory of musical mediation includes four spheres that lean heavily towards the microsocialities of musical attachment: a community of amateurs; devices and conditions of tasting; the body that tastes; and the tasted musical object (Hennion, 2005).

In a series of later articles, Born further refined her theory of mediation, arguing for ‘an expansion of the conceptual framework of [music’s] social mediation’ to incorporate four distinct but mutually intersecting ‘planes’ (Born, 2011: 378, 2012). In the first plane, music produces its own unique social relations, referred to as the ‘intimate socialities’ of musical practice and performance. In the second plane, music generates larger ‘musically imagined communities’, aggregating listeners around a particular genre, style or other identification. In the third plane, music refracts wider social differences such as class, race, gender, and age; while in the fourth plane, music is intertwined with the social and institutional forms that enable its production, distribution, and reception (Born, 2011, 2012). The four planes enter into relations of mutual interference and affordance but, crucially, are irreducible to one another. Born’s great insight, then, is that music’s social mediation occurs at different levels and scales, and that the multiple socialities generated by music are contingent, relational, and continually open to re-creation. She thus moves away from reductive accounts of ‘the social’ as a totality or entity (cf. Latour, 1999; Strathern, 1988).

Born’s theory of music’s social mediation is a crucial conceptual and methodological cornerstone of this thesis. There are two immediate reasons for this. First, the distribution of music across multiple scales of sociality dramatically expands how listening can be conceived. More than a simple relation between situated subject and musical object, musical attachments and (dis)tastes can be seen to arise out of an ‘assemblage’ of mediations—in Born’s words, a ‘network of relations between musical sounds, human and other subjects, practices, performances, cosmologies, discourses and representations, technologies, spaces, and social relations’ (Born, 2010c: 88). In this way, ‘listening’ becomes an inadequate term in itself, necessitating a move to the broader category ‘musical experience’, which, Born notes, allows for ‘questions of the corporeal, the affective, the collective and the located...’—in other words, the first two planes—‘to arise in a stronger way than heretofore’ (ibid: 80). This conceptual move from ‘listening’ to ‘musical experience’ is particularly important for me, not only because of the centrality of the first plane to this thesis, but also because of the prominence of aspects of the third and fourth planes—for example, gender, race, and class, post-colonial history, marketisation and commercialisation—in orienting different kinds of musical

and sonic affiliation. The way that these wider social and historical forces enter into and ‘animate’ the microsocialities of musical performance, mediating sounds, smells, temperatures, textures, crowd densities, and postures in ways that generate intense feelings of distance or proximity, connection or antipathy, to particular musical genres, does not seem to be adequately captured by the primarily auditory notion of ‘listening’. Throughout the thesis, I thus adopt the phrase ‘musical and sonic experience’ where necessary to capture ‘listening’ in all its affective, social, and sensory complexity, as it arises out of an ‘assemblage’ of mediations.

The second reason why Born’s paradigm is so useful has to do with the anti-structural relations between the four planes. Born notes that within the musical ‘assemblage’, heterogeneous elements—sonic, discursive, technological, social, temporal—enter into variable relations with each other to produce effects and experiences that cannot be known in advance.⁷ In other words, as with Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘multiplicity’ discussed in Chapter 1, the relations between Born’s planes are not absolute, negating, or pre-determined. Though they may, in combination, take on particular forms or shapes that endure historically, one plane never suppresses or determines the other(s) completely. Rather, the planes retain a certain ‘autonomy’, a pluralistic co-existence, which makes the constellation of mediations continually (potentially) open to change and reformation. In this way, Born’s framework allows for the conceptualisation of both ‘openness’ and ‘closure’, invention and stasis, social change and social reproduction (Born, 2011, 2012). The first and second planes, for example, may, in their relative autonomy, invert or ‘enact alternatives to’ prevailing social relations and institutional conditions occurring on the third and fourth planes, culminating in the emergence of new socio-musical alliances that shift normative hierarchies (Born, 2012: 381). On the other hand, the wider hierarchical social relations that constitute the third and fourth planes may traverse the first and second planes in such a way that music’s ‘imagined communities’ and affective socialities come to reproduce broader social categories, contributing to a sense of musical

⁷ Following Paul Rabinow and Deleuze’s reading of Foucault, Born notes that a musical assemblage is constituted by a ‘particular combination of mediations’, which are ‘characteristic of a certain musical culture and historical period’ (Born, 2005: 8). Further, the relations between mediations are ‘non-linear and mutually catalysing’, with each retaining a ‘certain autonomy’, irreducible to the others (Born, 2011: 377).

and/or social stasis and historical reproduction. The point, as Born emphasises, is that these outcomes cannot be decided in advance but are empirical and historical questions.

The Four Planes in Action

Throughout the thesis, the four planes and their particular intersections take on different levels of significance and produce diverse social and political effects. Specifically, though, it is the first plane, as it is traversed by and traverses the other planes, that is central to the thesis as a whole, given my focus on live musical events and co-present audience relations. Meanwhile the second plane, in its capacity to both reinforce and diverge from the socialities produced on the first plane, takes on a key role in Chapters 5, 6 and 8. Broadly, Chapters 3-5 document how the third and fourth planes get into the first and second in ways that reproduce wider social hierarchies; and Chapters 6-8 are about how the first and second planes can invert or transform social relations occurring on the third and fourth.

Notably, there are some important precursory examples of the type of mediation analysis that I undertake in the chapters. First, there are those who have conducted ethnographic studies of the first plane, noting how the intimate microsocial gestures produced by live music are entangled with wider social relations of class, race, age, and gender, as well as with institutional conditions. Christopher Small's (1998) study of a symphony concert is exemplary here. Describing in detail the microsocial 'goings on' inside the concert hall, Small argues that the highly particular modes of attention, ritual, and behaviour exhibited by audience members are inextricably linked to their social histories and identities. As he puts it, the fact that audiences are 'overwhelmingly upper middle class', well-educated, and relatively elderly, means that 'they can rely on one another to make the effort to arrive on time and to accept without protest their exclusion if they do not' (ibid: 41); they are bound together by a shared kinship—a sense of social and cultural understanding—which marks the concert hall as 'a place where middle-class white people can feel safe together' (ibid: 42). This notion becomes relevant in Chapters 4 and 8, where I probe the resistance to change among classical

musicians, promoters, and audience members when faced with new performance spaces and repertoire. Moreover, identifying interesting intersections between the first and fourth planes as they are crossed by the second and third, Small contrasts the socialities of the concert hall with those engendered by a reggae concert, noting that the differences between each in terms of social interaction and demographic representation culminate in radically different levels of policing. As he concludes, '[t]he further performance behaviour deviates from [classical music's] middle-class norms, the heavier becomes the enforcing presence' (ibid: 46). People's modes of relating to one other as they 'music' thus have consequences that reach beyond the musical event, mediating their 'relationships to the world outside the performance space' too (ibid: 48).⁸

Two further examples of work attending to the first plane are Charles Keil's (1992) *Urban Blues* and Jocelyne Guilbault's (2010) study of live soca in Trinidad. Again, what makes these accounts significant is their close engagement with how broader social histories and identities are refracted in music. In his mid-1960s study of blues performers in the United States, Keil emphasised the necessity of researching urban lower-class black culture in America, without which, he argued, the figure of the bluesman and the intense relationships generated between performer and audience in blues simply cannot be grasped. The black church as a site of cultural resistance, the modes of expression and belonging captured by preaching and gospel singing, the emphasis placed upon oral skills and spoken word in black communities, and the retention of West African symbols of masculinity such as falsetto—all these, Keil argues, enter into blues performance, imbuing the music with a power and cultural significance that in turn transforms the social realities of lower-class African American males (Keil, 1992: 8, 27). Chapters 5 and 6, which document dub reggae socialities and expressions of class, gender, and blackness in Britain, take a similar approach to Keil. Meanwhile, Guilbault shows how performances of soca in Trinidad generate 'public intimacies' between artists and audience members of different genders, ethnicities, ages, and

⁸ One of Small's key arguments is that music should be defined as a verb rather than a noun. Music, in his view, is an activity, something that we do: 'To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance... or by dancing' (Small, 1998: 9).

nationalities who would otherwise rarely encounter one another (Guilbault, 2010: 19). In this sense, the socialities produced by live soca, characterised by an intense ‘visceral exuberance’ and sense of delight in sharing ‘a moment, a pulse, a movement’ together, temporarily reconfigure wider social divisions (ibid: 23, 21). Crucially, however, Guilbault notes that the powerful sense of belonging afforded by soca is not all-encompassing: expressions of homosexuality are excluded, while the price of tickets is prohibitively expensive for the already marginalised lower classes. The politics of the soca assemblage are thus ambivalent, both emancipatory and repressive—a point central to my analysis in Chapter 6.

If Small, Keil, and Guilbault are primarily concerned with Born’s first plane, others working in cultural studies have focused on the second plane: what Born refers to as ‘musically imagined community’. Born’s term is adapted from Benedict Anderson (1983), who first used the phrase ‘imagined community’ to describe the spread of nationalism in the industrialised world. Specifically, Anderson’s concept refers to the way in which individuals are drawn into collective formations through their shared gravitation towards a particular idea or cause—in his case, the nation—and these formations are ‘imagined’ because most members will ‘never know their fellow-members... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (Anderson, 1983: 6). In music, ‘imagined communities’ became a palpable phenomenon with the rise of mechanically reproduced media, but their tangibility has increased with the proliferation of blogs, file-sharing platforms, and other modes of digital connectivity that unite geographically dispersed individuals around a common genre. Will Straw initially used the term ‘scene’ to capture music’s ‘globalized virtual communities of taste’ as well as its localised ‘face-to-face’ socialities (Straw, 2001: 248), and although the terminology is different, it is this notion of global taste communities that Born develops in her second plane. Referring to a ‘musically imagined community’ as a dispersed public that both predates and outlives the live musical event, Born emphasises the relative autonomy of such a formation—irreducible both to existing social identity categories (class, race, gender) and to the co-present socialities engendered by musical performance (Born, 2012: 262).

Across cultural studies, ‘musically imagined communities’ have been a topic of extensive research. Early relevant work in this area was carried out by the CCCS in their analyses of post-war ‘subcultures’ (for example, Hall & Jefferson, 1978; Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979). Although the ‘subculture’ model has, by now, been extensively critiqued for assuming too tight a homology between particular cultural forms and particular social groups, as well as for overestimating the stability of group identities, the political focus of the CCCS in emphasising how post-war cultural movements arose in opposition to, and in many cases successfully interrogated, the dominant culture, remains important for this thesis. Dick Hebdige’s work, in particular, which documents the evolution of reggae music in Britain, including its use by black ‘rude boys’—together with patois, dreadlocks, and ganja—to distort and resist dominant cultural forms, as well as its partial incorporation by white ‘skinheads’, is significant for Chapters 5 and 6 (Hebdige, 1979, 1987). Indeed, in making such an analysis, not only does Hebdige acknowledge the importance of extra-musical mediations like fashion, language, ritual, and appearance in generating musical-cultural identities. He also demonstrates that musical coalitions can both refract wider social identities, as with the temporary alliance between black and white ‘rude boys’ in 1960s ska, and provide the foundations for socio-cultural autonomy and resistance, as with the ‘Africanisation’ of reggae in the early 1970s, which was marked by a distinct politics of blackness. Drawing upon contrasting field sites, Chapter 6 demonstrates the prevalence of both of these tendencies in music, arguing for their different but equally potent political power. Further, the chapter shows how, in both cases, the first and second planes can be mutually reinforcing, with the socialities of performance catalysing powerful ‘images’ of belonging that sustain communities in between events, and these imagined communities in turn consolidating the affectivity of the live events.

Hebdige’s point regarding music’s ability to produce collectivities of cultural resistance invokes Paul Gilroy’s (1993) work on black Atlantic cultures, which offers conceptual insight into the interrelations between the second and third planes that is central for this thesis. Gilroy argues that music has played a unique role in uniting black diaspora populations, helping to produce distinct modes of ‘lived blackness’ that are both particular to time and place and a product of transnational

flows and hybrid influences (Gilroy, 1993: 82-3). This ‘doubleness’, Gilroy notes, confounds any essentialist *or* anti-essentialist understanding of racial (non-)identity, since black music that is trans-Atlantic and complex in origin, but that nonetheless appeals to and aggregates black diasporic cultures, can be seen neither to express any absolute essence of blackness (essentialism), nor to support the view that race and blackness are mere social constructions (anti-essentialism) (ibid: 99). Instead, drawing upon Foucault, Gilroy puts forward the notion of ‘anti-anti-essentialism’ to articulate the point that, however fluid and constructed identities may be in theory, racial difference and inequality continue to be experienced and reproduced in practice (ibid: 102). As such, ‘race’ as an identity category cannot simply be dissolved, since its mobilisation remains crucial for fighting oppressions. For Gilroy, this is where music plays a singularly important role. Through the continual routing and re-routing of black aesthetic conventions and cultural forms—what he refers to, after Leroi Jones, as a ‘changing same’ (ibid: 101)—music becomes a central means through which politicised racial identities and solidarities can be cultivated. The successful reproduction, transmission, and transmutation of black cultural traditions against an historical backdrop of rupture, displacement, and dislocation thus becomes a potential mode of resistance in itself. Gilroy’s concepts of anti-anti-essentialism and the ‘changing same’ are key to Chapter 5, which focuses on aesthetic retentions and the temporality of affect in the context of race and gender, as well as to Chapter 6 on the politics of continuity and community in dub reggae.

Two final theorists who deal with the second plane in ways that are significant to this thesis are Straw (1991, 2001) and David Hesmondhalgh (2005). Both advocate a similar position to Gilroy with regard to conceptualising collective musical identities. That is, both are critical of subcultural theory for its tendency to see musical cultures as ‘indexical’ of the social, as ‘subsets of society’, with fixed boundaries and a stable constitution—in other words, for eliding the second and third planes. At the same time, both are equally wary of invoking a model that overemphasises instability, as with Michel Maffesoli’s (1995) concept of ‘tribe’, which captures the performative, temporary, and unstable character of cultural affiliations without recognising ‘the inner circles and weighty histories which give each seemingly fluid surface a secret order’ (Straw, 2001: 248). As

Hesmondhalgh puts it, in an echo of both Gilroy's critique of anti-essentialism and Born's critical appraisal of the reduction of music to its microsocialities, 'the CCCS subculturalists might have overestimated the boundedness and permanence of the group identities they were studying, but simply to offer instability and temporariness as alternatives does not get us very far' (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 24). Rather, he suggests, we need concepts that have the capacity to articulate both stability and dynamism in contemporary musical cultures—concepts that grasp the contingency and sensory richness of musical socialities as well as their direction of movement and scale (see Straw, 1991).

In this respect, Straw favours the term 'scene', which, in his reading, encompasses both the 'effervescence' of local musical activity, and the 'grooves to which practices and affinities become fixed', expanding into international musical communities that are closely tied to processes of historical change (Straw, 2001: 252-4). Straw's concept of 'scene' is thus similar to Born's theory of mediation, and draws all four planes into it: from the 'cozy intimacy' of musical performance, to the dispersal of genre cultures around the world, to the racial, class-based, and gender differences that mark musical forms, to the 'webs of economic activity' and industrial organisation that underpin music's sociability (ibid: 249; 1991: 372; Born, 2011: 382). This is significant, and Straw's 'scene' analysis has some particular offerings for this thesis. First, it is highly attentive to music's differing logics and rates of change, which may 'slow the turnover of urban novelty' to such an extent that scenes themselves appear unchanging (see Chapters 4-6) or move so rapidly that the very act of naming new genres is bypassed (see Chapter 5); and second, it offers a detailed exploration of the interrelations *between* musical scenes. Straw notes, for example, how 'indigenously' produced sounds may propagate to new urban centres and subsequently evolve at a different rate; how 'native' and 'dispersed' scenes can enter into mutually influential relations and precipitate unintended musical developments; how cities can become host to a vast range of differential musical practices that are antagonistic or mutually catalysing towards each other; and how, most crucially for my purposes, a particular scene may spark backlashes—locally and/or globally—deterring certain social groups so intensely that they are compelled to congregate

elsewhere, thus reinforcing the ‘insularity’ of the original scene. These kinds of relational processes are central to Chapters 5 and 8, which both deal with questions of boundary-drawing and affective (dis)affiliation across multiple field sites.

Regarding terminology, I would, however, agree with Hesmondhalgh that ‘scene’ is too ambiguous a term to be of use in the multi-faceted way that Straw envisages. The different uses of ‘scene’ by Straw and Barry Shank (1994), for example, as well as Straw’s own complex deployment of the term to denote local and/or global musical socialities of co-present and/or virtual existence, risks muddying the waters between music’s different scales of sociality. In particular, ‘scene’ is in danger of collapsing Born’s first two planes, which although closely linked, are irreducible to one another. As I show in Chapter 8, for example, individuals and social groups can quite easily be part of a virtual music ‘scene’ or ‘imagined community’ while feeling excluded from its local ‘scene’, suggesting that the socialities of musical performance do not in any way stand for, or indicate, the heterogeneity of that genre’s listening base. Conversely, as I show in Chapters 4, 5 and 7 with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of ‘addressivity’, a great deal of uncertainty persists between the audiences ‘imagined’ or envisaged by musical producers, on the one hand, and the ‘actual’ audiences brought into being by their music, on the other. These kinds of complexities and irreducibilities are there in Straw’s analysis too, but the swollen term ‘scene’ does not help to articulate or unpack them.

Accordingly, I use Born’s four planes throughout the thesis to clarify which order(s) of music’s social mediation I am referring to and how I perceive them to be interrelating. When specifying the multiple mediations that enter into the first two planes, I also use the term ‘assemblage’, which is different to Straw’s ‘scene’, in that it describes a particular constellation of elements (social, spatial, musical, discursive), rather than denoting many different scales of constellation (local, regional, global, virtual). If and where I do use ‘scene’, it is to refer to the geographically specific—in my case, London-based—coalition of events and initiatives that comprise a musical genre in its live form.

Musical and Sonic Publics

Finally, my use of the term ‘public’ requires clarification. In her introduction to *Music, Sound and Space*, Born notes that what is at issue in ‘musical public-making’ is ‘the capacity of music to engender emotional identification in its listeners’, and thus to ‘promote affective unities’ (Born, 2013a: 35). These unities might emerge among those participating in a musical or sonic event, or between those virtually collectivised by the mediated circulation of music and sound. A musical public is, in this sense, simply ‘an aggregation of the affected’ (ibid). Born’s affectively attuned definition is the one that I follow most closely in this thesis; but her use of the term ‘public’ to refer to those aggregated by a live musical or sonic event remains contested in the literature. This is because, historically, the term ‘public’ has primarily been used to describe a virtual or ‘imagined’ community, coming into use with the rise of the printing press, journalism, and the currents of taste and opinion that ensued around these texts (Tarde, 2010 [1901]; Sennett, 1978; Johnson, 1995). Indeed, defining this new modern kind of ‘public’ relied in part upon distinguishing it from a ‘crowd’. The former thus became understood as a dispersion of physically separated individuals ‘whose cohesion is entirely mental’, and the latter as embodying a co-present throng or mass bounded by its spatial immediacy (Tarde, 2010 [1901]: 539). In spite of its archaism, the separation between ‘public’ and ‘crowd’ extends into contemporary literature. Michael Warner (2002: 50), for instance, defines a ‘public’ as distinct from a ‘bounded [physical] audience’, implying that co-present audiences somehow do not possess the public-making qualities that those who come into being around ‘texts and their circulation’ do. In music, the distinction is replicated in work that attributes ‘public’ only to musical ‘imaginaries’ and not to musical ‘intimacies’ (Dueck, 2013).

Against this separation, I follow Born (2013a) in using the term ‘public’ to denote the socio-musical groupings produced both by musical performance (the first plane), and ‘musically imagined communities’ (the second plane). I use ‘public’ for the first plane in part because the collectivities produced by live music and sound exemplify what Warner and others seem to omit: publics that are

visceral, affective, and tactile in origin, and which gain their social and emotional force through the space of ‘appearance’ (Arendt, 1958). More than this, though, it is the political agency of the word ‘public’—its ambivalent and often fraught links to questions of democracy, power, and difference, as well as its gesturing towards the political productivity of physical ‘bodies in alliance’ (Butler, 2011)—that makes the use of this term so pertinent to music and sound’s co-present collectivities, which, I argue, have the capacity to challenge social and political injustices, and upon whose existence the ‘publicness’ of a cultural terrain ultimately depends. In this regard, I take issue with those who diminish the importance of co-presence as a public-making sphere in lieu of the vibrant, ‘liquid’ sociality of the virtual public realm (Amin, 2012; Bauman, 2000; Castells, 2000). Indeed, celebrating the ‘openness’ and fluidity of networked sociality over the supposed ‘anachronism’ of spatial propinquity, as these scholars do, ignores the spatial imprisonments and enforced local separatisms that continue to erode the physicality of public life on a daily basis (Stirling, 2016a). Interconnectivity may well initiate new kinds of public and political organisation, but it does not overcome the ‘geographies of risk’ that prevent vulnerable young people from walking out of their own front door (Rätzsch, 2008); nor does it reinstate ‘Rights to the City’ for musical communities that have been locked out of clubs and other public spaces on racist grounds (Stirling, 2017. See Chapter 9). Rather, these local forms of zoning demand that we recognise the importance of spatially proximate publics, ‘face-to-face’ forms of affective unity and resistance, as well as ‘face-to-screen’ mediated publics, when theorising the politics of musical publicness; and in particular, that we attend to the mediating and ‘nested’ relationships between the two (Born, 2013a). Like Born, then, I argue that both the first and second planes are required for a theory of musical and sonic publics, and it is their affective workings that I unpack and illuminate in this thesis.

Music, Sound, and Affect Theories

Born’s theory of social mediation, and its implications for an expanded understanding of musical and sonic experience, is the invaluable starting point for a deeper analysis of the affective qualities of musical and sonic sociality. As outlined in Chapter 1, affect, in my definition, refers to those

adrenal surges, visceral states, and shimmering impressions that elude obvious discursive or semiotic representation, and that are often hard to pin down. At a physiological level, affects may involve modulations in heart rate, breathing, hormonal release, and rhythmic synchrony (entrainment), as well as heightened sensation in the skin and flesh. At an experiential level, they might take shape as a sudden thrill or elation, a vague hunch, a frenzy of excessive excitement, an impulsive rush, an uncontrolled irritation, or a fluctuating expectation. They could be obstinate and erratic, manifesting as ‘a pleasure and a shock, as an empty pause or a dragging undertow, as a sensibility that snaps into place or a profound disorientation’ (Stewart, 2007: 2). They might also feel ‘pre-conscious’, seizing one into a particular bodily state prior to awareness, though, as I delineate later, this does not necessarily mean that they are ‘pre-personal’. They could be contagious, persuasive, and compulsive, or haunting, disturbing, and repulsing. What makes them so important to music and sound studies, to my mind, is their role in the formation of musical and sonic publics: their ability to ‘attract, repel and provoke’, and to move people in ways that potentially shift the ground of social and political life (Rutherford, 2016: 291).

So far, the music and sound-related studies that I have cited have not delved sufficiently into the affective workings of music and sound. In particular, the relations between the body, affect, the social, and the political remain hazy in music and sound studies. Yet, if affect is crucial to an understanding of musical and sonic publics, and therefore also to a musical and sonic politics, then it demands an adequate theory. In my view, turning to contemporary affect theories from across the humanities and social sciences significantly enhances the ways in which we can think about and begin to comprehend music’s ‘hyper-affective propensities’ (Born, 2013a: 44). At the same time, theories of affect may also be enhanced by ethnographic research on music and sound. In this second review section, I engage theoretically with the implications of a turn to affect in sound and music studies. First, I outline the sorts of definitions and modes of thinking that the ‘turn to affect’ has brought into being, noting the particular thought trajectories associated with its dominant

paradigms.⁹ I then move on to discuss how sound and music have been brought into articulation with affect theories, arguing that, while productive in many ways, much of this work relies upon importing existing theories of affect into music without challenging them. Finally, I outline the critique that I intend to make of new affect theories throughout this thesis and point to important work in anthropology and ethnomusicology that could support this critique. Since each chapter of the thesis is dedicated to developing a particular aspect of musical and sonic affect, often in considerable theoretical and analytical depth, my account here will not be exhaustive.

A Sense of Being Alive

The ‘turn to affect’ in the humanities and social sciences has sparked an epistemological upheaval over the last two decades, generating an extraordinary number of approaches and definitions that converge and diverge in complex ways. Predominant strands have arisen in philosophy, following Deleuze and Guattari’s affirmation of the work of Spinoza (e.g. Clough, 2007; Massumi, 2002), in social theory, following a revival of the work of Gabriel Tarde (e.g. Blackman, 2012; Latour, 2005), in cultural geography and non-representational theories (e.g. Anderson & Harrison, 2010; McCormack, 2013; Thrift, 2007), and in feminist, queer, and post-colonial theory (e.g. Ahmed, 2004; Berlant, 1997; Brennan, 2004; Hemmings, 2005). It would be impossible to map every tributary here. Instead, I cite three hallmarks that I see as broadly central to the new literature on affect.

The turn to affect is concerned with how bodies and bodily matter participate in the ongoing construction of the social and the political. The first point to note here is the specific emphasis on *bodies*. Affect is taken to refer to those elements of experience ‘over which humans have the least control [such as] hormonal flows, especially of adrenaline; breathing... and those absolute intensities, which cannot be contained within a logic of signification’ (Gilbert, 2004: 11). Affect,

⁹ I distinguish the recent wave of work on affect from its foundations in Spinoza, Tarde, and other historical social psychological literatures (see Blackman, 2012), using ‘new affect theories’ for clarity.

then, points towards corporeal states, impulses, and auras, rather than to ‘their manifestation or interpretation as emotions’ (Hemmings, 2005: 551). This shift towards the body and physiology is seen by those advocating it as a counterforce to the logocentrism of poststructuralism. By attending to the non-verbal, non-conscious dimensions of living—the motor mechanisms of the body that are felt to be in excess of ‘the speaking subject’ (Blackman & Venn, 2010: 9)—new affect theorists are keen to stress the limits of discourse, signification, and meaning, thus largely opposing the linguistic models of experience characteristic of much poststructuralist and deconstructionist work (Gilbert, 2004; Massumi, 2002; Sedgwick, 2002).

A second key dimension of the turn to affect is its focus on what are held to be the ‘impersonal’ qualities of bodily states and affective flows, as opposed to the ‘personal’ nature of emotions (see Leys, 2010, for a critique). Moving away from the interiorised, subject-oriented understanding of emotions found in psychoanalysis, affects are conceived as ‘impersonal’ in the sense of being trans-subjective, shared, contagious, public, and tied to non-intentional, ‘pre-personal’ forces. The conceptual distancing of affect from emotion is, then, simultaneously a rejection of the individualising, psychologising and, in some traditions, linguistic ways in which psychoanalysis approaches bodily, psychic, and social matters. As Gilbert notes, ‘[t]his is not to dispute the importance of the Lacanian framework for understanding social phenomena. But it is to insist that such [social] phenomena possess dimensions [that] exhaust explanatory possibilities, in particular when [they] are irreducibly collective in character’ (Gilbert, 2004: 14). For a number of feminist affect theorists, this distinction is particularly important, underlining the ‘[public or] structural causes of suffering’, rather than reducing these to ‘the emotional’, ‘the personal’, and the bounded individual subject (Berlant, 1997, 2008; Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012: 121).

A third and final introductory point to note is the preoccupation among new affect theorists with how affect travels beyond the ‘human’ or the ‘subject’ to animate social and political connectivity between humans and ‘nonhumans’ (Latour, 1999). Affect theorists are thus resolutely anti-structural and often anti-humanist in their theorisation of the social. Instead, sociality is conceived

as an inherently mobile and dynamic set of processes, constantly forming and re-forming through the associations and suggestions that unfold between human and nonhuman bodies. The question for affect theorists is then not so much ‘what *is* a body?’ but ‘what can a body do?’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003 [1980]; Spinoza, 1677). How does affect enliven the potential for action, relation, and encounter between humans, animals, and machines? What kinds of social matrices might ensue in a milieu where subjectivities are defined not by individuated ideologies and identities, but by their ‘capacities to affect and be affected’? (Blackman & Venn, 2010: 9). Herein lies the crucial link between affect and politics: by conceptualising affect as an ‘impersonal’ or ‘pre-personal’ force that operates beyond or before human subjectivity, many affect theorists seek to enshrine within affect the promise of radical indeterminacy and possibility. Affect is, in this sense, an enlivening emancipatory energy that brings into proximity ‘a new life: more to reality’ (Massumi, 2002: 215), urging us to reconsider the boundary between the body, technology, the animal and the material. What comes to the fore, then, is a decentring not only of the logocentrism of poststructuralism and the individualism of psychoanalysis, but of the anthropocentrism of Kantian-Hegelian metaphysical philosophy.

New Affect Theories and Music

By and large, new affect theories have tended to exclude music and sound. As Anahid Kassabian points out, there is no entry on sound and very little on music in Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth’s (2010) *The Affect Theory Reader* (Kassabian, 2013a: 179). At the same time, few scholars working within the music disciplines have brought new affect theories to bear upon music and sound. The first writer to do so was Grossberg, a cultural theorist. In a 1984 paper on rock and roll, Grossberg rejected the idea of a split between ‘signification’ and ‘materiality’, noting that ‘[i]t is not that rock and roll does not produce and manipulate meaning but rather that meaning itself functions in rock and roll affectively’ (Grossberg, 1984: 233). Rock and roll, he argued, is a set of ‘networks’ through which pleasure, desire, and ‘strategic empowerment’ are made ‘possible and important for its audiences’ (ibid: 227-8). Moreover, these networks of empowerment—or

‘affective alliances’ (ibid)—are, Grossberg suggested, potentially generative of oppositional strategies that are ‘removed from the hegemonic affective formation’ (ibid: 235-7, 240). As early as 1984, Grossberg thus not only broke with linguistic Althusserian concepts of ‘ideology’, invoking instead a ‘flatness’ between the discursive and the material that prefigured his turn to Deleuze (Grossberg, 2010: 323). He also recognised music’s ‘affective alliances’ as inherently social and political, implicated in the re-configuring of embodied social boundaries and power relations. Pursuing Grossberg’s work in the early 2000s, Gilbert then explored the possibilities of a Deleuzian ‘shift’ in cultural studies (Gilbert, 2004). Drawing again on music, Gilbert suggested that we look not only to Deleuze but also to Raymond Williams (1977) as a means of apprehending the intertwining of the discursive and the material (Gilbert, 2004: 12-13). Through this anti-dualistic approach, Gilbert argued for the ‘sociality’ of musical affect—its social, cultural, and structural-historical mediation. At the same time, like Grossberg, he recognised that affective investment in music could itself potentially ‘re-structure’ the social by mobilising groups into counter-hegemonic positions. As will become clear, the work of Grossberg and Gilbert is crucial to the theory of affect that I develop, both for its relational approach and its socio-political grounding.

Goodman’s *Sonic Warfare* (2010) was also among the first to engage with sound and the affective turn. In contrast to Grossberg and Gilbert—and bearing similarities to Cusick’s work on music and torture—Goodman explores the deployment of sound as a ‘weapon’ to affectively manipulate and deceive populations in late capitalism via machineries such as sonic branding and the Mosquito Anti-Social Device (Goodman, 2010: xvi, 146). Most significant, for my purposes, is Goodman’s attention to the ‘ambivalence’ of sonic affect (Hemmings, 2005): sound’s ability to generate repetitive, pestering, and overpowering affective experiences—earworms, obsessions, and uncanny senses of ‘déjà-entendu’—and thus its alignment with stasis and fixity as much as novelty and change. Further developments have also arisen in Goodman’s wake (Thompson & Biddle, 2013; Kassabian, 2013a; Jasen, 2016). In their 2013 edited volume, Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle provide the first comprehensive introduction to sound, music, and affect theory, tracing dominant and marginal antecedents to the current affective turn and locating a genealogy of affect in the

history of musical aesthetics. Like Goodman, Thompson and Biddle raise the issue of affect's ambivalence, problematising—through a discussion of affect's role in boundary rituals—the constant theorisation of affect as 'transformative' and indeterminate (e.g. Massumi, 2002), when, as they put it, '[musical] affect gives no such guarantee, provides no such always-already radicalizing dynamic' (Thompson & Biddle, 2013: 7, 13). Their statement finds support in chapters by Kassabian and Freya Jarman, who, developing Goodman's work, examine how music and sound are increasingly commoditised and distributed according to 'a logic of affect'—for example in Sleep Apps, mood-driven Compilation CDs ('Smooth Classics for Rough Days') and listening technologies such as Moodagent (Kassabian, 2013b; Jarman, 2013: 184).

This recent sound and music-based work is fruitful for its attention to the collective, socio-political, and relational nature of affect. Thompson and Biddle in particular are enlightening on the ways in which sonically generated affects 'extend beyond the individual towards the bodies of others' (Thompson & Biddle, 2013: 8); while Kassabian develops an important sonically-derived theory of 'distributed subjectivity'—a 'nonindividual' subjectivity in which bodies and subjects are strengthened and impeded by the 'ubiquitous musics' that hail from cafés, games consoles, smart phones and even clothing (Kassabian, 2013a). Yet while this engagement with the social and biopolitical aspects of musical affect is welcome, concerns are raised by the lack of empirical grounding for key arguments. Indeed, the majority of writers mentioned tend to uncritically import pre-existing affect theories into their work as a way of articulating sonic experience in novel ways. Goodman, for example, adopts a dense Deleuzian vocabulary in his exploration of 'vibrational ontologies', at times implying that people's personal, social, and cultural histories have no bearing upon the kinds of sounds and vibrations that are likely to affect them and how. This is clear from universalising claims made throughout his book, such as that 'certain frequencies... produce an affective tonality of fear', or that infrasound 'arouses anxiety' and '[makes] you shake' (Goodman, 2010: 189, 66). By importing ontological Deleuzian concepts such as 'pre-personal' affect into his analysis, in other words, Goodman intimates that sonic materials can affect the body in ways that do not need a subject or psyche to register. Sound thus becomes a 'force' like gravity, and the body

becomes ‘dumb matter’ (DeNora, 2000; Blackman, 2012: 17). The effect is a re-emergence of the essentialist ideology of the music or sound ‘itself’, only in a new corporeal guise—an approach that is in marked friction with empirical work like DeNora’s that goes to great lengths to illustrate the sound-subject-context ‘partnership’ by which music’s efficacy is achieved, or Born’s analysis of how musical experience emerges from an ‘assemblage’ of mediations.

If others such as Jarman and Kassabian are sceptical of the notion that particular frequencies induce particular affects in listeners, their work is nonetheless speculative. While this is perfectly reasonable, their studies lack the kinds of empirical insights that could fuel further conceptual development in new affect theories. Instead, they and other contributors to Thompson and Biddle’s volume tend to adhere to one or other variant of affect theory, presenting the editors with what they call a dilemma of ‘definition’: ‘Where does one draw the line between affect and emotion? Are we following a Freudian or Deleuzian/Guattarian trajectory?’ (Thompson & Biddle, 2013: 23). This body of work thus reveals the limits of purely theoretical approaches: by continually returning to abstract philosophical ideas to explain affect’s social and political power without putting such ideas into dialogue with the empirical, these theorists risk advocating a politics of musical and sonic affect that may be unviable—‘a theatre of concepts the power of which... is matched only by their powerlessness to transform’ (Stengers, 2011: 380). Concepts are vital for enlivening our paradigms of thought; but, as I argued in Chapter 1, they must also remain in conversation with the material realities they seek to describe and transform, and if necessary, undergo modification, rather than simply being ‘followed’ (Born, 2010a). In the next section, I thus sketch an overview of the critique that I wish to make of new affect theories in this thesis, based upon my ethnography. Specifically, I suggest that when scrutinised ethnographically through the prism of music and sound, affect emerges as something conceptually quite different to how it is portrayed in the new paradigm.

Towards a Critique

The key aspect of new affect theories that I wish to critically engage with is the tendency to conceptualise affect as ‘pre-personal’ or pre-mediated. This tendency stems from the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1962) and philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1968), who, in different ways, rejected the notion that experience had to be characterised by the ideologies and intentionalities of individual subjects. As such, each drew upon theoretical traditions that enabled a conceptualisation of affect as ‘not-subject-based’. In the literature, this appears in various guises: as ‘non-cognitive’, innate, automatic (Tomkins, 1962; Sedgwick, 2002), or ‘pre-personal’, pre-individual, autonomic (Deleuze, 1995a; Massumi, 2002). In this thesis, it is Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical strand of affect theory that I mostly engage with, rather than Tomkins’s.

An important influence for Deleuze in philosophising affect was Spinoza’s concept of ‘affect’ (*affectus*): the ontological capacity to affect and be affected, or ‘affect-as-potential’. With Guattari, Deleuze explored how these potential or ‘virtual’ affects persisted alongside what Spinoza called ‘affection’ (*affection*): the affective encounter of a body with other bodies, or the empirical ‘capture’ of affect. For Deleuze and Guattari, as for Spinoza, then, the ontological and the empirical, the ‘virtual’ and the ‘actual’, were co-existent or ‘contiguous’ (see Chapter 1). One neither transcended nor entirely escaped the other. Next to the ‘plane of organisation’—the plane of the ‘actual’—Deleuze and Guattari therefore fabricated a ‘plane of immanence’: an ontological space of non-subjectified ‘affects’ where the individual subject and individuated identities (class, race, or any pre-existent ‘we’) were not the basic units of experience (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). But for all its wonder, and in spite of emitting into and absorbing the ‘actual’, this immanent plane was not a description of empirical reality. It constituted a *virtual* set of contexts: co-present and potentially disruptive, but not (yet) *actual*. The ‘plane of immanence’, then, was Deleuze and Guattari’s way of indicating that there are, potentially, other configurations of ‘life’: that ‘this world has had different aspects, will still have others’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003 [1980]: 337). They asked not that we impose their speculative concepts into the world, but that we test how, or whether, they

might be ‘actualised’ in the context of the ‘planes of organisation’ that stratify any given temporality. Their questioning followed the line: what would it take to bring this concept into being, and what kind of a milieu would it require? In this sense, the Deleuzian ‘virtual’ can be understood as ‘the work to be done’, as calling for realisation (Stengers, 2009: 14).

The problem arises with Deleuzian-inspired affect theorists such as Brian Massumi, who have taken ontological Deleuzian concepts and projected them onto the empirical. For Massumi, a sociality flowing out of ‘pre-personal’ affective intensities that operate autonomously to individuated ideologies is not a potential or ‘virtual’ realm as it was for Deleuze, but a persistent empirical reality—one that he ‘proves’ in a series of questionable laboratory-style experiments (Massumi, 2002: 25; for a critique, see Leys, 2010; Papoulias & Callard, 2010). It is important to note that part of the issue, here, stems from Deleuze and Guattari’s call for a revitalised empiricism—an empiricism in which the concept or the belief is taken to be real, and the ‘work to be done’ as consisting of how to ‘inhabit’ this concept and bring it into actuality (James, 1896). What seems to have occurred among those following this ‘radically empiricist’ method, such as Massumi, is what Grossberg refers to as the reduction of the world to the concept (Grossberg, 2014: 13). That is, rather than testing the feasibility of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts in a rigorously empirical and historically situated manner, Massumi treats their concepts as empirical certainties and seeks out contexts that appear to legitimise them. A similar critique can be made of non-representational theorists in cultural geography, such as Nigel Thrift, Ash Amin, and Derek McCormack. In their book *Arts of the Political*, Amin and Thrift encourage us to ‘invent new worlds’ by using artistic practice to ‘tap into the pre-personal plane’ (Amin & Thrift, 2013: 2, 4, 72). Again, a clear line of direction is detectable: ‘pre-personal’ affect is an assumed empirical reality, and its ‘actualisation’ is to be achieved through artistic practice, producing new modalities of belonging that apparently do not begin with the individual subject and identity (see also McCormack, 2013). The result of this work is that invented philosophical concepts become the basis for a politics that does not relate to reality, but that instead simply conceals long-standing forms of social reproduction, inequality,

and segregation, and thereby disables any understanding of how these uneven dynamics operate, and how they might be transformed.

In my ethnography, passages into the Deleuzian plane of ‘pre-personal’ affect did not make themselves apparent in any substantial way. On the contrary: the personal histories, psyches, and social positionalities of encultured subjects frequently emerged as resilient, working to align affective experiences with fixity and stasis, rather than change or shattering surprise (see Chapters 3-5). Asserting that the ‘pre-personal’ can be invoked or ‘staged’ at will, that practical ‘experiments’ involving dancing, walking, or driving can help ‘bodies’ learn to affect and be affected in ways that catalyse new social entanglements, as Massumi, Thrift, and others do, thus seems to pose serious ethical problems. As feminist, queer, and critical race theorists argue, to claim that it is possible to summon a set of milieus in which experience is detached from individuated identities is to undermine affect’s role in the reproduction of social oppressions: its tendency to circulate along already existing lines of social and cultural investment, and thereby to entrench and perpetuate social relations of domination, rather than overturn them (Ahmed, 2004; Berlant, 1997; Blackman, 2012; Hemmings, 2005). Here, Sara Ahmed’s concept of ‘stickiness’, Clare Hemmings’s attunement to the ‘genealogical resonance’ of affect, Lauren Berlant’s ‘cruel optimism’, and Lisa Blackman’s notion of ‘becoming-stuck’, are all crucial to a theorisation of affect that refuses its equation with pure change and becoming and demands instead that we recognise its ‘ambivalent dualism’ (Hemmings, 2005: 550): its ability to strengthen, as well as undo, a dominant social order. While Massumi does, notably, acknowledge the persistence of corporeal and socio-historical stabilities, he attributes this to an apparently different mechanism: ‘habit’ (Massumi, 2002). Meanwhile, the Deleuzian concept of ‘affect’ is treated as an empirical constant through which such rigid, subject-bound, socially conditioned ‘habits’ can be escaped (ibid: 236). The claim by Deleuzian affect theorists that pre-subjective delirium and fluidity are ‘with us’, in the virtual, actualised through mere ‘experimentation’, then, implies a world in which the territorialising dimensions of history, social identity, institutionalisation, and ideology are avertable—as if it were

possible, in Grossberg's words, to 'build a politics aimed at undoing the actual and replacing it with the virtual' (Grossberg, 2014: 18). My ethnography suggests otherwise.

In making this argument, it is not, however, my intention to suggest that affect is fully determined by the social (see Chapter 7), nor to imply that affect resides purely within the bio-physical body, as Massumi's 'habit' does, immune to suggestion and imitation (see Chapters 3 and 6). Such perspectives do not allow for the important question of how we become open to change: how, as I show in this thesis, a person's prior sense of self and sense of 'we' *can* be permanently altered by an affective musical or sonic encounter, sometimes in ways that shift wider social hierarchies and historical trajectories. What I specifically challenge, rather, is the haphazard, unmediated manner in which Deleuzian affect theorists depict such moments of change. In my fieldwork, affectively fuelled difference and transformation certainly did manifest, but not via an autonomous, indeterminate body. Rather, such processes tended to occur in two ways: first, via the creativity and invention associated with habitual musical affects themselves—a finding that immediately undermines Massumi's reduction of 'habit' to fixity and reproduction (Chapter 6); and second, via the way in which musical affective attachments and antagonisms were seen to mutate in surprising, even confounding ways, by virtue of music and sound's bidirectional temporal mediations (Chapter 7). In both tendencies, moments of change and susceptibility did not occur randomly or without a subject but emerged from a multiplicity of intersecting histories and stabilities, including personal histories—an 'assemblage' of mediations (Born, 2012). This importantly nuances the kinds of social and political potentials that are at stake in discussing musical and sonic affect (Chapter 8).

Ethnomusicology and Anthropology in the Affective Turn

Significantly, my findings regarding the workings of musical and sonic affect are supported by ethnographies of affect in ethnomusicology and anthropology. While this work doesn't always engage with contemporary affect theories, it nonetheless proffers an alternative understanding of affect—one that bears more resemblance to Spinoza's *affection*, the empirical 'capture' of affect,

rather than evidencing any manifestation of Deleuze's plane of pre-individual singularity. Moreover, such ethnographic work illustrates that when affect is not assumed to be 'pre-personal' but is simply taken to the field as a concept to be put to work, it is the complex and contradictory relationships between affect, the social, culture, and history that come to the fore. In music-related work, this is evident in Charles Hirschkind's ethnography of cassette sermons and ethical listening practices amongst Muslims in Cairo, which portrays how cassette technologies 'organise the sensorium' in accordance with a moral state, investing the body with particular 'affective-gestural potentialities' (Hirschkind, 2006: 75-6, 79). Sonically incited affect thus emerges as thoroughly intertwined with a particular set of cultural-religious ideologies, and the 'counterpublics' it produces as fragile and unassured: 'the contingent product of the way embodied forms of historical memory have congealed within new social and political spaces as the visceral substrate for a modern Islamic ethics' (ibid: 108). Further examples of the mutual mediation between musical affect and the social can be found in Rosemary Overell's PhD thesis on 'brutal belonging' in Japan and Australia's grindcore scenes, which develops the key ethnographic observation that '[p]ower relations mediate affect', and specifically that 'gender identity... enables or restrains scene-members' ability to experience [such] brutal belonging' (Overell, 2012: 216-7); Martin Stokes's (2010) ethnography of Turkish popular music, which adapts Berlant's (1998) concept of 'cultural intimacy' to delineate the life-affirming potentials and 'intimate' forms of nation and identity that music's affective capacities afford amidst sectarian clashes and state-circumscribed citizenship; and Lila Ellen Gray's ethnographic work on Portuguese *fado*, which draws upon Ahmed (2004)—as I do—to emphasise the affective 'stickiness' of musical genre, which she describes as a 'force field' around which 'affects, histories, life worlds, and social practices coalesce' (Gray, 2013: 9).

In anthropology, similar findings regarding the sociality and historicity of affect are evident. Yael Navaro-Yashin's (2012) ethnography of the affect discharged by a post-war environment is one strong example. Describing the haunted Turkish-backed Northern Cypriot landscape, where houses and fields are 'charged with the traces of other people's lives', she argues for the affective agency of material objects and their saturation in history and politics; but crucially, she also emphasises the

importance of subjectivity—the mediated nature of people’s affective responses to landscapes, based on their inner subjective and social positionalities (ibid: 178, 18). As Danilyn Rutherford puts it, ‘[p]eople arrive in landscapes with subjectivities formed by previous experience. Different humans respond to the non-humans in different ways’ (Rutherford, 2016: 291). Reviewing other important work on affect in cultural anthropology, Rutherford further points out that ethnographies such as Navaro-Yashin’s and William Mazzarella’s (2013) on the state regulation of sentiment in Indian cinema reinforce that ‘[w]e need to think about power to understand affect’, but that ‘we also need to think about affect to understand the nature of power’ (ibid: 290). Attempting to capture affect ethnographically, she argues, both ‘roots embodied experiences in deeper histories, while gesturing towards what these descriptions cannot grasp’, and thus serves as ‘a bellwether for theoretical advances in the field’ (ibid: 289, 286). Finally, Gisa Weszkalnys’s ethnography of oil speculation in São Tomé and Príncipe highlights how confusion, doubt, and suspicion circulate among Santomeans ‘not as autonomous forces but in ways shaped by institutional practices, official discourse, NGO campaigns, and incessant polemics’ (Weszkalnys, 2016: 136). The ‘cruel optimism’ of an oil economy that paralyses people with a ‘doubtful hope’ indicates, she argues, a different kind of ‘temporal affect’ to the impulsive shock and wonder that affect theorists are fond of fetishising—one that repels, rather than boosts, ‘generativity and productiveness’ (ibid: 133, 138).

In bringing to the fore the intertwinement of affect with subjectivity, the social, culture, and history, these ethnographies—together with my own—enable theoretical developments beyond those pioneered by new affect theorists. Making sense of these theoretical developments and articulating them in ways that might fuel further conceptual development is one of the core aims of this thesis. Of these ethnographic studies, however, none are particularly transparent or innovative with regard to the methods used to research affect ethnographically. This is a significant limitation, given the challenges associated with capturing affect empirically. How, for example, can something as elusive and ephemeral as affect be qualified? How does one know it is ‘there’? How might one go about naming, dissecting, and representing experiences that are felt, sensed, and only half-known,

and what evaporates or gets lost in the process? How does affect manifest audibly, visually, gesturally, or tactilely, and what non-discursive forms of representation (maps, photographs, diagrams) are made available by such manifestations?

Of the ethnographic work cited, Navaro-Yashin productively uses auto-ethnography alongside interviews with Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot families in order to get closer to the affective geographies she seeks to describe. Adopting ‘sensing’ as a method to conceptualise her surroundings, while also asking her informants to name the feelings their environment inflicted upon them, she displays a sensitivity towards what Rutherford (2016: 289) refers to as ‘affect and “affect”’: the affects felt by the researcher who engages with the materiality of the ethnographic field, and the affects experienced by the participants and informants being researched. Auto-ethnography has numerous benefits for researching affect, particularly with regard to detecting changes in the physiology of the body in conjunction with questions of subjectivity, social identity, and history. Yet, it is also limited to the experiences of the individual researcher. This, in turn, raises the question of whether Navaro-Yashin is really able to capture the currents of affect experienced by Northern Cypriots and others besides from herself merely through interview and talking. Some, such as Kathleen Stewart (2007), have attempted to overcome the limits of auto-ethnography by adopting creative writing techniques that seek to inspire empathy and affective recognition in the reader. Presenting her work as a series of evocative vignettes written in the third person, Stewart describes her method as generating a ‘contact zone for analysis’ that ‘slows the quick jump to representational thinking’ and offers instead an ‘idiosyncratic map’ of shared connections, attachments, and intimacies (Stewart, 2007: 2-3). While her work makes for wonderfully rich reading, it is misleading as an auto-ethnography, with the ‘she’ of the narrative implying a necessary commonality or ‘shared-ness’ of experience, rather than an attunement to the potential differentiation of affective experience.

Most innovative and interesting, for my purposes, is Overell’s approach to researching ‘brutal belonging’ in grindcore music. Drawing upon the methods of non-representational theorists, she

adopts a technique of ‘participant-sensing’, which involves capturing ‘on-the-spot’ experiences of grindcore scene members at gigs with a digital recorder, as well as supplying participants with their own digital recorders through which to spontaneously log their thoughts and feelings (Overell, 2012: 90-4; Wood et al., 2007). While still a discursive method of researching affect, these ‘audio-diaries’ help to ‘close the gap a little between the affective musical moment and the clinical ethnographic interview’ (ibid: 90). In the next and final section of this chapter, I discuss the methods I adopted to undertake my own research.

Methods

Ethnomusicology at Home

Given the challenges of researching affect ethnographically, a key priority when beginning fieldwork was to devise rigorous working methods and strategies of approach. Before doing this, however, I had to consider my position within the field. Having grown up in London and lived there for most of my life, the city is very much my home. I have also been an active, if intermittent, participant in two of my field sites—classical music and electronic/dance music—since at least 2006. In many ways, then, I am a ‘cultural insider’: part of a wider movement of scholars undertaking what has been termed ‘ethnomusicology at home’ (Nooshin, 2011: 285). The turn towards the ‘familiar and the similar, not just the exotic and different’, as Stokes (2008: 209) puts it, has some important as well as challenging disciplinary implications. For Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2001), ‘insider ethnography’ is a crucial step towards ethnomusicology’s de-colonisation. Meanwhile, turning the methods and epistemological commitments of ethnomusicology to musics that have traditionally been the subject matter of musicology, popular music studies, and sound studies engenders the potential for new kinds of relational analysis and cross-disciplinary comparison (Born, 2010d; Nooshin, 2011). On a practical level, ‘insiderism’ also brought advantages. Access to three of my field sites was largely unproblematic, the trust of my participants in these sites was easily gained, and I wasn’t slowed by language-learning and other necessary

processes of integration. While ‘closeness’ to my field sites was something of which I had to be acutely aware, particularly in terms of the prior knowledge I brought to the field and the need to ‘de-naturalise’ taken-for-granted familiarities and vocabularies, this continual reflexivity and sensitivity to distortion did not strike me as being different to that required of an ethnographer working in an entirely unfamiliar context. As Strathern noted in 1991: ‘No more or no less than the people he or she studies can the ethnographer occupy a position outside his or her own productions’ (Strathern, 1991: 7). Far from being a ‘neutral vector’, the ethnographer is, in short, an integral part of the research, whether entering the field as an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’. Awareness and negotiation of this is thus a constant and fundamental requirement.

More challenging were the different degrees of familiarity I encountered across my field sites. Indeed, my participation in dub reggae bore much more similarity to that of an ‘outsider’, particularly when attending events at Caribbean cultural centres in neighbourhoods that I had never been to, where I was sometimes the only white person and/or the only woman. Likewise, across the vast range of events taking place under the guise of electronic/dance music, some were easily accessible—for instance, white middle-class house and techno nights taking place at venues such as Village Underground and Corsica Studios—while at others, particularly UK House and R&B/hip-hop nights, which drew more heavily working-class, racially mixed, and younger crowds, my ‘outsider’ status was immediately detected. A host of examples spring to mind: a young working-class man at Fire nightclub in Vauxhall asking me if I was ‘undercover’ (police); the bouncer at Egg in King’s Cross demanding that every crowd member exiting the venue enter their pins into their phones as proof that they weren’t stolen, and then seeing me, and waving me through with a sweet-spoken, ‘I know you’re not a thief, baby’; and the photographer at Warehouse LDN in Enfield unabashedly dodging my attempts to be photographed for the nightclub website, in spite of photographing every other crowd member in the room—I assume because I was not exuding quite the right image.

What was key throughout fieldwork, then, was retaining an awareness of my proximity and easy assimilation into certain field sites, and my distance and estrangement from others, and ensuring

that my integration into each was, in the end, roughly equivalent. This required both familiarising and de-familiarising techniques. In my classical music fieldwork, for example, I sought to ‘get outside’ of my own social and musical circles by not relying on friends and friends of friends for access, but instead seeking out interactions with strangers across multiple divisions of labour (musicians, promoters, audience members, venue owners). Conversely, in dub reggae and other dance music spheres, I felt the need to do extra ‘legwork’ in order to achieve a comparable level of familiarity to my other field sites, and therefore spent considerable time ‘hanging out’ in local areas, talking to people I met in Caribbean bakeries, Nigerian hair salons, Internet cafés, and local libraries, and scouring the Internet and (pirate) radio waves for information about unfamiliar events and venues. My experience as a fieldworker thus largely mirrored George Marcus’s account of the multi-sited ethnographer, who, in moving between ‘public and private spheres of activity, from official to subaltern contexts’, is constantly required to renegotiate and recalibrate their identity and positioning in terms of their ‘shifting affinities for, affiliations with, as well as alienations from, those with whom he or she interacts at different sites’ (Marcus, 1995: 112-3).

In the Field

My primary fieldwork entailed attending and documenting relevant classical music concerts, club nights, and reggae dances, and tracking a variety of public sound installations. I would either attend events alone, with a friend, or, on a few occasions, with a small ‘team’ of co-researchers (more below). The time between events was largely spent building trusting relations with audience members I’d met at events, as well as with promoters, producers, venue owners, and sound engineers; soliciting and conducting over 40 semi-structured interviews; fleshing out field notes and transcribing interviews; ‘hanging out’ in record shops, record production houses, venues, cafés, and other neighbourhood spaces; and ‘following’ the activity of particular musical initiatives on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. As I became more immersed in my field sites, I also started to volunteer at some of the regular events. For example, I frequently helped set up Lucky Cloud parties, worked on the door, and aided in their search for new venues, all of which helped me to forge close relationships with those involved in the scene, as well as allowing me to

alter my ethnographic perspective between audience member, bar/door worker, and organiser. Finally, I gained experience running and promoting my own club nights—I did this once during and twice after fieldwork—DJing in public venues (as opposed to my bedroom!), and, with the help of friends and acquaintances, learning about the technical workings of electronically produced music and sound art, and the engineering science of reggae-based sound systems. These practical musical skills are particularly important to Chapter 5.

Methodologically, I mobilised a number of standard ethnographic procedures, such as closely observing the social dynamics of my field sites—logging the movements and gestures of my participants, their levels of engagement with the music and each other, the demographic make-up of the crowd, and so on—before triangulating this observational work with informal discussion and interview. Specifically, I was interested in comparing my own perceptions of a musical event with my participants’ accounts of being part of such an event—a strategy that revealed disparities and divergences as well as convergences (Chapter 4). In spite of the effectiveness of this, however, I still faced three major challenges in undertaking my fieldwork. The first was the question of how to research musical and sonic affect in a way that didn’t simply fall back on discursive methods, as well as, relatedly, how to understand the mercury-like quality of a vibe, aura, or atmosphere as it spreads and stutters through a musical collectivity. The second challenge was how to conduct ethnographic crowd research, sometimes in situations where audience numbers were in the thousands, or where my hopes of talking to more than eight or nine people during the course of an event were dashed by the rules and taboos of the genre. And the third challenge was how to approach the study of music and sound art in a city as vast and as rapidly changing as London. How, in other words, could I even scratch the surface of this musically saturated, densely populated, monstrously complex city, barely recognisable from one year to the next in its high streets, backstreets, nightclubs and skylines? This was, in part, a question of ‘casting my net’ appropriately, sensing my cut off points, and knowing my limits; but it also demanded that I deploy inventive methods that had the capacity to do justice to what I call ‘musical urban sprawl’. In response to these methodological challenges, I developed a toolbox of audio-visual, participant-based, and

collaborative methods, inspired by a range of scholars and disciplines, which I mobilised alongside more conventional ethnographic techniques. Below, I unpack this toolbox in more detail.

Live Methods

A key source of inspiration in thinking about how to research affect was Les Back and Nirmal Puwar's (2013) *Live Methods*. Back and Puwar argue that digital technologies have transformed our ways of apprehending and analysing the social world, creating space for an expanded, 'sensuous' sociology. With the smartphone having largely eclipsed the notebook as the ethnographer's storage device, digital methods such as photography, video, and audio recording—all of which are embedded in a smartphone—offer new tools for 'real-time' or 'live' investigation and 'inter-corporeal understanding' (Back & Puwar, 2013: 7). By making use of such tools, they suggest, we might get closer to 'the fleeting, distributed, multiple, [and] sensory... aspects of sociality' through research techniques that are mobile and operate from 'multiple vantage points' (ibid: 28). Taking my cue, I attempted to put a number of 'live methods' into practice during fieldwork. Among the most fruitful was a 'think-out-loud' technique that I adapted from DeNora (2000). This method involved inviting audience members at different musical and sonic events to literally 'think-out-loud' into a recording device—usually my iPhone—about their real-time social and embodied experiences. Part of the appeal of this method was that it attributed a certain agency to my participants, allowing them to make spontaneous utterances without me intervening or taking notes. But these audio snapshots of dancefloors and concert spaces also proved to be an invaluable way of documenting the minutiae of urban musical and sonic experience. At club nights, for example, participants would use 'think-out-loud' to express disgust at the pungent bodily smells that had suddenly interrupted their musical pleasure; point out the bunches of keys that had been dropped at their feet, having served their purpose as a not-so-subtle tool with which to inhale drugs mid-dance; and lament the tendency for intense crowdedness to breed sexual harassment. In conjunction with my own observations of individual-collective relations, as well as informal dialogue with crowd members, this method thus helped me to build a rich sensory-affective picture of music, sound, and sociality in their live forms.

Encouraged by the success of ‘think-out-loud’, I also pursued the idea of mobilising a ‘team-based auto-ethnography’. Conducted once again through audio-recorded voice memos, I asked a group or ‘team’ of three or four participants to become ‘co-researchers’ by accompanying me to a particular event, recording their observations and experiences into their phones, and forwarding them to me at the end of the night. Though this method proved difficult to co-ordinate, and I only succeeded in making it work a handful of times, the data it generated was illuminating, offering glimpses into the potentials that digital technologies harness for transforming ethnographic crowd research. Indeed, such a technique was an effective way of ‘re-imagining [participant] observation’, producing what Back and Puwar call a ‘pluralization of observers’ (Back & Puwar, 2013: 7): a group of individuals who document the same event from multiple vantage points, as different social-subjective nodes in a complex crowd or public. More than this, what both the ‘team-based’ and ‘think-out-loud’ methods drew attention to was how the affective and the sensory were almost always the first points of reflection for participants in documenting their sonic experiences. This often worked as a complement to my own text-based field notes, which sometimes centred more on larger-scale observations, such as audience demographics, entry fees and dress codes, spatial and material properties, venue capacity, and levels of policing. As such, I was able to amass data that moved constantly between music and sound’s microsocialities and macro-social conditions and qualities.

A final ‘live method’ that I put to use was field recording. Initially unsure what the recorded sounds of a concert hall or reggae dance would disclose about the affectivity of an event that text and writing couldn’t, I was often amazed, listening back to such recordings at home, at the number of small, seemingly insignificant moments and affective transitions that my iPhone had managed to capture through sound. One could hear, in the form of shouts and cheers, for example, the jubilant collectivising energy that erupts across a dancefloor when a well-loved tune drops; the mediation of sounds and vibrations through the physical materials and textural surfaces of a spatial environment; the distortion on the recording and the levels of shouting that pulsate into audibility between bass kicks, often indicating a deliberate cranking up of the volume by venues to encourage

people to ‘drink more, talk less’, as one sound engineer told me; and the moment when the selector started the record at the wrong speed by accident, and everyone had a good laugh. These kinds of audibility acted as an alternative or additive way of knowing and understanding the urban social world and its musical and sonic environments, often doing justice to the impassioned and textured qualities of the affective moments that I witnessed in ways that writing and speaking simply did not.

‘Draw Your Musical London’

Regarding the challenges of urban ethnography, I took particular inspiration from urban sociologist Emma Jackson (2012), who, in her work on contemporary spaces of homelessness, invites her participants to produce mental maps of the city under the instruction, ‘Draw Your London’. Through their creativity and willingness, Jackson is able to chart the trajectories of young homeless people in London: their routes through particular neighbourhoods, their attachment to specific urban places, and the forms of violence and governance they encounter. Moreover, by virtue of the composite maps, Jackson is able to identify similarities and differences between her participants—mutual fears, danger zones, shared spaces of loss, belonging, and opportunity (Jackson, 2012). Repurposing this method, I experimented with asking my interviewees to ‘Draw Your Musical London’, inviting them to create a musical mind map of the city that showed the places, people, and neighbourhoods that were of musical significance to them. While most expressed great enthusiasm, and willingly agreed, I wasn’t entirely surprised that, in the end, only nine maps came back to me, given the time-consuming nature of the task. Nonetheless, among those who returned their maps, rich discussion ensued with regard to why certain musics, sites, and ‘selves’ had been included or excluded, and I subsequently went on to work intensively with three of these participants, inviting them to attend specific musical events with me, and asking them to reflect upon their experiences through informal discussion and audio memo. This was with a view to enhancing my understanding of how people become implicated in wider socio-spatial, affective, and musical currents, whilst remaining disconnected from, and unable to ‘make sense’ of, others (Chapter 3).

An important finding to arise from the ‘musical mapping’ project was how participants perceived themselves to be spatially, affectively, and musically ‘distributed’ (Kassabian, 2013a). Brief descriptions scribbled on the maps often relayed a deep sense of attachment and nostalgia to multiple spaces and sounds, many of which were placed at a temporal as well as spatial distance from each other. One participant, for example, included a colour-coded ‘Key’ to delineate different decades of musical life (‘70s, ‘80s, ‘90s...), while another mourned the loss of bygone life-changing nights experienced in his twenties. In addition to this palimpsestic quality, what the maps also conveyed was a strong sense of the socio-musical circles through which people deemed themselves to move, which in turn rendered perceptible the collective dimensions of selfhood—the inseparability of a body or a subject from its milieu (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999). Of particular interest, here, was how participants’ cartographic portrayals of themselves sometimes differed from, or contradicted, what they told me in interview. For instance, there were times when participants would omit certain musical ‘selves’ from their maps, wanting perhaps to be perceived in a certain way, only for these ‘hidden’ musical identities to surface in discussion at a later date. Linked to this, in turn, was the question of people’s musical-geographic ‘radiuses’ and degrees of urban mobility, often detectable from the size of their genre maps and the breadth of the spaces that were accessible to them. Indeed, studying the maps in conjunction with interviews and observation became an important part of analysing the diversity, eclecticism, and scale of people’s musical affiliations and participatory horizons—their ‘omnivorousness’ (Peterson & Kern, 1996)—which I often found to be heavily mediated by class, race, gender, sexuality, and age. In this sense, the maps revealed patterns and disconnections between the private musical tastes and listening habits of particular individuals, and the degree to which those individuals were, or were not, able to traverse public musical-spatial boundaries and urban thresholds (see Chapter 8).

While these various experimental methods weren’t always successful, I believe they have the potential to enhance our ways of knowing and understanding cities and their complex music and sound cultures, not least by offering ways of overcoming the practical challenges of qualitative crowd research and generating new techniques for exploring the sonic texture of urban nightscapes

and the spatial distribution of sonic 'selves'. Moreover, working with critical forms of cartography and field recording that are participant- as well as researcher-based seems to go some way towards allowing the researcher to experience the world beyond their own mind.

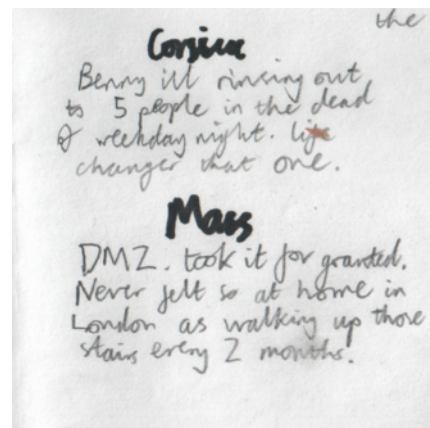
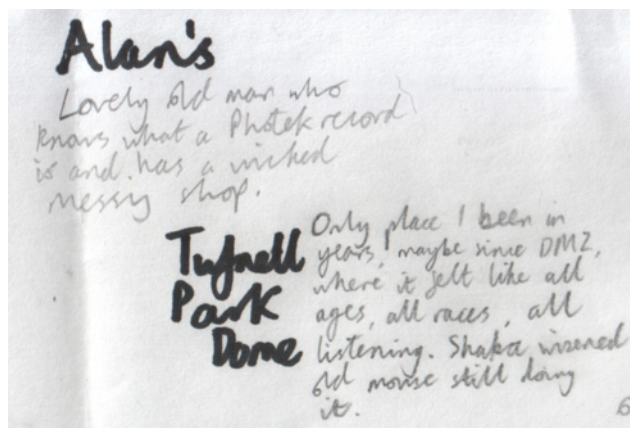
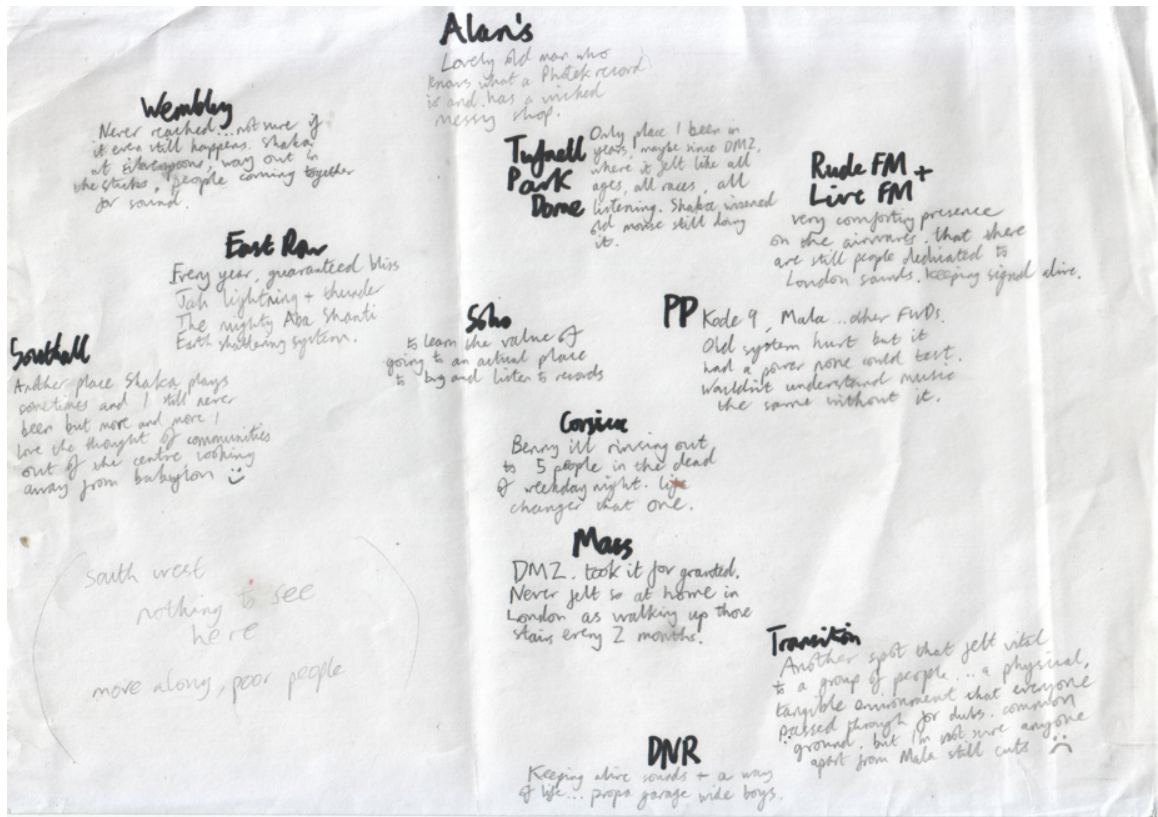


Figure 1: Chris's 'musical London' map.

Problems and Ethics

On a final note, it is important to flag up some of the problems I encountered that could not always be overcome. One was the non-transferability of certain methods across different field sites. For instance, while ‘think-out-loud’ worked particularly well across the electronic/dance music spectrum, it simply wasn’t feasible during a classical concert. This may, indeed, be a further reason for the disproportion of field sites across chapters, and why certain affective processes were seemingly captured better across some field sites than others. A second issue related to the problematics of my presence in certain situations. This was most troubling in the dub reggae scene, where, in the initial stages of fieldwork, approaching people to ask them questions as one of the only women and/or white people in the room was first seen as suspicious, and later as a sexual advance. During one particularly uncomfortable moment, I had to cut contact with a participant who continued to see my texts as a sexual proposition, in spite of explaining several times that I was a researcher. This specific incident raised questions both about my presumed power as an ethnographic researcher, and my relative lack of it, as a gendered subject in a heavily male-dominated musical environment, and it was after this point that I decided to alter my research strategies. Rather than approaching co-crowd members cold at events, I began using Facebook to contact those running the sound systems in advance, explaining who I was, what I was researching, and what I was hoping to find out. This was almost always met with enthusiasm and friendliness: ‘come say hello’, ‘glad you have the passion to research this music’, and so on. It also seemed to dispel any potential ambiguity as to my presence at events. As fieldwork progressed, I was able to form close links with a major dub label, and thereafter, with numerous key players on the scene.

Regarding the ethical considerations of my fieldwork, the majority of my participants appear under pseudonyms for the protection of their privacy. No individual names or identifying features are disclosed, except where this has been consented to by participants—for example, in the case of DJs, sound artists, and other public figures, whose naming is central to the research. When inviting participants to be interviewed, I provided information sheets and obtained their informed consent.

I now turn to Chapter 3, the first of my ethnographic chapters, where I begin interpreting, analysing, and theorising the workings and socio-political potentials of musical and sonic affect. Each chapter from hereon will make a particular theoretical contribution towards reimagining the concept of affect for a musical and sonic politics, culminating in a summary of these conceptual and epistemological insights in Chapter 9, the Conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter 3

‘Stickiness’: Music, Affect, and Social Mediation

‘Affects do not only draw us together, whatever our intentions; they also force us apart, or signal the lack of any real intersubjective connection’

Clare Hemmings (2012: 152)

‘Shared feelings are at stake, and seem to surround us, like a thickness in the air, or an atmosphere. But these feelings not only heighten tension, they are also in tension’

Sara Ahmed (2004: 10)

Introduction

When I entered the field in September 2013, I quickly realised the fragility and opacity surrounding this enigmatic thing ‘affect’: how untouchable and indescribable a ‘vibe’ was, yet how instantly people were able to articulate its absence; how forcefully an elated bodily state would seem to radiate out of a person, but how easily the contagion was shattered by a fleeting sensation, a smell, the sweat or sway of another body; the flash of a second it took for a person to be transplanted from ‘inside the music’, lost in a ‘dark, beautiful world’, in the words of one participant, to a state of ‘looking in from outside’. How can or should one make sense of a musical or sonic situation that endows one person with the sensation of ‘breathing, flying, like bombing down a motorway’, while corporeally suffocating another, ‘as if shouting at [them]’? Why might a particular musical environment be digestible for one crowd member, while literally sick making for another? What do people mean when they describe a dance floor as ‘loose’, ‘liquid’ or ‘hard work’?¹⁰

Seeking to make sense of these issues, this chapter offers a preliminary analysis of how people experience music and sound at an affective, bodily level. Specifically, I illuminate the multiple

¹⁰ All quotations in this paragraph are taken from exchanges with my participants.

processes and mechanisms that facilitate the transmission of musical and sonic affect, as well as focusing on the forms of embodied resistance and corporeal obstinacy that interfere with and interrupt it. Together with Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter is particularly concerned with affect's social and temporal mediations, illustrating how musical and sonic affect can become associated with fixity, social reproduction, and resistance to change. Meanwhile, the question of how affect is implicated in music and sound's ability to have emergent social and political effects—to put existing social orders into question—is addressed in Chapters 6-8.

Theoretical and Ethnographic Overview: Born, Lefebvre, Tarde

In Chapter 2, I gestured towards the beginnings of a new, empirically derived theory of musical and sonic affect. I noted that, when taken to the field as a concept to be put to work, affect emerges not as a 'pre-personal' force that modulates a body in indeterminate ways, but as a mechanism closely intertwined with personal history, social difference, culture, and history. It is thus, as I show throughout this thesis, a mechanism capable of cementing social relations of difference, as much as transcending or mutating them (Berlant, 1997; Hemmings, 2005). An important feature of this argument is its anti-dualism. Rather than endorsing a split between 'habit' and 'affect', as Massumi (2002) does, where corporeal experiences of fixity are consigned to the realm of automatism and socially conditioned habit, while experiences of 'newness' and change are seen to exemplify a body's potential to exceed these habitual limitations via 'pre-personal' affect, my argument is that affect is itself an *ambivalent mechanism* that encompasses both reproductive and emergent potentials. Further, I contend that all musical and sonic affective experiences—whether they produce fixing, stabilising effects, or moments of great volatility and uncertainty—are oriented by a multiplicity of interfering histories (Born, 2011, 2012; cf. Tarde, 1890). Shifts in atmosphere, though they may feel random and disconnected, do not, in short, radiate out of 'chance-ridden creation' or the 'objective indeterminacy of the virtual' (Massumi, 1992: 53-4), but rather emerge from the unexpected collision of personal, social, musical, and other histories—in Tardean terms, from 'the unanticipated conjunction of imitative currents' (Barry & Thrift, 2007: 517). This

importantly indicates that even where affect is confounding and deviant in its effects, it still requires a subject with a personal history and psyche to register (see Chapter 7).

Conceptualising affect in this way requires drawing centrally upon Born's (2011, 2012) theory of social mediation. Through Born's four planes, it becomes possible to analyse the complex ties between musical affect, the social, and the historical, while also realising their *irreducibility*. This stance, in turn, resonates with Henri Lefebvre's (1970) 'tripartite' dialectic and Gabriel Tarde's (1890) sociology of associations, both of which share with Born a commitment to the idea of 'mutual mediation': the notion that different elements of an assemblage (historical, affective, social, 'lived', spatial, global) enter into mutually catalysing but non-negating relations with each other. In this way, affect can be seen as oriented by higher orders of social, historical, economic, and spatial mediation; but at the same time, from the midst of these mediating processes, so it can also refract and inflect such orders. Processes of 'becoming' are thus neither entirely indeterminate nor entirely pre-determined, but constitute 'possibilities, uncertainties, opportunities and probabilities' (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 66). It is these anti-structural theories of mediation that I return to at the end of the thesis to further elucidate my ethnographic findings on music, sound, and affect. All stand in contrast to contemporary affect theories: on the one hand, moving beyond the reification of movement advocated by Deleuzians such as Massumi (2002, 2015), while on the other hand, diverging from theories of affect developed within feminist and critical race studies, which occasionally border on social or biological determinism (Brah, 1999; Brennan, 2004).

The ethnography in this chapter draws upon three of my field sites—dub reggae, electronic/dance music, and sound installation art. Using a selection of case studies, I trace the affective experiences, reflections, and afterthoughts of individuals moving within and between these musical and sonic collectivities. In particular, I focus on the different levels of ease with which participants were able to somatically adjust or attune to specific kinds of sonic social space and offer interpretation as to why certain musical and sonic spaces made more sense to them than others. I argue that this ethnographic material points towards the ways in which musical affective attachments can 'stick'

(Ahmed, 2004) for long periods of time, becoming socio-corporeally ingrained and resistant to change, working to entrench wider social divisions and differences. Accordingly, an understanding of musical and sonic affect's entwinement with the social and historical is essential.

'Stickiness', or, Affect as Fixity

In her book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed explores how objects, people, sounds, and places can become 'sticky', which is to say, 'saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension' (Ahmed, 2004: 11). This 'stickiness', she writes, is 'an effect of surfacing... *an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs*' (ibid: 90, emphasis original). If a person feels that they have become 'stuck', then, this is often because they have become stuck *to something else*, or because something 'sticky' has impressed upon them in the past and continues to travel with them in the present. Ahmed's concept of 'stickiness' arises in part as a response to Deleuzian affect theories, which assume that 'there is something called affect that stands apart or has autonomy' (Ahmed, 2010: 30). For Ahmed, one of the most damaging implications of theorising affect as 'autonomous' is the demands it places on us to 'be affirmative', as if the ensnaring forms of historical injustice that continue to penetrate social reality could all of a sudden be made to disappear (ibid: 50). Indeed, for Ahmed, those who endorse such a position seem to be dismissing histories of injustice as melancholic—as that which needs to be 'let go' of. Yet, as Ahmed writes, '[t]hese histories have not gone: we would be letting go of that which persists in the present' (ibid). 'Stickiness', then, is a way of understanding things that endure, rather than things that change. It attempts to account for 'how we become invested in social norms' that may keep us attached to the very conditions of our subordination (Ahmed, 2004: 12; Berlant, 1997). It is an affect-oriented approach to the question: 'Why is social transformation so difficult to achieve?' (ibid). And it begins from the premise that our affective relationships with objects and others are shaped, even before we encounter them, by long histories of articulation—aesthetic histories, histories of the subject, cultural histories, historical memories; by what is 'already attributed as being good or bad' or 'a higher good' (Ahmed, 2010: 35). 'Stickiness', then, is about bodily

orientations: movements of ‘towardness’ and ‘awayness’ in relation to those things we perceive to be desirable or undesirable, and through which surfaces and boundaries are enacted and sustained (Ahmed, 2004: 8-10).

Ahmed’s concept of ‘stickiness’ bears certain similarities to Bourdieu’s (1984) work on music’s ability to embody social differences over time, leading to ‘distinctions’, in the form of repulsions and attractions. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, Bourdieu’s work has played a major role in sociologies of musical taste that seek to understand the antagonistic differentiations that persist within the musical field, where tastes are constituted by intense ‘*dislikes* and avoidances alongside likes and practices’ (Savage & Gayo, 2011: 341; see Bennett et al., 2009). Where I see Ahmed’s work as a particularly valuable development of this musical literature is in its specific focus on the role of *affect* in such differentiating or ‘orientating’ processes. Her interest is in how and why ‘different “figures” get stuck together’ in the first place, what it is that keeps them ‘stuck’, and whether the particular form of ‘sticking’ takes shape as a ‘holding together’ or a ‘blockage’, as a source of survival or an obstruction (Ahmed, 2004: 13, 91). In what follows, I take inspiration from Ahmed in drawing upon three case studies from fieldwork that illustrate how people can become affectively attached or ‘stuck’ to certain kinds of musical and sonic assemblage. In particular, I emphasise how this musical affective ‘stickiness’ cannot simply be averted by actualising a ‘pre-personal’ affective register, nor cast away by what Anna Gibbs calls ‘the immediacy of what passes between bodies’ (Gibbs, 2010: 198, 193). Rather, such somatic musical and sonic habits manifest as stubborn, defiant, and corporeally ingrained, working to *affirm* or *entrench* pre-existing social identities and ideologies. This chapter, then, is about being affected by music and sound in ways that fix, ‘stick’, and stop a person from attuning to something in the way that they consciously desire (Ahmed, 2004: 91).

As outlined in Chapter 2, one of my experimental methods for the ‘musical mapping’ project involved inviting participants to attend musical events with me—events with which they were unfamiliar or from which they felt affectively and socially disconnected. In so doing, the aim was to test these individuals’ affective thresholds: their ability to ‘make sense’ of sonic-social spheres that were not their own. In one prominent case, I invited Jan—a 38-year-old white European male, whose musical taste map consisted of techno, acid house, and other electronic/dance music events—to attend a reggae sound system dance with me. I’d first met Jan through a friend, and he’d become interested in my research upon discovering that it involved going out to techno and other music nights. Techno occupied an extremely poignant place in his life, having provided the sound track to his teenage years in the early 1990s, and he described it as the first music that ever ‘hit’ or ‘moved’ him. Although he’d come to like other kinds of music in his adult life, such as drum ‘n’ bass, improvisation, and hip-hop, he reiterated that he’d never felt the same sense of belonging, adrenaline, and excitement as he’d experienced with techno. ‘Nothing will ever be quite as strong as that again’, he told me.

Jan’s response to being invited to a dub reggae event was one of genuine interest and openness. Although, for him, dub reggae constituted totally unfamiliar territory, he held no prior disdain for the music, and expressed a keenness to experience musical difference. The reggae dance I took him to was Jah Shaka’s August 2014 Carnival Special at the Dome in Tufnell Park. Active from the mid-1970s, Jah Shaka runs one of the oldest UK-based sound systems and is referred to by many as the ‘father’ or ‘King’ of dub. He also has a considerably mixed following, particularly in terms of gender, race, and class, traceable to the early 1990s when Culture Promotions took over his management and started promoting to students (see also Chapter 8). This is in contrast to other reggae events that I conducted fieldwork on, which were predominantly black, male, and working class.

At Jah Shaka dances, and at dub reggae events generally, emphasis is placed not on musical flow and continuity, but on rupture: what Michael Veal describes as ‘an aesthetic of surprise and suspense, collapse and incompletion’ (Veal, 2007: 77). This is achieved through an array of historically developed musical techniques, such as using reverb and delay devices to set rhythmic echoes in disjunction with the basic ‘riddim’ (drums and bass), thereby vehemently decentring the groove; or through the strategy of ‘disruption’, where, in contrast to the seamless aesthetic of beat matching typically employed by house and techno DJs, the selector interrupts the music as violently and abruptly as possible in order to return to the beginning of the track. Other features of a typical dub dance include the bass-driven audio or ‘sonic dominance’ (Henriques, 2003), which largely precludes socialising through talking; the introverted, meditative vibe, often characterised by slow marching and ‘skanking’;¹¹ and the ubiquity of mild psychoactive substances such as marijuana.

Jan and I arrived at the Dome at around 11pm. The vibe was energetic, fuelled by a pre-Carnival excitement, and each time Jah Shaka ‘disrupted’ a record, scattered portions of the crowd would leap into the air in an outburst of energy, shouting ‘YES SHAKA!’ These explosive responses were fairly typical and tend to be experienced by regulars as periodic moments of suspended elation. One of my interlocutors, Andrew—a black British Londoner who I met at a dance in Tottenham, but who was also present at this particular Shaka session—described the experience of ‘disruption’ as ‘...the *shock*, you know, that comes after being fixated’, and revealed that Shaka’s June session of that year was ‘the best Shaka [he’d] ever been to in [his] life’, owing to its ‘spot on’ negotiations between induction into a trance-like state, and radical interruption. Notably, the thrill experienced in the transition between transfixion and ‘shock’ is an historical affective staple of reggae dances. As Veal notes, ‘extreme audience responses’ such as the exhilarated firing of guns at the ceiling were commonplace during Jamaican dances of the roots era (c. 1970-85), particularly following the ‘disruption’ of an insistently repeating rhythm (Veal, 2007: 201). For those invested in dub reggae,

¹¹ Skanking is a form of dancing associated with Jamaican popular music. It originated in the 1960s when ska music was prevalent in Jamaica. It typically involves a ‘running man’ pose, moving one’s legs in a walking/running motion to the beat with arms bent and in sync with the legs.

then, the experience of ‘disruption’ is, and has historically been documented as, one of heightened excitement and the buzz of disorientation.

For the first couple of hours, Jan attempted to melt into the surrounding vibe. When he wasn’t in the thick of the crowd with me, trying to move in time with the music, he was walking around the room absorbing the sound system, the people, and the extensive merchandise on offer. At around 2am, however, I found him in the outdoor smoking area looking agitated. He admitted that he was struggling to ‘get into it’ and said that there were aspects of the dance he simply could not take on board. First and foremost, he found the experience of ‘disruption’ intensely jarring. Initially, he had thought that such piercing interruptions to the music were a technical hitch or that the system had blown, but upon realising that they were intentional and periodic, he became irritated, unable to comprehend what could possibly be pleasurable about having the flow of one’s musical experience continually adjourned. To Jan, all that Jah Shaka was doing was ‘turning knobs on his sound desk, randomly deciding it [was] time to stop, switching the power off mid-tune, and then turning the power back on again a few seconds later’. He concluded: ‘What’s difficult about that?’ At least in the cultures of electronic/dance music that he was accustomed to, he reasoned, DJs do something skilful and impressive. A further obstacle for Jan was that no matter how hard he tried, he did not know ‘what to do with [his] body’: the slow 70-90bpm tempos of roots reggae had no place in his musical biography and were felt to be incongruous with the ‘functional’ 120-140bpm musical cultures with which he was affiliated. Finally, he was unable to achieve a sense of communion or collective experience through slow bodily control and transfixion, as other crowd members seemingly could. For Jan, collective musical pleasure was accessed through the movement and uninhibitedness of his body in dialogue with other bodies, not through what he perceived to be a trance-like, anti-social sensibility, where people occupy ‘the same position on the dancefloor for hours and hours’, as he observed.

Jan’s experience illustrates how musical affect is contingent upon the precise ways in which an encultured, historicised subject comes into relation with an encultured, historicised musical ‘event’–

—how music’s affective capacities arise from an assemblage of mediations (Born, 2010a). In this particular case, Jan’s inability to attune to the affective atmosphere around him can be seen as not so much attributable to any pre-existing bias against or disdain for dub reggae as a genre; as Jan had emphasised before the event, he was open to encountering new music, and had even enjoyed reggae music at parties occasionally. Rather, what he found difficult were the specific rituals, technical practices, tempos, and socio-spatial vibes characteristic of the co-present dub reggae dance. In short, the slow-paced, bass-driven aesthetics of sonic rupture and trance-like introspection—so specific to and articulative of the black British historical context (more below)—held no prior place in Jan’s personal history and socio-cultural milieu, and instead were felt to be thoroughly incomprehensible and perplexing. This was particularly the case for Jan—as opposed to my participant Pat who accompanied me to similar events and found it easier to attune (see Chapter 6)—who had only ever participated in dance music cultures that were predominantly white, aesthetically seamless, fast-tempo, and oriented towards the peaking of musical pleasure via continuity and empathy.

Jan’s sense of affective antagonism was not only tied to his personal history and socio-cultural location, however. Social and historical processes of genre formation and the historical trajectory of institutional forms plausibly played a key role too (Born, 2005, 2011; Stirling, 2016b). It is profitable here to consider the pleasurable experiences of my black participant Andrew vis-à-vis the evolution of ‘disruption’ and other abrasive musical techniques in 1970s Jamaican dub—a genre that many black Britons, particularly first and second generation, exhibit a long-standing affective affiliation towards owing to the specificity of British colonial history, the enduring presence of Jamaicans and other Caribbean people in Britain, and the post-war arrival of the reggae sound system in the UK. It is, in short, the ‘shattered soundscapes’ of dub reggae (Veal, 2007), and its multiple hybrid offshoots (dancehall, jungle, grime), rather than the aesthetic seamlessness of black American-originating musics such as disco, house, and techno that have historically characterised

the black British musical experience—a legacy that partially continues today.¹² The ‘whiteness’ of deep house, disco, and techno generally in London supports this; as do the predominantly black crowds aggregated by dub, dancehall, grime, and UK funky nights (see Chapters 6 and 8). Emphasising the importance of history and culture to musical participation, another black interlocutor, Curtis, who was from Chingford and in his late 40s noted:

I listen to all sorts... house, techno, even Classic FM! But when it comes to going out, it has to be conscious music. It has to be relevant to my history. That’s why I come here [to dub reggae events] (Curtis, July 2014).

In contrast to Jan, who was part of the white European house-techno continuum, Andrew and Curtis were deeply invested in a musical-historical culture that privileged aesthetic ‘disruption’ and disorientation, and this was very much related to their black Britishness. By the same token, it is revealing to consider the meditative atmospheres of dub reggae dances today, which first evolved during the genre’s inception in Britain in the 1970s—an era of extreme racism and hostility (CCCS, 1982). Again, it is for specific historical reasons that black British empowerment and affective solidarity have been achieved, via dub reggae, through a musical sociality of disciplined, ‘conscious’ resistance and controlled bodily gesture, rather than one rooted in hedonistic abandon, blatant illegality, and hallucinogenics, as the largely white hardcore techno movement that Jan grew up around was (Bradley, 2013: 315; Saldanha, 2007). Seen in this way, Jan’s struggle to ‘tune in’ to the predominantly black, introspective, fragmentary sonic space of reggae emerges as not only tied to his personal history and musical biography, but also, in complex ways, to his ‘whiteness’, his Eurocentrism, and his age—specifically, the fact that he grew up at a time when black musical spaces were more inaccessible to white people than they are now. As Jan himself reflected, gesturing at the musical sociality surrounding us at Jah Shaka, ‘I’m too blond for this... I’m too white’.

¹² As Bradley writes of 1970s London, ‘roots reggae was a particularly relevant expression of blackness. Although US soul was an equally eloquent voice of protest, it wasn’t from the Caribbean... [C]ompared to a Jah Shaka sound-system dance... there was never going to be anything righteous about a discotheque’ (Bradley, 2000: 430-1).

Jan's perception of his 'whiteness' as a contributing factor to his inability to become initiated into the affectivity of dub reggae is particularly interesting. Indeed, while Jah Shaka dances are very much open to white audiences today, the white proportion of the crowd—many of whom are young and upper middle class—continue to struggle somatically with certain aspects of the sound, such as volume and extreme bass weight. This was evident in fieldwork from the ways in which, on multiple occasions, young, white, earplug-wearing crowd members flocked to the centre of the dance to distance themselves from the 'overpowering' level of sound emitted by the speaker stacks ringing the room. Meanwhile older, black audience members, including Andrew and Curtis who had 'sneaked out' to dances since they were kids in the 1970s, stood at the stacks, unflinching. Excerpts from my field notes indicate the recurrence of this:

April 2014, Jah Shaka @ The Dome, Tufnell Park

I was standing near one of the stacks when Tommy [one of my white, male participants] found me... He said he was going to the centre because he couldn't handle standing in front of the 'fucking loud' speaker. I followed him. He was with a bunch of university mates—all white and upper middle class [...].

April 2014, University of Dub @ Scala, King's Cross

[T]he actual dance floor was almost totally white, while most of the black people stood around the edges on the balconies, many of them just listening in stationary poses. [The constellation] immediately reminded me of [another reggae fieldwork event] Sound System Sound-Off.

June 2014, Sound System Sound-Off @ The Golden Palace, Edmonton

The sound was ridiculously powerful—at times, uncomfortably so... [But] none of the [black] crowd members were bothered, and none had earplugs. Andrew just laughed when I asked him if the sound levels bothered him! By contrast, Cora [a white, female participant, who had accompanied me to the event] repeatedly told me she was finding the bass 'tough' and 'hard work' and said that even if she had her weed on her, she wouldn't be able to smoke it—and definitely couldn't drink much either—without feeling sick.

In a comparable way to Jan's intolerance for rhythmic 'disruption', this patterned black-white demarcation of bodies in reggae crowds seemed to make visible deeply embedded differences in personal affective history and socio-cultural milieu. The white demographic, who have historically maintained a physical distance from reggae dances, only relatively recently becoming part of the regular Shaka audience,¹³ often seemed to harbour a lower physiological tolerance threshold for

¹³ After the punk-reggae connection dissipated in the late 1970s, and the mainstream UK reggae scene faded following the death of Bob Marley in 1981, reggae dances largely retreated into spaces occupied by West

dub's 'sonic dominance' (Henriques, 2003) than those who were thoroughly embedded in dub reggae culture, and who had seemingly grown somatically accustomed to the extremes of sound through decades of proximity and immersion: namely the older, black demographic.

The key point to emerge from this introductory case study, then, is that multiple histories (personal, social, cultural, musical, institutional) enter into musical affective experiences; and in these particular cases, they did so in a way that affirmed or made perceptible pre-existing affective dispositions and socio-cultural differences. Jan was not, in short, able to simply overcome prior personal, corporeal, and cultural-historic experiences by succumbing to a 'pre-personal', molecular affective state. Rather, his deep affective attachment to house and techno and cultural disassociations from dub reggae manifested as 'sticky' (Ahmed, 2004) and enduring in the face of new socio-musical influences. Seen in this way, the stabs of antagonism and irritation that Jan experienced in relation to the sonic properties and techniques employed by Jah Shaka—particularly compared to the thrills and reveries of the crowd around him—enacted or 'made public' a throng of resilient personal, socio-cultural, and historic disparities and particularities; just as, in a similar way, the lower tolerance thresholds of white crowd members compared to black when it came to dub reggae's bone-shaking, ear-drilling bass vibrations made perceptible the fact that enduring cultural-historical trajectories and temporal relations underpin and facilitate both our musical experiences, and the affective events we partake in.

Simon Encounters a Lucky Cloud

In my second example of 'stickiness', I draw upon a different musical assemblage: the London Lucky Cloud parties. This time, rather than focusing on the differentiation of affective experience

Indian immigrant communities—social clubs, town halls, and cultural centres (see Veal, 2007; Gilroy, 1982b). The London sound system scene was thus fairly inaccessible to white audiences for substantial portions of the 1980s and '90s. When Culture Promotions took over Jah Shaka's management in the '90s and began promoting to university crowds, however, the crowds became whiter and more middle class.

in relation to sonic properties such as rhythmic ‘disruption’ or volume, my emphasis is on genre. Specifically, I illustrate the ways in which musical genres can become imbued with social connotations that get under people’s skin and into their bodies, manifesting as ‘affective biases’ that angle them toward or away from particular musical sounds and spaces (Ahmed, 2004; cf. Bourdieu, 1984).

Rooted in the principles of the late David Mancuso’s 1970s New York Loft parties (see Lawrence, 2003), the London Lucky Cloud parties place particular emphasis on high-fidelity audio, social experience, and egalitarian musical practices. Records are played through Klipschorn speakers and other audiophile equipment with the level of sound not exceeding 100DB—a paradigm that enables highly detailed musical reproduction but at a volume where people can still dance and talk comfortably without shouting. There is no mixing or other technical intervention, and the DJ booth is visually obscured, in an attempt to direct the focus towards the dancers and dancefloor rather than the DJ/their skill. This ‘anti-superstar DJ’ ethos is enhanced by the meticulous spatial and material qualities of the room, which are geared towards the sustenance and well-being of dancers: the venue is a community centre (the Rose Lipman building in Dalston), with ‘springy’ wooden floors (to conserve energy), natural light (to see each other), a vegetarian buffet (for endurance), and a ceiling of coloured balloons to make the space as welcoming and ‘homely’ as possible. Finally, musical selections—which are expansive, but which tend to fall into the rare groove, disco, and deep house continuum—are rigorously programmed by the musical ‘host’ (DJ) for their perceived ability to take the listener on a sonic-psychic journey, ‘arc’, or trip, aided for some by psychedelics and empathogens. The parties can thus be defined by their kinetic and sociable dancefloor energy; their anti-hierarchical and anti-commercial ethos; and their seamless, holistic musical aesthetic, which aims to trace the emotional contours of an evening.¹⁴ Given that these events are central to Chapter 6, more detail about their cultural and historical specificity will be given there.

¹⁴ Tim Lawrence describes the contours of the parties as beginning with a playful ‘entry’ or warm up, followed by a more transcendent breakdown, and ending with an uplifting ‘re-entry’ (Lawrence, 2003).

Since their inception in 2003, the Lucky Cloud parties have taken place four times a year on a Sunday, 5pm-midnight, as close to the equinoxes and solstices as possible, as Mancuso desired.¹⁵ The first party I attended was the ‘summer’ party, in June 2013, and I continued to attend every party thereafter throughout my fieldwork, and many more since. In December 2013, I invited one of my participants, Simon, who I’d met at an ambient music concert in Hackney (Biosphere + Perc + EQLS) to attend the Lucky Cloud ‘winter’ party. Simon, a 30-year-old white man from the west of England, whose musical biography revolved around Britpop, ambient, dub and noise music, had been intrigued by my research, particularly the experimental aspect of inviting people to participate in musical events that were alien to them, and willingly agreed. On a crisp December evening, he and I thus made our way to the Light Bar in Shoreditch, where the Lucky Cloud parties were held at that time, before moving to the Rose Lipman community centre in 2014. As we walked, I talked about the history, philosophy, and musical aesthetic of the parties, explaining that although not limited to any particular genre, deep house and disco were likely to be prevalent. Immediately, Simon confessed to having held an acute disdain for house music and other dance genres such as UK garage for much of his adult life—an antipathy rooted in teenage perceptions of these genres as ‘townie’,¹⁶ ‘commercial’, and ‘cheesy’. Expanding in interview the following month, he added:

I can’t deny that’s how I felt for a long time. To me [as a teenager] house music—and dance music—was clean, artificial, commercial...what all the ‘townies’ listened to basically. While indie music was messy, live, authentic, involving ‘real’ musicians and instruments (Simon, January 2014).

As implied by the words ‘townie’, ‘commercial’, ‘cheesy’, and ‘artificial’, Simon’s genre biases as a young adult were strongly classed and gendered, tapping into the familiar patriarchal, bourgeois narrative that seeks to condemn the feminine ‘vulgarity’ of sentimental disco and dance music in favour of the masculine ‘rationality’ of cerebral rock culture. As Simon openly admitted, sample- and synthesiser-based music, with its pre-programmed beats, ‘sickly’ melodies, female vocals, and clean production aesthetic, was not ‘real’ authentic music to him growing up—not like live indie-

¹⁵ For more details about the parties, see <http://www.loftparty.org/about.html>. See also Chapter 6.

¹⁶ ‘Townie’ was a term used predominantly in the 1990s to refer, in a derogatory way, to working-class youth living in towns. It has similar connotations to the words ‘chav’ and ‘pikey’.

rock with its ‘messy’ guitars—but rather, a fake representation of music, in which those producing the sounds need not even be musically trained. That such music provided the backdrop to a mainstream club scene where the girls and the ‘townies’ congregated was thus, to Simon, perfectly befitting. At stake in Simon’s confession, then, was a classic instance of how the commercial, the popular, the ‘mainstream’, and the musically simplistic are equated with the feminine and the classed-down, and are mobilised as a means of policing the boundaries of a largely white, straight, male, middle-class, indie (independent) ‘underground’ (McLeod 2001: 73; Straw, 1993: 181). As Will Straw writes, the dense sonic layering and ‘tight solidity’ of indie-rock and industrial becomes, literally, ‘a protective wall... [a] defence against contamination by vulgarity, by the lure of...the soft groove’ (Straw, 1993: 179).

As we approached the Lucky Cloud venue, Simon assured me that these ‘embarrassing preconceptions’ were behind him, and soon changed the subject. Indeed, so convincing were his assurances that it came as a surprise when, hours later, Simon took me aside and professed that he was finding the party a ‘real challenge’. When I asked him why, he immediately attributed his experience to the bias he had held against house and disco as a teenager, which, he felt, continued to endure ‘in [his] body’, if not in his intellect. ‘I can’t help but feeling similar to what I did when I was younger... Basically, it’s all a bit “nice”, a bit “twee”, a bit feel-good and crowd pleasing’, he explained. ‘I mean, I *want* to like it, but... [Pointing at his chest]. Something won’t let me!’ Besides the music, a further difficulty for Simon was what he referred to as the ‘pressure’ exerted on him by other dancers, who seemed to want to engage him socially through dancing and physical movement. ‘It just makes me uncomfortable, to be honest’, Simon admitted. ‘Especially as they’re clearly all on pills and being really overfriendly...’. Indeed, not only was Simon at odds with the idea of using music as a means to communicate empathetically with others, given his dedication to genres that afford relatively interiorised musical experiences, where the music (for him at least) is the primary focus. He also found the crowd’s penchant for drugs like ecstasy and acid quite alienating, having never associated with such substances. During our interview, he explained:

It's not that people [at Lucky Cloud] were deliberately excluding, or anything like that, at all. But they were clearly on a totally different level to me, which was in itself quite estranging (Simon, January 2014).

Simon's aversion to the Lucky Cloud parties again illuminates how affective experiences of music are 'multiply mediated' (Born, 2005). As with Jan, Simon's personal and socio-cultural history intersected with the specificities of the musical 'event'—the history and sociality of genre, the socio-spatial atmosphere, other contingencies like drugs, décor and people—in such a way as to thwart his attempts to become initiated into the affective contagion. But there is, I would argue, an important difference between Jan's and Simon's disaffected musical experiences. Namely, unlike Jan at Jah Shaka, Simon had, in the past, held a conscious dislike or distaste for the styles of music being played at Lucky Cloud: a sonic social bias that, as he put it, continued to linger 'in [his] body' as a corporeal form of antipathy, in spite of his mental efforts to the contrary. As he reflected in the aftermath of the party, the visceral discomfort that he felt towards the sounds and vibes at Lucky Cloud had to do not with a lack of desire to attune, but with a strange powerlessness to detach from his prior experiences of disco and house music—experiences that were, in turn, marked by the reified gendered and classed connotations that these genres had accrued for him in his youth. What comes to the fore in this example, then, are the ways in which musical genres become imbued with particular social 'identities', which then work to attract or repel particular people and social constituencies, often in stubbornly corporeal, lasting ways (cf. Bourdieu, 1984).

The question of how and why musical assemblages accrue such social connotations in the first place will be elaborated on fully in Chapter 5. For now, it is instructive to turn to the history of disco in order to understand Simon's specific musical affective disconnection. As Tim Lawrence (2003) notes, disco and early house of the 1970s and '80s evolved in the wake of the civil rights, feminist, gay liberation, and racial equality movements in North America, and, initially at least, produced women-friendly, pansexual, multicultural and musically anti-elitist spaces. In Lawrence's words, the 'freedom' discourses of the 1960s 'wove their way into [new] forms of cultural organisation', finding dance-oriented articulation at New York discotheques like the Loft, the Sanctuary, and the Paradise Garage, where a number of dispossessed groups were afforded 'safe havens' in which to

socialise and experiment with new ways of being (Lawrence, 2003: 182, 437). In the British context, the gay and/or feminised legacy of disco and house, and the emphasis that these musics place on the body, social dance, and physical-psychic release, has largely carried forward.¹⁷ Disco has long been appropriated by queer communities in the UK (Dyer, 1979); the acid house and UK rave scenes of the late 1980s and early '90s were notoriously de-masculinised, asexual, and gender-egalitarian in their audiences, as well as mixed-class (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999; McRobbie, 1994; Pini, 2001; Rietveld, 1998); UK garage of the 1990s—derivative of breakbeat jungle and US 'garage' house—summoned large crowds of women from mixed ethnic and lower-class backgrounds (Reynolds, 1999); and the London Lucky Cloud parties themselves, although predominantly white, are unusually mixed in terms of gender, sexuality, age, and class.

Given the historical and social associations of these genres, and their partial extension into the present day, it makes sense that disco, house, and UK garage—as sounding materials—tend to hold queer, feminine and/or working-class connotations, and are consequently described in euphemistic terms as 'cheesy', 'townie' or 'twee' by those like Simon who wish to distance themselves from such sounds. Indeed, such a process exemplifies how the social 'gets into' music: how, as Born describes, extra-musical connotations (of class, gender, sexuality...) are 'projected into [...] musical sound', and are then, over time, 'experienced as deriving [or emanating] from it' (Born, 2011: 377). For Simon, as a straight, white, male, middle-class teenager in the late 1990s, the sounds of house, garage, and other dance musics were thus not necessarily unpleasant or offensive on a physical-material level, as with the abrasive volume or jarring 'disruption' of reggae sound systems cited earlier. Rather, these sounds were unpalatable to him because they were an embodiment of the debased social groups that he so viscerally wished to disassociate from—facile, pre-programmed, vulgar sounds that appeal only to the senses and bodily surfaces, with no intellectual depth. To be affectively repulsed by, and to recoil from such genres was, then, to partake in a

¹⁷ As noted in the previous section, the 'blackness' of these US scenes has not translated in the British context. The exception is UK House, a recent British African incarnation of house music that came to prominence in c. 2009, which is very mixed-race, mixed-class and mixed-gender. This scene will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 8.

process of ‘boundary-drawing’: of using music to cultivate one identity for himself that aligned with the social groups he wished to affiliate with, and another for the social groups he wished to ‘other’—the ‘townie’ urban working classes and immature girls. It was, in Stephanie Lawler’s terms, to express musical class-based ‘disgust’, with ‘taste’ providing a key defence barrier against the threat of ‘sameness’—of becoming like the other (Lawler, 2005).

Processes of social and musical differentiation are certainly not new. Indeed, a near-identical historical precursor to Simon, though rooted more in homophobia than classism or sexism, was the derision that US rock audiences displayed towards disco in the late 1970s, exemplified by the ‘network of disco haters’ that coalesced around Steve Dahl’s ‘disco sucks’ campaign (Lawrence, 2006: 130)—“‘disco sucks cock’ if you have to have it spelt [out]’ (Smith, 1995: 23). Moreover, as Chapter 2 illustrated, such differentiating processes are well documented in academic discourse, most notably via Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of ‘distinction’ and its various iterations across the sociology of musical taste (e.g. Bennett et al., 2009; Savage, 2006) and popular music studies work on music, genre, and identity (e.g. Frith, 1996b; Straw, 1991). Less common, however, is research that addresses the extent to which these mechanisms of differentiation ‘stick’ or ‘shift’ over time, individually and collectively. It seems significant, for instance, that Simon’s anachronistic classed and gendered identity, founded upon an ‘embarrassing’ teenage musical prejudice, manifested as ‘sticky’ fifteen or so years later. That is, however hard he tried to submit to a higher, trans-individual, collective energy on the Lucky Cloud dancefloor, he could not overcome his prior personal affective habits and socialised predispositions.

From an ethnographic-observational point of view, the first symptom of Simon’s ‘stickiness’ was his immediate contempt for the so-called ‘crowd-pleasing’ aesthetic at Lucky Cloud: a musical feature long disparaged for its association with the blatancy of ‘mainstream’ (feminised, classed down) pop cultures, in contrast to the obscurity and mystery of niche ‘underground’ (male, middle

class) avant-gardes (Bradby, 1993; Straw, 1991, 1993; Reynolds, 2013).¹⁸ That this ‘feel-good’ familiarity was a key source of affective tension for Simon not only affirmed his prior classed and gendered socio-musical disposition, but also indicated his continuing proclivity to ‘boundary-draw’ along lines of social difference. A second symptom was the resentment Simon felt towards the corporeal freedom and emotional intimacy germinating on the dancefloor. Again, this not only suggested a defiant affective attachment to the cerebral, aesthetically ‘serious’ music cultures in which he was already enmeshed; it also enacted and served to reproduce the patriarchal, bourgeois ideology that has, for centuries, denigrated physicality, bodily pleasure, the senses, emotional connection, touch, and hearing in favour of their ‘opposites’—reason, the mind, the intellect, knowledge, individuality, and sight—with the very dualistic nature of this aversion a primary characteristic of ideology. In short, whatever his desires or intentions, Simon could not shake his former sonic social ‘affective biases’; ‘*something*’ deep down would not let him.



Figure 4: Lucky Cloud dancefloor at the Light Bar, Shoreditch.

¹⁸ Crowd-pleasing refers to the way that DJs or musicians mobilise familiar tunes, big hits, or ‘bangers’ to appeal to the habitual desires of the dance floor.



Figure 5: Light show at Lucky Cloud, the Light Bar, Shoreditch.

What thus emerges is an affective mechanism analogous to Hirschkind's 'somatic learning' (2006: 76): a training and 'inculcating' of the body in accordance with a particular set of ideologies to produce a 'substrate of latent tendencies'. Simon's musical conditioning appeared to have instilled in him a set of calcified embodied habits, engendering both an experience of personal repetition and stability, and re-enacting social differences and dominant ideologies at a corporeal level.

Sally Anne Steps into Sound Art

My final example of affective 'stickiness' turns to practices of sound installation art. Specifically, I focus on 'Bridge Links'—a site-specific work by London-based sound artist Esther Ainsworth, which was installed as part of the Camden New Wave Festival in November 2013. Whereas the previous examples have emphasised the centrality of sonic properties (Jan) and genre's social associations (Simon) in mediating affective experiences of music, this example illustrates the role

of spatialities—in combination with other aspects of the sonic assemblage—in affectively ‘sticking’ a prior social positionality or difference.

Ainsworth’s site-specific sound piece was installed for two days along Regent’s Canal over the weekend of 2-3 November 2013. I had been alerted to it while conducting fieldwork on another sound installation the previous week: Catalina Pollak’s ‘Phantom Railings’ in Malet Street Gardens, also commissioned for the Camden New Wave Festival. I thus set aside the weekend to investigate Ainsworth’s temporary installation. As it transpired, Ainsworth’s sonic sculptures occupied little more than the walking-length of two canal arches—roughly fifteen paces each—situated in the Camden Town area of Regent’s Canal; and the sounds of her composition were taken from local site-specific field recordings, meaning that the work re-mixed the natural soundscape of seagulls, barges, and overhead trains, rather than inserting something overtly artificial into the landscape, as ‘Phantom Railings’ had.¹⁹ In spite of this seeming sonic sensitivity, however, the installation provoked conflicting and diverse responses. Upon arriving at the scene, I introduced myself to Ainsworth and her friends, who explained that bafflement and occasionally negative attitudes towards the sound work had prevailed during the course of Saturday morning, particularly among older Camden residents. One especially persistent passer-by had reportedly demanded that Ainsworth show her license, questioning her with allegations such as: ‘what gives you the right to do this on the towpath?’ ‘What’s the point of it?’ And, ‘but why is it *here*?’ In spite of Ainsworth’s efforts to install acoustically inoffensive sounds, then, ‘Bridge Links’ ignited a relatively extreme conflict over territory, with residents feeling that ‘their’ space, ‘their’ canal towpath, had been invaded.²⁰

¹⁹ ‘Phantom Railings’ comprised 55 sensor-based acoustic devices that turned the movement of passers-by on the street into a sound that purported to mimic that of dragging a stick along railings, though in fact was a synthesised sound that was too percussive to be realistic.

²⁰ In support of what I refer to as the ‘acoustic inoffensiveness’ of the sounds, it is revealing that ‘Bridge Links’ was part funded by the English Folk Dance and Song Society. This meant that Ainsworth took inspiration from historical recordings of the canal conserved in the Society’s archives to produce a composition that was both sonically and site-specifically sensitive. This institutionally mediated sonic conservatism supports the fact that residents’ conflicting and antagonised responses arose out of factors other than the sounds themselves, notably, the installation’s occupation of ‘their’ canal.

By contrast, children were struck with awe upon hearing the sounds, while a number of young creative individuals, including an ex-Fine Art student from Central Saint Martins and an events manager from the nearby arts venue King's Place, excitedly stopped in their tracks, eager to talk to those supervising the installation, who were also mostly arts-associated people. Since Regent's Canal largely evades formal surveillance, there was also a homeless contingent resting on benches to the side of the towpath, seemingly unaware of any unusual goings-on under the arches. Meanwhile, a busker singing just beyond the second tunnel was by and large ignored by passers-by, in spite of the competing acoustic spatiality he was producing. What immediately came to light, then, in contrast to the affectivity of the dancefloor brought about by Jah Shaka and Lucky Cloud, was a plurality of fragmented sonic social a/effects—hostility, conversation, aggregation, affability, obliviousness—resulting in the creation of fluid and 'nested' zones of publicness and privacy (Born, 2013a: 26). The situation, in other words, revealed sound art's profound spatialising capacities: its ability to function as a means of both 'shrinking and expanding personal space' (Dibben & Haake, 2013: 160). On the one hand, pockets of privacy recursively bubbled up as those provoked were alienated from their surroundings and propelled away from the sonic arches (private-in-public); while on the other hand, numerous publics materialised within the larger public space, as those intrigued by the sounds were grouped into sociable clusters (public-in-public).

Zooming in to observe, film, record, and talk with passers-by over the two days that 'Bridge Links' lasted, it became possible to identify some of the agential currents that were converging to orient people's different responses to the sounds. Particularly pertinent was the way in which social differences of gender, class, and age, together with historical and institutional factors (Born's third and fourth planes), saturated and infused people's affective experiences of the sound works, often in ways that produced repetitive or 'sticky' social identity formations. In what follows, I elaborate on the emergence of these sonic affective identities in more detail, noting how different mediations tended to become more or less prominent within the assemblage at different times.



Figures 6 and 7: Esther Ainsworth, 'Bridge Links', Regent's Canal.

First, in its site-specific exposure to a stream of unsuspecting passers-by, 'Bridge Links' made perceptible a social space that was cross-cut by multiplicity. Different people reacted to the aesthetics and genre implications of the sounds in different ways, often resulting in a clash of feelings and actions. As the contrasting affective responses of older Camden residents, children,

and younger arts-associated individuals demonstrated, this at times manifested along relatively clear-cut lines of social and cultural difference, such as age and education. Indeed, that those attracted to ‘Bridge Links’ were mostly the young, arts-initiated individuals and uninhibited children, whilst those antagonised or shocked were the older, non-arts local residents, suggests that responses to the sound piece did not simply stem from the material qualities of the sounds themselves, but rather—as in the case of Simon at Lucky Cloud—from what those sounds connoted socially and culturally, and how instantly (un)recognisable they were as an artistic practice to different individuals and groups. In other words, the social connotations of sound installation art as a ‘genre’—i.e. as a relatively new art form—were mediating the situation, as opposed to merely the sounds.²¹ This was emphasised by the way that Ainsworth was repeatedly confronted by members of the public, while the busker nearby was ignored, in spite of the equal sonic disturbances that both were producing.²² As one Camden resident who I interviewed ‘on-the-spot’ put it:

[I]f somebody’s there busking, you see the guy to pay. It’s like, you know what it *is*, so you don’t feel [any] threat. But with the sound piece, it takes you by surprise. It’s like... There are so many connections that need to be made in order to make us understand what is happening that of course, for a split second, you feel the threat (Elsie, November 2013).

Buskers, in this account, are perceived to be part of normative urban space. They constitute a familiar genre of urban acoustic experience, particularly in Camden where street music is historically thriving, and can thus be ‘zoned’ or ‘blanked out’ with apparent ease. Meanwhile, sound installation art is experienced as a relatively strange and novel phenomenon, and thus as disruptive and potentially threatening. For the resident quoted above, it demanded rapid thinking and complex processes of sense-making. By contrast, for those familiar with artistic practice, such as the ex-Fine Art student and King’s Place manager, ‘Bridge Links’ was instantly recognisable as a sound art

²¹ ‘Phantom Railings’ artist Pollak was quick to trace her practice to Fluxus and the Western avant-garde, indicating sound installation’s links to an arts-associated lineage—a genealogy supported by academic studies of sound art (e.g. Kahn, 1999; LaBelle, 2004; Ouzounian, 2013). See also Chapter 7.

²² As one reader pointed out, gender also springs to mind as a mediating factor here, in the sense that it is usual for men (such as the busker) to dominate public space, while rarer and less acceptable for women like Ainsworth to do so. However, when stepping under the arches at ‘Bridge Links’, it wasn’t obvious who the artist was. Members of the public who raised concerns tended to address whoever was closest at hand—usually those supervising the installation, who were both men and women. I would thus suggest that genre was the more powerful mediator in this instance, rather than gender; though both may have been in play.

piece. What comes to the fore, then, in line with the examples of Jan and Simon, is how people are differentially oriented towards or away from musical and sonic genres before they encounter them, depending on personal history, socio-cultural location, the history and sociality of genre, and historical and institutional conditions (Ahmed, 2004; Born, 2010c). And although, as I show in Chapters 7 and 8, such orientations may be flexible, supple, and open to change, in this case, they intersected with the sonic ‘event’ in resilient ways, leading to affective-social divisions along predictable lines of age, class, and culture.

It was not just temporal factors (personal, socio-cultural, generic histories) that oriented people’s affective responses to ‘Bridge Links’, however. Space, site, and local geography were also crucial, particularly as they intersected with sound art’s connotations as a genre. This became apparent when I asked my participants whether they felt sound installation art tended to invoke ‘artiness’ and/or novelty and unfamiliarity, and all responded that such inferences were spatially and geographically mediated. One interviewee, Anna, who did not experience ‘Bridge Links’ but who I met at another sound art event of Ainsworth’s that took place at Bow Church a few weeks later, expressed her feeling that sound installation art was ‘elitist’ and ‘pretentious’, appealing only to the middle classes who were educated in the arts. Further, she speculated that the word ‘exhibition’, which was chalked on a blackboard outside Bow Church at this event, would have resonated particularly uncomfortably in an area like Bow, whose working-class communities have been subjected to soaring house prices and the threat of displacement under the London 2012 Olympic regeneration schemes, and who, in Anna’s words, ‘weren’t at all happy when people like us artists moved into the area’. Similarly, both Ainsworth’s friends monitoring ‘Bridge Links’ and Pollak’s co-choreographer for ‘Phantom Railings’ expressed strong views on sound art’s ‘newness’ and relative exoticism as a genre, seeing this—in combination with its occupation of public space—as a key factor in antagonising passers-by. Jared, an artist who helped supervise ‘Bridge Links’, reflected in interview:

Sound art is the ‘newest’ art, [so] in a sense, people are the least familiar and least comfortable with it. [...] You know, they aren’t sure how to respond [and] they’re afraid of looking stupid... That’s what generates negative responses, I think.

People don't like feeling that they don't understand. [...] You could also say that, in a sense, people aren't actually *choosing* to experience [public] sound art... It's not like [an installation] in a gallery. So, you can see how it could be quite imposing on a few different levels (Jared, November 2013).

In Jared's view, it is sound art's novelty and unfamiliarity *combined* with its placement in urban public space that creates such ambivalent affective responses. People going about their daily lives are not 'choosing' to experience the sound works; rather, some might argue, the works are imposed on them, often unexpectedly, as they attempt to carry out their daily activities. Fernanda, a Chilean choreographer who orchestrated a dance performance for Pollak's 'Phantom Railings', similarly recognised the contested nature of installation- and performance-based art in urban public space, noting the radically different responses to her work in Santiago compared to London:

In [the] UK, people with confrontational art...they're like, "I don't know what to do!" You know...they're unsure how to act. [In Chile], urban space is much better. People can stop, they don't need to buy a ticket...they can stay or leave...this is much better, I think. But in England... [laughs] I don't know! People maybe don't like it? (Fernanda, November 2013).

Both Jared's and Fernanda's comments reflect the democratic project at the heart of sound installation art: its constitution as an art form for 'anyone who happens to listen' (Neuhaus, in Ouzounian, 2013: 83), rather than for those with the economic, social, and cultural capital to seek out specialised art or listening experiences. Yet, as both interlocutors also make clear, sound installation art's unsuspecting publics do not always take kindly to this aesthetic 'gift'. Complementing Jared's observations regarding the potentially antagonistic dimension of sound art as a 'new' art that occupies city spaces in surprising and unannounced ways, Fernanda's reference to 'England' introduces the important notion of culture: the situated, relational nature of installation and place-based sound art, and its different capabilities and a/effects in one city or country compared to another. In short, people's affective responses to, tolerance of, and levels of engagement with public (sound) art are powerfully mediated by the historicised, encultured nature of the 'host' city and its urban public spaces.²³ In the final part of this section, I enrich my analysis

²³ This issue was not only brought to light by Fernanda, but also by Merijn Royaards in his account of attempting to co-ordinate a sound art performance in Beirut in October 2014. As Royaards discovered when collaborating with the Lebanese Parkour Team, Beiruties self-censor their movements to such an extent that 'the mere act of running is suspect... [not to mention] running with cameras and sound equipment'. His

of this sonic-spatial assemblage by turning to a particular woman's affective experience of 'Bridge Links'—one that not only highlights the encultured nature of public space in London, but that also emphasises the importance of a site's specific architectural properties in mediating sonically incited affect.

The example centres on Sally Anne, a young woman for whom the 'newness' of sound installation art took on a very particular dimension at 'Bridge Links'. Sally Anne was one of a few passers-by who I stopped and asked to reflect upon what they had just traversed as they emerged from Ainsworth's resonant arches. She told me a bit about herself: she lived in Kilburn and would often walk the canal towpath from there to Regent's Park, she used to work as a nurse, and she grew up in Birmingham. She also recounted that she had never experienced a public sound installation before. But whereas most passers-by portrayed their experiences in mildly nonplussed terms, making baffled but intrigued comments such as 'that was weird', Sally Anne, who was pushing a pram with her four-month-old baby early on the Sunday morning, was definitively agitated. She said that she had felt it 'unnecessary' to be thrown into a state of uncertainty as to what was happening around her, especially when with her young child. As we talked, she explained that her sense of estrangement had been amplified by the particular materialities of the site. For instance, her initial hesitation upon stepping into the shadiness of the arch and being engulfed by 'eerie drones' was compounded by a dim awareness of being un-surveilled on the canal. There was no CCTV or formal security close at hand to deter 'whatever might be happening'. Further, as she passed deeper into the immersive sounds, she became aware of the constraining physical geography of the towpath, as well as the 'poor visibility'. She could not 'cross over to the other side' or choose a different route, as those coming into contact with 'Phantom Railings' could, for instance. Geographies of knowledge and spatial properties of the site thus exacerbated her hesitancy towards the sounds to produce a fleeting affect of fear: a fear of 'not knowing'; a fear of indeterminacy and

attempts to realise a sound art project that had been conceived and successfully tested in the UK were thus blocked in Beirut by the 'psychological borders and habituated codes of movement' that prevailed among Beiruties in the wake of years of sectarian violence and civil war (Royaards, 2014).

inescapability; a fear that was both pre-disposed by, and served to actualise and reproduce, her gendered positionality as a woman with a baby walking with a pram in public space, and the potential vulnerabilities attached to this positionality.

The case of Sally Anne is important for two reasons. First, it exemplifies how, as ecological approaches to musical perception have emphasised (Clarke, 2005; DeNora, 2000), the spatial placement of a sound is crucial to how we experience it. When plunged into a state of uncertainty by an unfamiliar sound, the presence of darkness, physical enclosure, and other obscuring material qualities—or by contrast, lightness and unambiguity—will likely affect how that uncertainty unfolds. If a situation cannot be deciphered straight away, as in Sally Anne’s experience, sounds that might usually pass one by may become re-embodied or ‘multiple-bodied’: a ‘liminal space of potential signs’ (LaBelle, 2004: 77), pregnant with multiple prospects of what is happening and about-to-happen simultaneously. In turn, these imagined ‘signs’ might feed forward into new expectations, new intensities and thoughts, amplifying one’s bodily state. In other words, what begins as uncertainty and hesitation may mushroom into distress and fear, or dissipate into calmness, depending on the spatialities and materialities of a sonic event. As Sally Anne and I discussed, it is quite possible that if ‘Bridge Links’ had been installed in a geographically different, more open site, she would not have felt the same surge of panic as she did the day I met her. In addition to personal, socio-cultural, and sonic/musical histories, then, ‘Bridge Links’ stresses the importance of ‘situation’ in sonic affective experience: how space and site can alter the boundaries of corporeal experience, perhaps turning what might have been one set of affects into another.

Stemming from this, the second reason that the case of Sally Anne is significant is that it illustrates how the spatialities of a musical or sonic assemblage can ultimately ‘make or break’ whether a particular (gendered, classed, raced...) social identity becomes ‘actual’, or not. As I have shown, Sally Anne’s fright upon coming into contact with ‘Bridge Links’ was underpinned by a specific constellation of mediations: the ‘newness’ of sound art as a genre; her own personal history and social and cultural location; and the lingering historical, social, and institutional forms of power

that continue to designate urban public space as the ‘property’ of men, thereby engendering latent geographies of anxiety for marginal and gendered ‘others’. But what finally ‘actualised’ Sally Anne’s gendered positionality—as a woman and mother struggling to navigate the city without fear—were the specific spatial properties of the site: the darkness of the tunnel, the tacit geographies of knowledge regarding the lack of surveillance on the canal, and the confining geography of the canal towpath, which was without an ‘escape’. Comparable to the experiences of Jan and Simon, then, the example of Sally Anne illustrates how music and sound, through their affective propensities, can entrench or ‘fix’ pre-existing social differences and power hierarchies—this time triggered by the uncertainties and anxieties attached to a totally new and unexpected sonic experience, and escalated by the particular spatialities of the sonic assemblage.

Conclusion

The ethnographic examples in this chapter point to how individual affective experiences of music and sound are mediated by multiple histories—personal, social, cultural, spatial, and institutional. Further, in each example, the particular constellation of mediations converged in such a way as to *reiterate* or *entrench* a prior social identity or difference. In Jan’s and Simon’s cases, pre-existing musical ‘affective biases’ (Ahmed, 2004) and ‘somatically learned’ ideologies (Hirschkind, 2006) manifested as enduring and obstinate in the face of new musical experiences, impeding their ability to respond positively or empathetically. Indeed, this was *in spite of* their desires for pleasurable entrainment and attunement. In Sally Anne’s case, a novel sonic experience worked to ‘actualise’ a latent gendered identity.

Significantly, Massumi also discusses the notion of ‘stickiness’ via the concept of habit (Massumi, 2002). Yet, I have deliberately chosen to draw upon Ahmed and Hirschkind rather than Massumi in this chapter for two key reasons. First, Massumi treats bodily habit as an anti-mimetic physiological automatism. As he puts it: ‘Habit is an acquired automatic self-regulation. It resides in the flesh. Some say in matter’ (Massumi, 2002: 11). For Massumi, when people become ‘stuck’,

this is because a habit has lost its ‘powers of adaptation... [and] become a mere reflex’ (Massumi, 2015: 64). He thus reduces affective ‘stickiness’ to biological automatism: to a ‘stimulus-response’ reaction that does not require a subject (ibid: 66). Second, in the same way that he treats ‘habit’ as a-subjective, rigid, and biological, so he treats ‘affect’ as habit’s antithesis: a-subjective, open, and immanent, a liberating force that can be summoned through ‘little, practical, experimental... measures’ (Massumi, 2015). Not only, then, does he conceptualise habit and affect in binary opposition, the former ‘inside’ the body and the latter ‘outside’ (see Blackman, 2012); he also argues that change or ‘suppleness’ via the unmediated virtual can be invoked through experimentation, as if it were possible to ‘choose’ freedom (Hemmings, 2005). For Massumi, there is no question that some ‘bodies’ may be more open to change than others, or that for some, ‘stickiness’ is the norm, because in his conceptualisation, habit and affect are not underpinned by any theory of the subject.

In contrast, I have shown through the cases of Jan, Simon, and Sally Anne that sonically incited affect is, or can be, a ‘fixing’ or ‘sticking’ mechanism that reproduces the power-saturated dimensions of history, identity, and ideology, thereby decoupling affect from its reified association with movement and change. Further, I have shown how such territorialising processes are not reducible to a biologically determined concept of habit, nor prone to voluntary change by mere ‘experimentation’, as Massumi suggests. Rather, sonic affective ‘stickiness’ is contingent upon the way in which multiple histories of different orders and scales—including personal histories—intersect in the present. An analysis of the affective dynamics of musical and sonic events, then, requires a model of social mediation such as Born’s (2011, 2012), which allows for close diagnosis of the particular forms of social mediation entering into a musical affective encounter, while also remaining open to how music and sound’s affective socialities might transform wider social relations and conditions. In the next chapter, I examine how musical affective ‘stickiness’ can manifest on a collective, historical scale, rather than simply constituting an individual experience.

Chapter 4

Public Feelings: Collective Affect and the Production of Ambivalence

'[S]ounds and senses can change, potentially, how we can understand what being historical means'

Lauren Berlant (2010: 105)

Introduction

So far, I have shown how musical affect can be a fixing mechanism, working to 'stick' (Ahmed, 2004) people to particular musical and/or social spheres in ways that are resistant to change, and that entrench wider social differences. In this chapter, I move from the individual to the collective to explore how musical affective 'stickiness' can be a process associated with simultaneity, producing states of disorientation, detachment, and disdain that are shared or public. Further, I suggest that when affective experiences of music take on this collectively 'sticky' character, they have the potential to engender moments of shared ambivalence and reflexivity that may, in turn, open out into socio-musical change. I address these ideas by focusing on the creative practices of DJs, curators, and producers from my fieldwork who, at the time, were experimenting with introducing elements of novelty and difference into the genres within which they were working as a means of challenging the values, expectations, and affective registers of their audiences. Through these examples, I demonstrate the collective embodied resistance with which such attempts to stimulate change were met and trace the historical resonances of such 'sticky' situations. This chapter thus differs from Chapter 3 in two ways. First, it examines how musical affective 'stickiness' can manifest collectively, historically, and across generations, as well as individually, working to reproduce and refract socio-musical formations over time. And second, it engages with the mediating relations between musical producers and their publics, thereby bringing both affect theory and the thesis as a whole into dialogue with genre theory.

Theoretical Overview: Affect, Time, and ‘Addressivity’

The theoretical underpinnings that I outline here are relevant both to this chapter and the next, and they build upon arguments outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. First, with regard to developing a new theory of musical and sonic affect, the current chapter deepens the insights put forward in the previous chapter, illuminating how affective experiences of music and sound are oriented by a multiplicity of intersecting mediations, which can align in ways that fix, ‘stick’, or reproduce pre-existing socio-musical hierarchies and identities. Further, and again building upon Chapter 3, this chapter demonstrates how such ‘sticky’ affective attachments can manifest as intractable and enduring, rooting a person or people into a particular socio-musical milieu in a way that cannot be averted by ‘actualising’ a set of pre-subjective ‘virtuals’ (Massumi, 2002). Where this chapter exceeds the previous is in its focus on musical affective ‘stickiness’ as potentially shared, historical, and transmitted through time. I articulate this genealogical dimension of affect by turning to the literature outlined in Chapter 2 on the social history of live music—in particular, the history of classical concert life in Europe and of electronic/dance music in Britain—demonstrating the continuity of certain postures, atmospheres, and sensibilities through time, as well as consulting Gilroy’s (1993) work on the ‘changing same’ in diasporic black musics. Together, these literatures enable a deeper understanding of the contingent historical processes by which musical sounds become imbued with social (raced, gendered, classed...) connotations, as well as shedding light upon how such connotations solidify and transmit over generations, working to sustain allegiances between particular social groups and particular musical lineages in ingrained, naturalised ways.

Extending and enriching this genealogical stance in the next chapter (Chapter 5), I draw upon the work of feminist and critical race affect theorists who have engaged with the intergenerational transmission of affect via notions of embodied ‘inheritance’ and generational attachment (Ahmed, 2004, 2010; Bell, 2007; Blackman, 2012; Gordon, 1997). Temporal affective processes such as these relate to what Lisa Blackman has called ‘haunting(s)’: histories that are ‘barely articulated, but importantly are communicated, albeit non-representationally’ (Blackman, 2012: xxii).

Particularly relevant to my analysis is Ahmed's (2010) concept of 'awayness', which I adapt to describe the enduring forms of affective detachment and demographic absence that I witnessed across certain field sites; and Avery Gordon's notion of the 'ghostly' as a social figure or 'rememory'—an historical event that is tacitly passed on, loitering in the 'social geography' of the present, like bumping into 'somebody else's memory' (Gordon, 1997: 165-6). These feminist and post-colonial affect literatures, I suggest, provide the conceptual substratum through which to articulate musical affective 'stickiness' as more than just a personal experience of individuation—rather, as a collective genealogical (dis)connection or '[shared] embodied relation to the past' (Bell, 2007: 33). In turn, this brings Gilroy's 'anti-anti-essentialism' into focus, which, in the context of race, diaspora, and black historical consciousness, alludes to how felt dispositions can be commemorated and routed through music (Gilroy, 1993: 102).

A final theoretical domain that is relevant both to this chapter and the next is genre theory. Here, I draw upon Bakhtin's (1986) concept of 'addressivity', and its uptake in music by David Brackett (2005, 2016) and Born (2011), to delineate how the aesthetic choices of cultural producers are partially contingent upon the audiences that they envisage their music to 'address'. As Brackett puts it, an artist makes aesthetic adjustments, often 'not wholly conscious', according to 'an imagined audience', anticipating how their music will be heard (Brackett, 2016: 15). Further, not only is the relationship between 'addressor' and 'addressee' historically contingent, as Bakhtin argued. It is also, as Born (2011: 384) has shown, uncertain and unassured, since there may be a significant difference or 'asymmetry' between the audience that is 'imagined' and the audience that is 'achieved'. Developing this work, I argue that affect is central to an understanding of the parity and/or disparity that occurs between an 'addressed' audience and an 'achieved' audience. In this chapter, for example, I show how cultural producers can fall short of achieving a particular desired or altered set of socio-musical relations precisely because of the stubborn, historically ingrained affective attachments of those to whom the music is 'addressed'. In such an instance, musical affective 'stickiness' becomes central to the *frustration* of an envisaged musical public. By contrast, in the next chapter, I show how cultural producers can knowingly mobilise particular socially

imbued aesthetic gestures as a means of deliberately ‘addressing’ a particular sociality or musical affective register, and can be successful in mobilising this sociality, again due to the power of pre-existing musical affective attachments. In this latter case, an envisaged musical public is *achieved* on the basis of affect. The thesis thus builds on existing work on genre and creativity, particularly that which has examined musical practitioners’ attempts to use aesthetics as a vehicle for social and microsocial change (Born, 2011, 2015; Brackett, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2000; Toynbee, 2000).

Ethnography: Producers, Curators, and their Publics

The ethnography in this chapter draws upon case studies from my electronic/dance and classical music field sites. Each case study describes the work of DJ/producers, musicians, and curators who, at the time of fieldwork, were experimenting with introducing new aesthetics, spatialities, and modes of programming into their musical milieus in an attempt to initiate social change. By social change, I refer to differences either in the demographic makeup of audiences, or in the nature of the social relations that were typically brought into play by performance events, or, in some instances, both.

In the first case study, I focus on a musical event in which Detroit DJ Juan Atkins introduced aesthetic and technical novelties into the techno assemblage, seemingly as a way of challenging ‘superstar DJ’ culture and hierarchical dancefloor relations. I show how these novelties were met with collective resistance from the crowd, at best producing a shared sense of disorientation and irritation. This case study thus primarily centres on the affective dislocations generated between DJ/producer and audience as a consequence of aesthetic change and deviation from genre. In the second case study, I turn to the classical music assemblage. In particular, I focus on contemporary classical music initiatives that are attempting to draw new kinds of audience and dissipate the historically rigid microsocialities of classical music in favour of something more informal and accessible. As with the Atkins example, however, I show that instead of achieving such transformations, these experimental events tend to engender a significant resistance to change, with

audiences remaining largely white, upper middle class, and classically trained, and unable to ‘let go’ of their habituated forms of listening and embodiment. Here, questions of spatiality and architecture become prevalent in my analysis, as do wider social relations of class and race as they mediate classical music history. At the same time, I suggest that there is potentially something more occurring at these new classical music events than mere social and historical reproduction—an emergent interest, even, in how classical music might mutate and evolve for posterity. In this way, the challenging of classical music’s rituals and traditions by new music curators might be generative of a new collective reflexivity and possibly even a new classical music subjectivity.

Techno Assemblages and Affective Interruptions

Juan Atkins @ Village Underground, Shoreditch

8th March 2014

Widely credited as the ‘originator’ of Detroit techno in the 1980s, and a famously virtuosic DJ, Juan Atkins came on stage at approximately 2am at this particular club night to great anticipation from the crowd. Murmurs about what time the techno legend was due to appear had been ricocheting impatiently around the dancefloor for a good hour before Atkins’s appearance, and a surge of people arrived at 1.30am, seemingly specifically to catch his set. Yet, unlike Matt Cutler, aka Lone, who had played before him, Atkins did not beat-match for the majority of his time behind the decks. Whether this was deliberate or accidental remains unclear; but it meant that each time he made a transition to a new tune, his records intruded into one another, rhythmically out of kilter, compelling crowd members to re-adjust to the rhythmic environment roughly every ten minutes. Indeed, the clattering of kick drums between tracks—described by one person as ‘horses at the races’—was all the more overt given how ‘minimal’ Atkins’s selections were: records that consisted of 4/4 kicks, sparse snares, claps and hats, and not much else. Gradually, the affective trail of this performance seeped across the cavernous warehouse venue that is Village Underground. The crowd’s expectations and desires, it transpired, had been greatly frustrated. One Portuguese man in his late

twenties who I asked to ‘think-out-loud’ reported irately, ‘very bad mixing, even if good tunes’; while a 25-year-old university student carped, ‘he’s pulling out some wicked tunes, but his mixing is *diabolical*... I just can’t get into it’, and suggested that Atkins ‘didn’t even compare’ to the ‘impeccable’ DJ set by Detroit techno giant Carl Craig the previous night in Hackney Wick—an event that I had also attended.²⁴ In another ‘think-out-loud’ field recording of Atkins’s set, a distorted but distinctly ‘dodgy mix’ even becomes audible in the background, accompanied by a participant bitterly muttering, ‘fuck’s sake, his mixing’s so ropey!’

Talking to these and other self-professed techno fans at this event, then, it appeared that feelings of annoyance, resentment, and affective stutter were dominating experiences. Atkins’s continual breaching of the boundaries of a musical environment that normally revolves around uninterrupted four-to-the-floor repetition and seamless record transitions, as techno does, precluded audience members’ ability to ‘get into it’ and ‘hit the zone’, instead unwantedly increasing their self-awareness and reflexivity. Moreover, this jolting effect was particularly acute given Atkins’s ‘superstar’ status as the forefather of techno and the high expectations surrounding him.

Drawing upon Born’s four planes of social mediation, I want to identify the mediating qualities that oriented this halting affective situation. First of all, it is relevant that the crowd at this night hailed from a narrow social bandwidth. Although relatively mixed in terms of gender, and drawing a large number of nationalities (Portuguese, Spanish, French, Australian, and Irish), the predominant demographic was young, white, straight, and middle class.²⁵ Such a demographic is typical of the UK techno scene, particularly the heavy European presence—reflective of the genre’s genealogical

²⁴ The irony being that Carl Craig was an acolyte of Juan Atkins and the ‘Belleville Three’ (Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson), closely mentored by Derrick May in the late 1980s and ‘90s.

²⁵ I acknowledge the danger of generalising the class demographic here. My assertion is based on three factors. First, conversations with crowd members gave an indication of people’s composite capitals (Bourdieu, 1984): one group had attended Edinburgh University together, having grown up in affluent London neighbourhoods and attended independent or grammar schools, while others that I spoke to were young graduate professionals. Second, at £15 entry, the ticketing for this event was potentially inaccessible for lower-income groups. And third, other similar events that I attended at Village Underground hailed a similar middle-class social bandwidth, with two employees of the venue confirming that this was ‘the norm’ for their ‘weekend techno events’.

ties to Europe—and the ‘whiteness’.²⁶ Further, it was clear that the majority of those drawn together by the music were invested in a global Eurocentric musicality of beat-matching, technical skill, and DJ proficiency. This was evident not only from conversations with crowd members regarding Atkins’s ‘diabolical’ mixing, but also from the hierarchical constellation of the crowd itself, with all 600-plus individuals facing the stage where Atkins was performing in a one-directional act of ‘DJ infatuation’, meticulously judging his technical abilities and record choices.²⁷ Audience members that I spoke to may thus have been quick to cite rhythmic anomalies and ‘ropey mixing’ as the ‘reason’ for their inability to entrain in a pleasurable way, but the ‘bigger picture’ indicates that their affective experiences were in no way reducible to these sonic features. Rather, the situation encompassed a range of mediating factors: a largely white, middle-class techno crowd, mutually embedded in a competitive global DJ culture of mixing, sonic continuity, and seamless set-building, feeling, it appeared, unanimously irritated by one of the scene’s heroes turning up and thwarting these aesthetic values.

Following my argument in Chapter 3, musically incited affect once again emerges as ‘multiply mediated’ (Born, 2005). Rather than an autonomous force modulating ‘bodies’ in indeterminate ways, or a ‘bad vibe’ freely sweeping across a heterogeneous group of individuals, the hum of disapproval that spread through the crowd at this night seemed, above all, to signal a shared sense of discontent among a group of people who were generically oriented in a similar way, enlisted historically by similar socio-musical experiences, and thus similarly disoriented by the differences that had been introduced into their genre paradigm (the intersections between Born’s second and third planes). This reading is further enriched by the case of Jan, discussed in Chapter 3. Emanating from a similar musical milieu as the Juan Atkins and general Village Underground techno crowd—namely, the European house-techno tradition—Jan was comparatively unable to ‘make sense’ of

²⁶ This relates to my point in Chapter 3 regarding the relative lack of genealogical tie between black British communities and black American-originating musics, including techno. Indeed, while Detroit techno has always been middle class—Atkins, May and Saunderson were from black middle-class families—it was only ever a predominantly black scene in the US (Reynolds, 2013; Sicko, 1999). See Chapter 8.

²⁷ The spatial properties of the venue were also a factor here, with Atkins situated on a raised stage at the front of the oblong warehouse, and powerful spotlights directed towards where he was performing, both of which helped orchestrate the audience into a DJ-focused constellation.

the rhythmic interruptions that framed the reggae dance and expressed similar dismay at what he perceived to be the lack of technical ‘skill’ involved in Jah Shaka ‘turning the power off mid-tune’. In both cases, what emerges is the way in which musical genres and their historically mediated social formations—here, marked by race and class in particular—privilege aesthetics of disruption or seamlessness in different ways. The fractured sonic space of dub reggae may afford a sense of thrill for the predominantly black British audience embedded in its matrix. But for the largely white middle-class ‘affective alliance’ to which Jan and the crowd members at this techno night belonged—one centred on unbroken tempo, technical faultlessness, and a sense of timeless musical continuity—a disrupted, jarring soundscape, particularly when inserted right into the techno assemblage itself, is met with antagonism rather than gratification. The affective disjuncture produced by the Atkins event, then, can in some ways be understood as inter-corporeally connected to, and reflective of, Jan’s musical affective ‘stickiness’ in Chapter 3, only here at a collective level.

Yet, there was, in my view, a further set of mediations arbitrating the crowd’s discontent at this event: mediations of an institutional nature (Born’s fourth plane). The elevated status of the DJ and the emphasis placed on technical skill that the Atkins event made so apparent reflects a set of hierarchical protocols that have escalated to an unprecedented level in global electronic/dance music over the last decade, owing to shifting technological and institutional conditions. These shifts include the growth of live streaming platforms such as Boiler Room, which, through the very positioning of the video camera over the decks and DJ equipment, as well as the fact that you can ‘participate’ in such an event from the privacy of your home, insinuate that the point of electronic/dance music is to attend to the skills of the DJ, rather than to dance or socialise.²⁸ Other shifts include the genre-flattening logics of new electronic music festivals such as ‘Convergence’ and ‘The London Electronic Arts Festival’ (LEAF), where, as it says on the tin, electronic/dance music is contemplated as an ‘art’ form, imported into concert halls and galleries, and analysed through ‘talks, technologies, masterclasses [and] installations’, with iconic figures like Giorgio

²⁸ See <https://boilerroom.tv/>.

Moroder invited to give Keynote Lectures at £15 attendance.²⁹ Linked to this, in turn, is the rise of gallery club nights such as the monthly ‘Tate Lates’ sponsored by Uniqlo at the Tate Modern, where DJs and musicians perform alongside film installations, artworks, and workshops; and, relatedly, the increasing number of collaborations between high profile DJ/producers and symphony orchestras—prominent examples being techno producer Jeff Mills’s ‘Light from the Outside World’ (2015) featuring the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and dubstep innovator Mala’s collaboration with the Outlook Orchestra in 2018. Together with American EDM’s glorification of the DJ, these status and sponsorship changes have accelerated the intellectualisation of electronic/dance music, the expectation of technical perfection, and the individualistic phenomenon of ‘DJ worship’ to an even greater extent than in the 1990s superclub era, when ‘superstar DJs’ first emerged.³⁰ It is against the backdrop of this intense ‘genrefying’ process, then, that Atkins’s non-beat-matched set appears all the more unorthodox, and the antipathy of the crowd all the more explicable.³¹

From this analysis, it is possible to grasp the workings of collective musical affect in more depth. The atmosphere of exasperation that came into being at Village Underground did so, I have suggested, as a result of the way in which people’s musical and socio-cultural histories intersected with the aesthetic variances brought into the event by Atkins’s unconventional techno set. In turn, this was tied to the history of techno as a genre—its norms, forms, and aesthetic values—as well as electronic/dance music’s changing institutional and technological conditions. Together, this constellation of mediations converged to produce not just individual antipathy, but collective antipathy—a collective inability to experience musical pleasure, which was seemingly heightened by contagion and intersubjective relations during the event. Similar to the estrangement that Jan

²⁹ For information about Convergence, see <http://www.convergence-london.com/2017>. For information about LEAF, see <http://www.gigsandtours.com/news/leaf-london-electronic-arts-/1051>. Giorgio Moroder came to prominence as a DJ/producer during the 1970s and is widely credited with pioneering the electronic/dance music subgenre Italo disco.

³⁰ For a discussion of the transformation of the DJ into a ‘superstar’, see Reynolds, 2013; Collin, 2010.

³¹ While it is hard to know for sure, I believe that it was a decision not to beat-match, rather than a mistake, given the highly competitive environment in which Atkins himself learned to DJ. As Derrick May recalls of his and Atkins’s early DJ engagements in 1980s Detroit: ‘Detroit crowds were really particular... if you really weren’t throwing down or you did a fucked-up mix, people would just look at you and walk off the dancefloor. And that’s how we developed our skills’ (May, in Reynolds, 2013: 9).

and Simon experienced in Chapter 3, then, only here on a group scale, members of the crowd that I spoke to displayed a mutual incapacity to ‘sink into’ a new musical aesthetic situation. In so doing, they made perceptible their collective and seemingly resilient attachments to a particular musical genre (techno), rooted in particular technical and aesthetic conventions, and encapsulated by particular kinds of affective experience. The shared psychic and bodily resistance that dominated experiences at this event thus constituted a form of public affective ‘stickiness’ (Ahmed, 2004): a collective embodied disposition shared by multiple people that could not be swayed or mutated.

At the same time, as a method of altering the social relations brought into play by performance situations (Born’s first plane), Atkins’s aesthetic techniques or ‘blunders’—whichever way they are seen—had some interesting effects. Indeed, through the perplexity and frustration enacted by the crowd, the socio-spatial hierarchy that typically stratifies the techno club was destabilised. Not only did Atkins’s chaotic kick drums consistently confound crowd members’ expectations, producing a confused and unsettled social environment. Such rhythmic disorders also rotated people towards each other with questioning looks, pushed conversations outside into the smoking area, and generated a new kind of conversational sociability, temporarily interrupting the intellectualised and individualistic practice of ‘DJ worship’. Seen in this way, the collective affective dislocations produced by this event simultaneously helped to engender an emergent ambivalence and reflexivity among crowd members with regard to the privilege placed upon technical prowess and DJ status in DJ cultures. Atkins’s clunky record transitions and ‘ropey’ mixing thus did not merely constitute a deviation from techno’s aesthetic norms; they also signalled a potential non-conformity to the white-middle-class-heterosexual paradigm of DJ stardom and technical fetish that has come to saturate electronic/dance music of the house-techno tradition. Most crucially, the power of this ‘non-conformity’ hinged upon the way that it challenged, or at least threw into uncertainty, the ingrained musical affective habits of a roomful of deeply encultured individuals, who sought affective attunement and technical perfection rather than interruption. The sonic disruptions produced by Atkins, then, potentialised or opened up a larger set of social and cultural disruptions.

In the next section, I turn to focus on contemporary classical music initiatives. In an interesting reverse scenario of the intellectualisation of electronic/dance music, I show how such initiatives are attempting to draw new kinds of anti-elitist audience and break down the hierarchical microsocialities of classical performance through changes to aesthetics, repertoire, and venue, moving *out of* auditoriums rather than into (or staying in) them.

(Non)classical Music: Collective Resistance, Collective Ambivalence

Over the last two decades, a number of UK-based classical musicians and curators have sought to bring about social change within the classical music assemblage by introducing architectural and aesthetic innovations into live concerts. Through the relocation of classical music to nightclubs, car parks, warehouses, and other urban spaces, as well as the programming of classical repertoire alongside popular and non-Western genres, these new music initiatives seek both to attract new kinds of audience to their events and alleviate the formalities associated with classical music performance. As I show in this section, however, my ethnographic findings point towards the difficulty that such initiatives seem to have in significantly transforming the atmospheres and audiences of classical music concerts in the ways they envisage. Instead, events tend to generate a collective social and corporeal resistance to change, with crowd members remaining largely white, middle class, and musically educated—although significantly younger—and feeling upset or even offended by the differences introduced into the classical music paradigm. Comparable to the Atkins case study, then, this section demonstrates how resilient musically embodied habits can manifest collectively and simultaneously—often, for these particular audience members, as shared waves of uncontrolled antagonism and exasperation. Yet, more than the Atkins example, I argue that such musical affective orientations have a deep historical dimension, dating back to the mid-19th century when the ‘classical concert’ as we know it first came into being.

As Born has emphasised, one of the benefits of ethnography is its ability to open up contradictions between words and actions: to disclose gaps between ‘external claims and internal realities’ (Born,

1995: 7). In my classical music fieldwork, this proved to be a clear truth. In spite of the outward resistance to change that was frequently on display at new music events, talking to audience members privately in more informal settings revealed that many were, in fact, keen to transform their habituated listening practices and formal behaviours, and sought answers as to how they might go about this. Many, for instance, offered curatorial thoughts as to how the tendency to want to listen to classical music in silence, and the ‘uncontrollable’ feelings of intolerance that arise when this is challenged or threatened, might be alleviated to produce a new classical music sensibility. These young classical music participants, then, expressed a very real desire for change that stood in contradiction to their disciplinary actions and conservative attitudes at concerts. Developing the previous case study, this section thus illuminates how ‘sticky’ musical affects not only have the capacity to fix and constrain those affected but may also precipitate shared feelings of ambivalence that give way to reflections upon, and even openness towards, difference and newness.

Silence, Stillness, and Sacrilege

Before delving into an analysis of new classical music initiatives and their publics, it is important to situate such events both historically, and with respect to the wider classical music scene in London currently, so as to understand the continuities and breaks between past- and present-day audiences and the nature of the affective ‘stickiness’ in question. As noted in Chapter 2, there exists an incredibly rich literature on the social history of concert life in Europe and America (Gunn, 1997; Johnson, 1995; Levine, 1988; McVeigh, 1993; Pieper, 2008; Weber, 2017 [1975]). While the focus of these accounts is inevitably different, a common thread that runs through them is an acknowledgement of the fundamental changes to musical culture and society that occurred with the rise of the bourgeoisie during the 19th century. As Weber and Johnson note, prior to this point, concerts in cities like London and Paris were often held in taverns, theatres, and parks, and ‘did not differ greatly in their social manners from the other kinds of socializing and entertainment which took place in those locales’ (Weber, 2017 [1975], np). Arrests for drunken behaviour, ‘[wisecracks] shouted above the music’, and violent fistfights were commonplace in the *parterre* at the Parisian

Opéra in 1750, while audience members of higher social status seated in the upper echelons of the theatre regularly preoccupied themselves with socialising, gossiping, and gazing at noble girls through their opera glasses (Johnson, 1995: 18, 29-30).³² In Johnson's words, '[c]irculating, conversing, arriving late, and leaving early were an accepted part of eighteenth century musical experience', with the opera as undoubtedly 'more social event than aesthetic encounter' (ibid: 31, 10). Further, in both Europe and America at this time, 'miscellany' was the key organising principle behind concert repertoires, with programmes combining a mix of opera selections, virtuosic numbers, ballads, and sacred choral pieces, and opera companies often choosing to replace operatic arias with popular airs or folk songs of the day (Weber, 2017 [1975]; Levine, 1988: 89-90).

By the mid-19th century, however, concert life was almost unrecognisable to what it had been. A major change that took place from circa 1840 was the breaking up of the musical world into factions, which went in 'separate musical and social directions' (Weber, 2017 [1975], np). Benefit concerts, with their inclusion of opera medleys and other miscellaneous elements, started to be seen as 'incoherent' and 'bad taste' by a new middle-class movement that favoured 'serious' orchestral music and classical repertory; and this was to such extent that by 1850, strict boundaries had sprung up between 'low-brow' and 'high-brow' repertoires—a schism that would solidify into 'popular' and 'classical' by the end of the century. In tandem with this split came fundamental changes in audiencing, with the 'high-brow' classical concert hall rapidly becoming a space populated by non-aristocratic, self-made, upper-middle-class citizens who possessed an increasing amount of power (Johnson, 1995; Weber, 2017 [1975]). Further aided by changes to social and legal structure, including the rise of wealth and professional success as alternative channels to birth for acquiring elite status, this new class of educated professionals was soon able to dominate concert audiences, gradually melding bourgeois and aristocratic groups together, and taking on increasing control as the spokespeople for classical music (Johnson, 1995: 228; Weber, 2017 [1975]).

³² As Johnson notes, 18th century Parisian theatres were designed to give a clear line of sight to other boxes in the auditorium, to the extent that it was actually quite difficult to see the stage. For audiences at the time, this didn't matter, since 'being seen' was a higher priority than having a clear view of the opera (Johnson, 1995: 10).

One of the most dramatic changes to accompany this new calibre of audience was the shift wrought to musical ideology, and subsequently, to concert etiquette and behaviour. Indeed, it was through this new middle-class elite that the idealistic principles of listening attentively and respecting the ‘work of art’ started to take shape—principles rooted in a bourgeois penchant for hard work, intelligence, and propriety, and a vigilance towards ensuring these traits were on display at all times lest negligence should bring about ‘a reversal of fortune’ (Johnson, 1995: 231). The growth of this ideological movement was apparent in such behaviours as applauding during particularly impressive or high quality musical performances; a hyper-vigilant politeness and sense of obligation not to disturb others during a concert; a predilection for seats that faced the stage rather than those along the sides of the hall—an architectural consequence of which was the building of rounded rather than rectangular concert halls; and a desire to arrive at the concert hall hours early to secure a place, since concerts were now public affairs and seats no longer pre-allocated (all Johnson, 1995: 69, 231-2, 58, 200).

Above all, an increasing ‘code of silence’ descended upon classical music audiences—a feature that did not simply signal a desire to listen carefully to the music, but that also served to demonstrate the bourgeoisie’s intellectual and moral capacity for respectfulness: their ability to display ‘proper manners’, and therefore their legitimacy as part of an elite social class category (ibid: 232).³³ That these behaviours were soon considered a necessary component of bourgeois identity meant that the absence of, or inability to reproduce, such behaviours signalled exclusion from such an identity. In this way, the ‘policing of manners’ during concerts became an act of self-assurance; a way of shunning those who didn’t conform as socially inferior and ignorant, while affirming one’s own moral and social class position as superior. But what this ‘code of silence’ also initiated was a

³³ There is debate over the extent to which listening habits changed between the 18th and mid-19th centuries. Weber (2017) accuses Johnson (1995) of drawing ‘a sweeping contrast between the two periods’, with the 18th century portrayed as a time when ‘nobody really listened’. Yet, in my reading, Johnson concedes that in 1750, there were moments that brought ‘genuine attention’ to the concert hall. His point rather is that this attentive silence became the norm in the late-19th century to an extent that would’ve been unrecognisable to earlier audiences (Johnson, 1995: 18).

privatisation of affect: a suppression of any outward emotional or passionate response to the music. Partially bound up with enlightenment ideals of the ‘rational’ white, male, heterosexual subject who, unlike his ‘irrational’ non-white, feminine, queer counterparts, supposedly had the capacity to ‘transcend’ music’s dangerous bodily effects, this silent act of submission rendered it difficult for critics and other observers to gauge the internal thoughts and feelings of classical music publics—a challenge that continues today. Where, for mid-19th century audiences, Richard Sennett (1977) surmises that a great sense of fear and anxiety underpinned the resounding silence of the bourgeois concert hall—a fear of embarrassment, a fear of being exposed through an accidental *faux pas*, a profound self-doubt regarding social class identity—for 21st-century classical music audiences, a similar sense of ‘unhappy passivity’ persists, but, I argue later, for different reasons.

By the mid-19th century, then, the classical concert world as we know it had largely taken shape. Indeed, by 1870, ‘there was little in the new concert world which would seem anachronistic today’ (Weber, 2017 [1975], np). What is both remarkable and perplexing is how and why the customs and practices established during this period have endured practically unchanged into the 21st century, in spite of periods of radical social, cultural, and economic upheaval, unthinkable technological advances, and genuine attempted change from within. At no point was change more on the agenda, for instance, than during the post-war decades, exemplified by the numerous avant-garde movements that swept across the globe from the 1960s onwards. To name just some of those to which I refer: John Cage and the New York school, with their attempts to democratise the relationship between composer, performer, and listener through concepts of chance and indeterminacy; La Monte Young’s ‘word scores’ (e.g. ‘Draw a Straight Line and Follow It’), which broke down concert hall conventions in their tendency to culminate in the entire audience and even the performers leaving before the end of a performance; the Fluxus movement with its emphasis on ‘happenings’, audience participation, and performative freedom; the 1970s Dutch avant-garde, which staged protests against the Amsterdam Concertgebouw orchestra in the hope of achieving democratic socio-musical relationships (Adlington, 2013: 4, 16); breakthrough works arising from this Dutch scene, such as Louis Andriessen’s *Volklied* (1971), which was written for an unlimited

number of instruments played by amateur musicians and premiered at a popular music festival (ibid: 19); and the Inclusive Concerts of the early 1970s, which were free to attend and featured jazz and pop alongside classical music in a move that largely mirrors new initiatives today (Adlington, 2004).

Why is it, then, in spite of these and other currents of innovation, that the conventions of 19th century bourgeois romanticism continue to reign supreme in the concert hall? Why does classical music remain tethered to a hierarchical paradigm in which the composer and his or her ‘work’ bind the performers and audience into a policed situation?³⁴ During fieldwork, I attended fifteen ‘conventional’ concert hall events at venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, the Southbank Centre, and Cadogan Hall, and heard repertoire by composers ranging from György Kurtág to Chopin and Debussy to Eric Egan and Gerald Barry. At no event was I not made palpably aware of firstly, the disciplined behaviours that continue to dominate classical concerts, and secondly, the elite social class demographic that enact and endorse such behaviours. Silence during performances, for instance—no coughing or rustling, sitting absolutely still, submitting to the musical ‘work’—was a ubiquitous feature of all concert hall events without exception, including during pieces that were historically intended to disrupt the hierarchical relations between performer, composer, and listener, such as Cage’s ‘Music for Five’ (1988). Indeed, at the end of one Royal Albert Hall concert—a BBC Prom performed by the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra—the conductor Myung-Whun Chung actually congratulated the audience on being the quietest, most attentive audience he’d ever conducted for. ‘Tonight’, he said, ‘you, the audience, were the *real* stars’. Discipline, affective suppression, and silence are thus continuing to be rewarded rather than challenged.

³⁴ In an attempt to answer this, Robert Adlington gives an excellent account of the difficulties faced by the Euro-American avant-garde in their efforts to implement change to the classical music paradigm in the 1960s. The critique of bourgeois values by avant-garde composers, for instance, was complicated by their continuing need to depend upon the institutions of classical music due to specialist performance requirements and the lack of popular audience appeal (Adlington, 2009: 5; 2013: 10). Another issue was the contradictory anti-authoritarianism of many composers: in spite of their efforts to the contrary, some compositional authority always remained, even if it just entailed telling people to ‘move around’. See Adlington, 2009, 2013.



Figure 8: Nikolai Lugansky performing at the Southbank Centre, Waterloo.

But beyond submitting to the socio-cultural codes of silent listening, audience members at such events would also discipline, survey, and scold each other in a manner that appeared almost identical to historical accounts of mid-19th century bourgeois idealism. Stand-out moments of this included an incident where I took my seat at the Royal Albert Hall to hear Henryk Górecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, and the man next to me, who was white, middle-aged, and had the score open in front of him, leaned over and said: 'You *do* know that you're supposed to have your phone switched off'. I replied that I was aware of this and would prefer not to be told what to do, after which ensued a mild altercation between us that culminated in the man shouting, 'LEARN HOW TO BEHAVE IN THE CONCERT HALL!' This experience was not the only one of its kind. Attending a chamber music concert at King's Place soon after, I turned to the woman seated in the row behind to ask if I could look at her programme. Immediately, she pointed to the Exit and told me that programmes were sold 'over there'. I replied that I just wanted to have a quick look, so she reluctantly held her programme open in front of me but would *not* allow me to hold it myself. 'Would you mind if I hold it?' I tentatively asked, knowing I was pushing my luck. 'Certainly not',

she responded in semi-outrage, because I hadn't said 'please', adding, 'even my children know how to say "please"'. Once again, I was publicly reprimanded for apparently not knowing how to 'behave' in the concert hall and had little choice but to accept my scolding or risk causing a scene and being asked to leave. These and other similar scenarios confirmed that classical concerts taking place in traditional auditoria function as more than simply a platform for the display of 'good manners'. They also act as an opportunity for people to discipline and exercise power over each other, seemingly as a means of demonstrating their own propriety and status.

In sum, the concert hall today continues to operate as a space in which social, moral, and ethical boundaries are policed and upheld. Further, these practices are aided by the spatial organisation of the auditorium itself, which places each audience member under the close surveillance of his or her neighbour in a model that resembles Foucault's panopticon prison (MacGregor, 2013). This scenario is seemingly no different from concert hall audiences of mid-19th century Paris, London, or Vienna as documented by Johnson and Weber; audiences that would, in the case of one Parisian listener, enforce 'politeness' with ironically *impolite* proclamations, such as: 'For Heaven's sake, wait... Wait until the intermission to satisfy your terrible talkativeness!' or, 'Wouldn't the slightest bit of education tell you that it shows the worst taste to talk aloud in [the concert hall]?' (Johnson, 1995: 232)—quotes that could almost literally be taken from my fieldwork in 2014. What prevails, in short, is an attitude expressed through passive aggressive gestures and hostile words of *I know better*: an attitude that serves to discipline and dominate the other, and that has endured from c. 1840 to the present, in spite of both attempted change and the widely cited decline of traditional 'high-brow' culture and the respect that it once garnered (Bennett et al., 2009; Prieur & Savage, 2013). The question I am interested in, then, is why have these social relations and microsocial aggressions achieved such extraordinary stability, and just how 'sticky' and intractable are they?

16th November 2013

I now turn to the work of new classical music initiatives in London that are attempting to fuel social and cultural change within the classical music assemblage. I suggest that one way they are seeking to do this is by returning to a pre-19th century model of classical music performance: emphasising 'miscellany' as a programmatic principle, inserting popular elements into classical repertoire, and encouraging non-silent behaviours during performances. My specific focus is on the culminating event of Nonclassical's 'Pioneers of Percussion' festival, which was held at the King's Cross nightclub, Scala, in November 2013.

Founded in 2004 by Gabriel Prokofiev—the grandson of Sergei—Nonclassical is a 'classical club-night' and record label based in East London and is at the forefront of a wider movement currently seeking to 'redefine the rules' of classical music for a 21st-century audience by 'breaking out of the constraints of the traditional concert hall'.³⁵ It is thus, in a similar way to the movement of electronic/dance music into galleries and concert halls, an innovation on Born's fourth plane—music's institutions and historical conditions. Other key players in this contemporary classical scene include the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE), which runs a regular classical music night called the Night Shift (est. 2006); the commissioning organisation Bold Tendencies (est. 2007), which is responsible for transforming the multi-storey car park in Peckham, South London, into an 'arts hub' where orchestra-in-residence Multi-Story regularly perform; the London Contemporary Orchestra (LCO) (est. 2008), which has played concerts at disused London Underground stations and powerplants among other alternative sites; the London Contemporary Music Festival (LCMF) (est. 2013); and re:sound (est. 2012)—a collective of composers, artists and performers who host music events in 'atmospheric, idiosyncratic spaces across London'.³⁶

³⁵ See <http://www.nonclassical.co.uk/about-us/>.

³⁶ See OAE: <http://www.oae.co.uk/about/>; Bold Tendencies: <http://boldtendencies.com/about/>; Multi-Story: <https://www.multi-story.org.uk/about/>; LCO: <https://www.lcorchestra.co.uk/about/>; LCMF: <http://www.lcmf.co.uk/About>; and re:sound: https://www.facebook.com/pg/resoundcollective/about/?ref=page_internal.



Figures 9 and 10: 'Classical Music Minus the Rules' (top); and tuning up at the Night Shift, Village Underground, Shoreditch.

While each of these initiatives has its own set of priorities, an underlying feature is their shared interest in transporting classical music out of the concert hall and into unusual urban venues and neighbourhoods.³⁷ The ‘Pioneers of Percussion’ festival of which this particular Nonclassical event was a part, for instance, had already hosted smaller events at fashionable East London venues such as the indie/live music pub The Macbeth in Hoxton, the nightclub Oval Space in Bethnal Green, and the multi-arts ‘cultural hub’ Limewharf in Dalston. Occupying the 1000-capacity nightclub Scala for their culminating event, Nonclassical pitched the evening as their ‘biggest event ever’, with ‘three rooms of live music and DJs surveying a whole spectrum of percussion-led music’.³⁸ Entry costs were a relatively modest £6/8/12, and the programme ranged from works by Cage, Edgard Varèse and Karlheinz Stockhausen, to performances by Japanese taiko drummer Joji Hirota, Ghanaian percussionist Abass Dodoo and his ensemble ONE-DRUM, and Middle-Eastern percussion duo Dumtak. In other words, as is typical of Nonclassical events, music of the European and American classical avant-gardes was programmed alongside ‘non-classical’ electronic and/or non-Western musical repertoire.

It is significant to note that the differences introduced into the classical music paradigm at this event had some genuinely transformative effects. For one thing, the staging of classical music at a nightclub obviated the need to arrive at a designated time. People turned up in dribs and drabs as they would for a club night, evidencing nothing of the strict time keeping that typically structures an auditorium concert, and with none of the punitive consequences of arriving ‘late’. Meanwhile, levels of inter-audience hostility were considerably less than at other classical music events, with no one hastening me to my seat or attempting to discipline me, as was the case at the Southbank Centre auditoria or the Royal Albert Hall. Further, the spatial distribution of the music, with

³⁷ As I learnt from one classical musician, there are reasons for moving out of the concert hall besides simply wanting to break free of its ‘constraints’. Speaking to what Robert Freeman (2014) has called the ‘crisis of classical music’, one major reason is that orchestras across England are not drawing sufficient audiences to their concerts. As such, they are at risk of having their funding cut. Moving to new spaces is a way of avoiding the critical gaze of public funding bodies and gives the impression that alternatives are being sought.

³⁸ See <http://www.nonclassical.co.uk/news/index.php/2013/10/nonclassical-presents-pioneers-of-percussion-scala>.

multiple performances running in parallel across different rooms—and, amusingly, ‘set times’ stuck to the wall under the headings Room 1, Room 2, etc., as if at a rave—in fact proved a relatively effective way of encouraging physical movement. Crowd members drifted in and out of rooms with drinks in hand in a relaxed manner, sensing no obligation to sit through music they had no desire to hear. In turn, this crowd nomadism enhanced sociability, enabling me, for one, to have many more conversations with audience members than is usually possible within this scene. While elements of the scenario remained bizarre to the point of farce—for instance, the extensive drugs and weapons search at the door, a legal obligation for nightclubs—the event in some ways, then, fulfilled its aim to ‘redefine the rules’ of classical music, overturning stifling concert hall conventions such as the compulsion to sit through an entire performance without moving, or to arrive on time or risk being shut out.

Despite these shifts, however, the alternative location and programming seemingly did little to temper classical music’s disciplinary listening practices. This was highlighted upon my arrival, where I entered into Room 1 to find the entire audience sitting on the floor, physically still and in silence, listening to Cage’s ‘2nd Construction’. Such strict formalities were prevalent throughout the evening and were brought into sharp relief by the way in which this same audience immediately began dancing, cheering, and clapping for Joji Hirota’s and Abass Dodoo’s ‘non-classical’ Japanese and Ghanaian percussion performances, before abruptly reverting to immobile silence as soon as works by Varèse or Stockhausen became audible again, re-implanting themselves on the floor, clapping politely between pieces, and re-entrenching the division between themselves and the performers.³⁹ The nightclub setting thus may well have dispelled certain concert hall protocols, but it simultaneously exposed the ‘stickiness’ of others. Evidently the crowd at this event were embedded in the rituals and customs of classical music consumption in a way that could not be

³⁹ I would argue that mediations other than musical genre also played a role here. The performer was clearly significant, with Abass Dodoo making a concerted effort to get people dancing in a way that the classical musicians did not. Aesthetic qualities were also relevant, in the sense that Cage’s ‘Child of Tree’ clearly ‘affords’ different potentials to Ghanaian drumming with regard to danceability and rhythmic entrainment. Nonetheless, genre played a key role in terms of the extreme *degrees* of formality that came into being with the classical performances.

shifted by a mere shift in venue. Moreover, what was compelling was the way in which informal dancing, talking, and clapping were immediately deemed ‘appropriate’ for the ‘world music’ acts, suggesting that both forms of audiencing are, in a sense, ingrained.

A further distinct feature of this event was the way that the deep-seated listening practices of audience members intersected with the physical architecture of the nightclub in an unforeseeably incongruent way. Specifically, the splitting of performances across rooms coupled with the club’s lack of soundproofing meant that the sounds of Rooms 2 and 3 intruded into the sounds of Room 1 in a fairly relentless manner. For the (many) classically trained listeners present, who sought uninterrupted audible clarity, the fact that muffled non-Western and non-classical performances continuously intervened in the subtle quiescence of classical art music was, to say the least, a significant challenge. At no point was this more obvious than during the evening’s finale: a performance of Steve Reich’s *Drumming* by the Royal College of Music percussion ensemble. As the performance got underway and audience members attempted to immerse themselves in Reich’s complex rhythmic phasing, the sounds of West African drumming seeped into audibility from Room 3 upstairs, invoking a wave of discontent and angry head-turning—a particularly ironic response given Reich’s own indebtedness to African music (see Scherzinger, 2005). Tuts, curses, and mutters spread across the sea of bodies sitting cross-legged on the nightclub floor, while the performers themselves looked increasingly put out.⁴⁰ One crowd member, Scott, a composition student at Goldsmiths, said afterwards that the spilling of ‘background noise’ had ‘totally ruined’ the Reich performance for him; while a Royal College of Music student, Zach, articulated in a post-event interview:

[For me] the event failed in many ways... I thought that the biggest ‘fail’ was when they tried to play something like John Cage ‘Child of Tree’... Or you know, any other [classical piece] that is based on percussion hits in space. But instead [of] percussion hits in space, it was percussion hits in... Ghanaian drumming! Cos

⁴⁰ In presenting this material at Darmstadt Ferienkurse, I was amazed to discover that one of the percussion players who had performed Reich’s *Drumming* at this Nonclassical event was present in the audience. He revealed that the performances in Rooms 2 and 3 were running behind schedule that night and were not intended to coincide with *Drumming* in Room 1. The collision of sounds and genres that vexed the audience was thus not a deliberate curatorial move, but an accident.

there was absolutely no sound insulation at this place, so you could hear fuck all (Zach, November 2013).

Comparable to the Juan Atkins event, the generic and aesthetic divergences brought about by the relocation of classical music to a nightclub, and the fact that these divergences worked against the grain of the idealised concert hall atmosphere, proved to be a source of great frustration for the predominantly ‘muso’ crowd. Yet, whereas the affective disjuncture at the techno night was primarily rooted in sonic-aesthetic and technical interventions, here it was rooted in spatial and architectural differences and the diversification of programme and repertoire, which, in turn, interfered with and affected the sounds of the classical performances.



Figures 11 and 12: The audience at the Scala awaiting the start of Reich's *Drumming*.



Figure 13: The same audience cheering and dancing during the ‘non-classical’ performances.

Taking off the Concert Hall ‘Hat’?

Why does the spatial relocation of classical music and the broadening of its programmes to include diverse global genres prove so difficult for audience members to adjust to? Using Born’s paradigm, I want to draw out two sets of mediations. First, like the Atkins club night, the audience assembled by this event were relatively socially homogeneous and normative to the genre. In spite of the move to a multi-purpose, non-genre-specific venue (the Scala), the demographic of those drawn together remained in line with traditional concert hall events in the sense of being predominantly upper middle class and white, with the only marked difference being the younger age of participants, who were mostly between 20-30. Moreover, of those that I spoke to, almost all were classical composers, promoters, musicians, or music students. Not only, then, did the crowd represent an elite social class demographic—one that has dominated classical music since approximately 1850 (Johnson, 1995; Levine, 1988; Weber, 2017 [1975]); the majority were also professionally invested in the institutions and industries of classical music. The situation thus constituted the coming-together of

a Bourdieusian ‘avant-garde’: a clique of cultural producers and consumers who carry similar ‘composite capitals’ and who, in gathering together, reinforce their resemblance to each other and maintain their position outside of ‘mainstream’ forms (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993). With respect to the exasperated atmosphere that saturated Room 1 during the Reich performance, the presence of this ‘avant-garde’ is significant. It suggests that, far from an arbitrary sonic interruption aggravating a group of ‘bodies’ in a ‘pre-personal’ or pre-mediated manner, it was the specific intrusion of unwanted ‘noise’—non-classical music (African drumming)—into classical performance (Reich’s *Drumming*) that presented such a major challenge, not only to the high-cultured social identities and aesthetic expectations of this ‘avant-garde’, but also to the very status of classical music itself, whose existence depends upon its separation from popular and other musics. What thus materialised was a contradictory sensibility: while the ‘non-classical’ aspects of the event could be enjoyed in isolation, their contamination of the ‘classical’ performances rendered them instantly undesirable and affronting.

A second set of mediations pertains to the social and historical connotations invoked by classical music as a genre, and the apparent intractability of these connotations over time and across space. For this particular audience, the sounds of classical repertoire immediately conjured a very specific set of behaviours, including the consumption of the music in near-silence whilst sitting still; the limiting of polite applause to the end of a piece; and the policing of others to ensure conformity. The sheer dominance of these microsocialities was apparent not only from the passive compliance of the audience, who instantly, and of their own accord, sat down in silence upon hearing classical musicians take to the stage; but also from the fact that such behaviours were reproduced in the unfamiliar setting of a nightclub, rather than simply in the associated ‘grandeur of the concert hall’ (Small, 1998: 25). This suggests that, contrary to the views of initiatives like Nonclassical and LCMF, shifts in venue and spatial location tend to be fairly inconsequential when it comes to influencing classical music’s disciplinary performance socialities. Indeed, the fact that intolerant affective atmospheres and rigid audiencing rituals manifested across all manner of ‘alternative’ urban venues during my classical music fieldwork—from the multi-storey car park in Peckham, to

the Camden Roundhouse, to the ex-industrial warehouse Limewharf, to a World War II bunker in Dalston—supports this, as does the following quote from my participant Zach:

[W]hen I listen to classical music anywhere, I put my kind of concert hall ‘hat’ on. And I listen to the music in exactly the same way. You know, when I hear classical music, it’s like, ‘I’m in a concert hall now. I’ve got to behave really smartly’. Even if [I’m] not actually in a concert hall (Zach, November 2013).

The replication of classical music’s listening practices across different performance spaces is thus palpable; but what is also significant is the young age of those like Zach who obediently reproduce the rules of the concert hall at Nonclassical and other similar events. At the time of fieldwork, Zach was 25 and studying for an MA in composition at the Royal College of Music, Scott was 24, and others that I spoke to at this event were 22, 23 and 27. Rather than rejecting or rebelling against the attitudes and dispositions of previous generations of concert-goers, as the rhetoric of Nonclassical and other initiatives seems to imply is desired, young consumers of classical music appear, on the contrary, to be intimately connected to the immediate and historical past in their uptake of classical music’s conventions. Together with the reproduction of these conventions across diverse performance sites, this would seem to indicate that, more than the ‘dry, miserly narratives’ of concert programming, the ‘uninviting spaces’, or the ‘outmoded’ conservative values of older audience members (Toronyi-Lalic, 2013), it is the cultural hegemony and authority of classical music’s multiple institutions (Born’s fourth plane), together with the unchanging demographic of its audiences (third plane), that holds most sway in orienting classical music’s performance socialities in ways that are so resistant to change (Born, 1995; DeNora, 1995; Goehr, 1992).

From this analysis, a picture emerges of the profound historical continuity and obstinacy of classical music’s behavioural and social norms, with the irritation and anger that spread across the audience during the Nonclassical finale a clear affective manifestation of this. Those who participate in the genre today have thus seemingly ‘inherited’ the very affective register of concert-goers in the mid-19th century: an affective register cultivated as a conscious marker of 19th century heterosexual, white, male bourgeois identity that combined utmost self-control over the body with an ‘immunity’ to music’s ‘irrational’ and effeminate sensuality and emotionality (Kennaway, 2012: 16, 9). The

complete naturalisation of these antiquated social values and their corporeal manifestations today—even among women, queer, and other marginal identities themselves—makes fathomable why Gabriel Prokofiev’s attempts to ‘present classical as if it were rock or electronic music’, not only programming it alongside and ushering it into the venues of non-classical music, but also literally assimilating it with ‘other’ musics via the porous spatialities of the nightclub, tend to summon distinctly dubious responses. Indeed, rather than assuaging the rituals of classical concert-going, Nonclassical’s introduction of spatial and sonic novelties into the assemblage seemed only, on this and similar occasions during fieldwork, to highlight the ‘stickiness’ of such rituals (Ahmed, 2004). In relation to genre theory and Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of ‘addressivity’, it thus becomes clear that musically embodied habits that are historically and viscerally congealed to the extent that they are in classical music can *frustrate* the achievement of an envisaged novel musical public, with Nonclassical unable to draw new diverse audiences and unable to modify the microsocialities and atmospheres of classical music performance in the way they intend due to the power of such affective attachments.

Collective Ambivalence and the Problem of Curation

Like the Atkins event, I would, however, argue that the collective affective resistance on display at Nonclassical did not simply reproduce pre-existing social identities and hierarchies. Rather, in a certain way, the volatile whispering and fidgeting that engulfed Room 1 during Reich’s *Drumming*, as well as the muffled sounds of Ghanaian percussion perplexing the musicians onstage, worked to temporarily destabilise the utopian aesthetic ideals of the classical concert paradigm. In particular, the shared irritation and restlessness that submerged audience members, and the clear lack of control that they felt over the ‘disruptive’ situation, made perceptible the historical fragility of classical music’s hegemonic status and assumed-to-be superior cultural values. For Scott, the Goldsmiths composition student mentioned earlier, the leaking of West African drumming into American avant-garde minimalism appeared to symbolise a genuine threat to the purity of classical music; an attempt

to place Western art music on a level footing with ‘other’—in this case black, non-Western, non-notated—musics, and to thereby dilute its ‘uniqueness’. As he articulated in a post-event interview:

It’s not that I’m against classical music being performed in spaces that aren’t the concert hall... Or even, you know, this whole thing of ‘classical club nights’, treating it like it’s rock music... Actually, the more platforms for ‘new music’ the better, in my opinion. But it still needs to be... Like, kept separate, in some way. It still needs to be its own thing. You know, and the performance conditions that are required need to be respected. Otherwise, well, it won’t be classical music anymore, will it (Scott, November 2013).

Scott’s response makes clear that the accidental ‘sound clash’ that occurred between Reich’s *Drumming* and Ghanaian drumming had some significant outcomes. Indeed, to bring to the surface such a defensively-oriented position, in which traces of a desire for musical autonomy and silent performance conditions—and a fear of their slipping away—were clearly detectable, was to simultaneously make perceptible the precarity of classical music’s taken-for-granted certainties and superiorities, revealing instead the complex construction of such apparent self-evidences through a ‘multiplicity of historical processes’ (Foucault, 1981: 75). In other words, the musical ‘miscegenation’ of the Reich performance, and the agitated affective responses that it induced, created a situation in which classical music’s sedimented historical and social practices could materialise as momentarily uncertain, ‘in the making’, fabricated, and ‘unnatural’, rather than absolute, territorialised and ‘natural’. In turn, this fleeting instability tore at the seams of what Daniel Leech-Wilkinson refers to as the ‘enforced utopia’ of classical music: the historical and institutional relations that have enabled classical music to endure as ‘a perfect society, walled off from the rest of the world... unforgivable to disrupt’, and thus ‘inherently totalitarian’ (Leech-Wilkinson, 2016: 329).

In addition to this more antagonistic reading, however, the intersection of classical music with ‘other’ musical spaces at the Nonclassical event also brought to light a more ambivalent kind of subjectivity. This was apparent in the contradictory positions taken by a number of audience members, who endorsed the work of Nonclassical as progressive and exciting, on the one hand, while continuing, inadvertently, to submit to the protocols of the concert hall and feel angered by

its interruptions, on the other. For one woman, Juliet, who, like Scott, was studying for an MA in Music at Goldsmiths, it was not so much the disturbance of the Reich performance that frustrated her, but what she referred to as her own inability to ‘break free’ from the disciplinary rituals of classical music listening, which—as a classical violinist and singer—were deeply embedded in her personal history and socio-cultural milieu. As she put it in an ‘on-the-spot’ interview:

I think classical music’s really changing as a result of Nonclassical... It’s becoming much more of a ‘cool’ thing to do. I mean, look around the room... It’s like 80% young! That’s kind of unprecedented. To be honest, the only thing stopping me from getting fully on board is myself... Cos I’m—well, we all are, I guess—so used to listening to classical music in a certain way. And it’s so annoying cos it’s so hard *not* to (Juliet, November 2013).

Juliet’s position, caught between optimism and antagonism, captures the specific nature of what I would call the contemporary classical audience member’s ‘unhappy passivity’ (Johnson, 1995: 228). It is an unwanted and redundant passivity: a retained sense of moral obligation towards the concert hall ‘code of silence’ and a habituated tendency to listen to the music ‘attentively’ without disruption, which in fact is often experienced as preventing listeners from achieving the kind of relaxed, somatic musical experiences they purportedly desire. As Juliet recalled of the event in a later interview, ‘I just wanted to be able to enjoy the Reich piece [and not feel bothered by] the shit soundproofing! *That’s* what was annoying me’. In lieu of the perceived sense of fear that stunned mid-19th century audiences into silence, then—so afraid were they of making an erroneous judgement and losing their social status (Sennett, 1977)—it appears rather to be a sense of anguished conservatism underpinning contemporary audiences’ ongoing silence and passivity; an impotence with regard to asserting their agency and liberating classical music from its historical chains; a listening condition that Bill Dietz (2018), in his queer reading of audiencing, characterises as ‘passivity without release’—submission without pleasure.

Significantly, half a dozen others at Nonclassical also admitted that it was a visceral kind of self-resentment, rather than resentment towards the aesthetic and spatial disruptions, that fuelled their frustration. One interviewee, Harvey, who had trained to a high level as a clarinettist, described

how his analytical listening skills prevented him from just experiencing and enjoying the music, and told me about the ‘painstaking process of trying to “unlearn” [his] tendency to want to listen [to classical music] in silence’. Similarly, Zach expressed frustration at his proclivity to enter into the ‘pointless game’ of listening structurally, emphasising that he wished he could ‘boot that side [of him] away’ and ‘just get into it’.⁴¹ In turn, these conversations opened up discussion as to whether particular kinds of classical music might work better in urban space than others. Zach felt that something like Varèse’s ‘Ionisation’ (1929-31), with its focus on texture, timbre, and shifting planes of sound, was better suited to a noisy urban space than, for example, Cage’s ‘Child of Tree’ (1975), where performers are instructed to amplify cacti and other miniscule sounds. Likewise, Harvey commented that long, minimal works like Philip Glass’s *Einstein on the Beach* were, for him, much more amenable to partial listening and wandering in and out of the room than complex, narrative-based works by composers like Harrison Birtwistle. As he put it, ‘[Glass] is more similar to techno—you can leave and come back and not *really* miss anything’. Both Zach and Harvey thus agreed that while Nonclassical and others were doing important work, their events were often ‘not very well thought out’. As Zach surmised, playing high-modernist music in a nightclub is ‘totally inappropriate and stupid... At least choose something more accessible like Laurence Crane or [Peter] Ablinger’.⁴²

While Nonclassical do not always appear able to mitigate the ‘sticky’ affective attachments of classical music listeners in the ways that they intend, then, their events clearly have the capacity to make such attachments public in productive ways, generating a new reflexivity about the classical music listening condition among audience members. At the Scala event, the twin mechanisms of ‘subservience’ to the Great Tradition of classical music, and ‘fear’ of hybridity, non-conformity,

⁴¹ On structural listening, see Dahlhaus, 1989; Subotnik, 1988; Dell’Antonio, 2004.

⁴² Laurence Crane (b. 1961) and Peter Ablinger (b. 1959) are two contemporary classical music composers. For Zach, both produce music that is more accessible to a non-specialist audience and more amenable to an alternative venue than high-modernist works by composers such as Birtwistle or Feldman. In Crane’s case, compositions are often extremely minimal and focus on familiar tonal chords and harmonies. Zach cited Crane’s ‘drone’ piece ‘Raimondas Rumsas’ as an example. In Ablinger’s case, it was also the non-narrative approach and focus on sonic matter and phonographic depiction that Zach felt offered something more accommodating to a lay listener or a partial listening experience.

and irrevocable change, both of which have contributed to the cultural stasis of classical music, were conceivably thrown into uncertainty, with audience members becoming deeply self-conscious and aware of their submissiveness to the music and inability to relinquish themselves from certain sanctioned modes of analytical listening. In turn, this fuelled vibrant conversation both during and after the event about how such sedimented somatic habits could be made compatible with the inventive thrusts of Nonclassical and other new music initiatives—for instance, by focusing on the question of curation and upon which aesthetic features might best (or better) be suited to urban environments, as Zach and Harvey pondered; or by thinking about the kinds of spaces that composers of new music could or should be writing for. Is it the concert hall? Or is it another imagined, ‘non-silent’ space? Discussions such as these revealed that potential change in this scene seems to be coming not from the official curators of new music, but from audience members and composers themselves who, after attending new initiative events, often seemed motivated to *become* curators as a way of responding to the shortcomings of the attempted innovations they had experienced.⁴³

Nonclassical’s ‘Pioneers of Percussion’ festival may not have achieved the informal performer-audience atmosphere that Gabriel Prokofiev envisioned, nor succeeded in attracting new social groups to the music, other than in terms of age; but it still offered glimpses of how classical music advocates like Juliet, Zach, and Harvey might, in the future, become ‘open’ to a new kind of classical music subjectivity. With the persistence and adaptation of new music initiatives, then, together with off-shoot audience and composer-led performance spaces, innovative educational projects, LGBTQ+ adaptations of operas, and cheap ticket schemes that enable greater financial accessibility, it may be that new modes of musical perception, ideology, aesthetic value, and corporeality come into being over time in the classical music assemblage.⁴⁴ This is significant, given

⁴³ One example is the black British composer Hannah Kendall, who, failing to see change materialising in new music with regard to race and ethnicity, wrote her own opera, *The Knife of Dawn* (2016), specifically for a black protagonist, with the express purpose of transforming audiences. Moreover, her mode of address seemed to work, as the audiences drawn to her opera were 45% black and Asian.

⁴⁴ To give some examples of this kind of work: the group Radical Opera put on a queer production of Purcell’s *Dido & Aeneas* as *Dido & Belinda* (2016) that focused on intensive performer-audience exchange; and composer Annie Hui-Hsin Hsieh recently worked with flautist Kathryn Williams to produce ‘Pixercise’

that classical music currently continues to operate as a monocultural space of power and elitism, whose atmospheres, behaviours, and architectures act as barriers to large swathes of the population (see also Chapter 8). Indeed, it is for this reason that classical music as a genre, in my view, demands to be challenged, opened up, and transformed—its exclusions ‘taken into account and kept open to contestation’, rather than ignored and perpetuated (Deutsche, 1998: 289).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how experiences of ‘stickiness’—a term adapted from Ahmed (2004) to describe the resilient affective attachments that people feel towards particular musical assemblages—can be collectively felt, can have historical resonances and continuities, and can be intensely resistant to change, working to sustain and reproduce socio-musical formations over time. Musical affective ‘stickiness’ is not, then, or not only, a self-contained individualising mechanism that arises when one invites heterogeneous individuals into unfamiliar musical situations, as analysed in Chapter 3. Rather, it is a feeling that can be shared or public, by virtue of the way in which live audiences become collectively attached or ‘stuck’ to particular musical histories, socialities, technologies, generic and aesthetic conventions. Specifically, I have shown how such public forms of ‘stickiness’ can be brought to the surface by situations of attempted aesthetic or generic change, where cultural producers seek to challenge or instigate alterations to the norms and forms of their genres.

In addition, I have continued to argue that musical and sonic affect arise out of an ‘assemblage’ of interfering mediations, even where such affects are collective and contagious in character. In other words, rather than endorse the notion that affects are freely circulating and autonomous—leaping between bodies like ‘wildfire’ (Gibbs, 2001: 186)—and rather than adhere to essentialising

(2018)—a piece that required Williams to play Ravel’s *Bolero* on the piccolo whilst doing rigorous forms of exercise, thus dramatically changing both the aesthetics of performance and performer-audience dynamics. Both were instances in which the performance itself became the site of change.

accounts of shared musical affect such as Goodman's (2010), which imply that particular frequencies and vibrations affect 'bodies' in particular ways, I have shown, in the case studies of this chapter, how affects emerge as public or shared when a particular group share a particular orientation towards what is musically desirable or undesirable—an orientation that is simultaneously shaped by personal, socio-cultural, musical, and institutional histories, as well as by the contingencies of a particular live music situation. This is an insight that can only be gleaned through repeated comparative and diachronic empirical work. It becomes obvious, for example, that affective experiences of music are not indeterminate or 'pre-personal' when one considers the recent intellectualisation of techno and other electronic/dance musics and the impact of this on the aesthetic and technical expectations of its Eurocentric, white, middle-class publics; or the historical routing of classical music affectivity and the 'inheritance' of particular 19th century idioms and somatic dispositions over time by an almost identical social class demographic. Questions of music, affect, and temporality will be turned to in more depth in the next chapter.

Finally, the two case studies in this chapter bring both the concept of affect and the thesis as a whole into dialogue with genre theory. This is in the sense that, in both the Juan Atkins and Nonclassical examples, affect and corporeal (dis)pleasure play a pivotal role in mediating the relations between cultural producers/curators and their publics. Nonclassical's experiments with the programming and spatial relocation of classical music, for instance, were met with wildly ambivalent and occasionally hostile audience responses, demonstrating how 'sticky' affective attachments can *frustrate* the achievement of a new imagined musical public, with Nonclassical unable either to draw socially diverse audiences or alter the microsocialities and listening conditions of musical performance in significant ways. As I have argued, however, what is of interest in this scene is how a number of audience members and composers are taking it upon themselves to become curators and agents of change, after recognising the apparent failure of new music curators to bring about substantial transformation. In short, 'addressees' are becoming 'addressors', assuming the positions of leaders and organisers in their field in order to experiment with new modes of 'address' (Bakhtin, 1986). The questions that remain are: what is the telos of these emerging meta-experiments, and

who are their envisaged publics? Is transformation in the classical music assemblage a performance-based, infrastructural, and promotional question, as well as a curational one? These questions are returned to in Chapter 8.

In the next chapter, I turn in greater depth to questions of genre, history, and creativity, focusing on how particular kinds of affect can prevail and endure across certain musical lineages over time, culminating in an affective ‘stickiness’ that gets transmitted intergenerationally. Further, building on the current chapter, I examine how cultural producers can experiment with using their own creative practice to initiate social and microsocial change within such assemblages. In this way, I develop conceptual links between music, affect, the social, and the temporal.

Chapter 5

Intergenerational Affect: Genre, Genealogy, and Creativity

'To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it'

Avery Gordon (1997: 7)

Introduction

Continuous with the previous chapter, I now go deeper into questions of history, genealogy, and genre theory as a means of examining the 'sticky' nature of certain musical collectivities. I approach these issues by engaging with London-based DJ/producer Jack Latham, aka Jam City, who has, over time, become reflexive with regard to the gendered social relations of the UK grime/bass music scene in which he operates. Connecting the contemporary situation in grime and bass music to the historic and ongoing absence of women from dub reggae, I use the case of Latham as a prism through which to examine not only shared musical affective attachments and forms of embodied (dis)connection among audiences in the present, but also in relation to particular genre lineages over time. In this way, I enrich the Nonclassical case study of the previous chapter, attending to the histories and continuities that enable a particular musical affective disposition to endure, while analysing in detail the mechanisms that lie behind this kind of musical affective 'routing'. In the latter part of the chapter, I turn to questions of creativity, exploring the potential for DJ/producers to initiate socio-musical transformation through aesthetic intervention. In particular, I quote from an interview with Latham in which he describes how he is attempting to use his creative practice to initiate social change and transform the publics to which he performs.

Gender, 'Awayness', and the Dub–Dubstep–Grime Continuum

In June 2014, I met and interviewed DJ/producer Jack Latham, better known by his alias Jam City. Hailing from a different sphere of electronic/dance music to Juan Atkins, namely grime and UK

bass music, Latham has been active as a producer since 2010, releasing music predominantly through the London-based label Night Slugs.⁴⁵ We met in the middle of a baking hot summer's day at a Turkish café in Camberwell, and one of the first things Latham said to me was that he was 'always having thoughts' about his crowds while DJing. This manifested soon enough when the interview progressed from introductory questions about biography to the issue of male-dominated audiences and 'masculine energy' in certain spheres of London-based electronic/dance music. Both Latham and I agreed that, in our experiences—his as a DJ and mine as an ethnographer and audience member—London played host to a multitude of male-gendered musical publics.⁴⁶ The primary culprits for this, we felt, were dubstep and grime, both of which emerged in the early 2000s in London, as well as their offshoots, post-dubstep, instrumental grime, and bass music.⁴⁷ Captivated by our conversation, I conducted a second interview with Latham over Skype in April 2015. This time, we not only delved deeper into the possible reasons why overtly male-dominated crowds continued to persist in many club environments, but also discussed the role of creative practice in sustaining, enabling, and potentially transforming such gendered assemblages. Indeed, Latham's discomfort regarding the overwhelmingly male musical sphere in which he operated was such that he had begun to attempt to challenge this through his own musical practice.

The themes of these interviews form the basis of this chapter. Moving beyond a focus on single events, as in Chapter 4, I first trace a genealogy of musical affective attachment by analysing a series of related genres. Specifically, I examine the prevalent absence of women from British dub reggae since the 1970s and explore the ways in which this uneven gender dynamic has been carried

⁴⁵ Night Slugs began as a club night in the mid-late 2000s with line-ups that featured dubstep and grime-inspired artists. It developed into a record label in 2010 and is characterised by its melding of grime, dubstep, US Jersey club, and UK funky.

⁴⁶ This of course does not refer to queer musical spaces that draw predominantly male crowds. The musical publics referred to in this chapter, notably dubstep, grime and their offshoots, are overwhelmingly straight as well as male-dominated.

⁴⁷ Grime and dubstep shared much in common at the outset: both took influence from dub, jungle, drum 'n' bass, and UK garage, and both initially operated through an infrastructure of small club nights and pirate radio, with much cross-over between artists and ideas. But whereas dubstep evolved into an instrumental music in which MCs played a subordinate role to DJs, grime elevated MCs to centre stage, precipitating the genre's close affiliation with rap. Although grime and dubstep were both overtly male-dominated, the main focus of my analysis in this chapter is dubstep, since it had an enduring presence in clubs in ways that grime did not, because grime events were perpetually closed down by the police. See Stirling, 2017.

forwards to later electronic/dance music genres such as dubstep, grime, and bass music via aesthetic, spatial, technical, and socio-cultural retentions. I thus illuminate how musical affect can not only manifest collectively, but historically and intergenerationally too, with particular kinds of impressions, atmospheres, and orientations transmitted and passed down through time. The ethnography in this chapter draws upon my dub reggae and electronic/dance music field sites, noting in particular their historical interconnections and the ways in which certain subgenres of the latter have consciously inherited particular aesthetic traits and affective potentials of the former. The chapter thus becomes historical to a greater extent than the previous two chapters.

The Nature of Culture

My first experiences of male-gendered publics in electronic/dance music predate this thesis considerably, stretching back to London-based dubstep nights FWD>> and DMZ in 2006-7.⁴⁸ The crowds were overwhelmingly male: I would go with a group of male friends and would always be in the minority as a woman. Similarly, Latham's experiences as a DJ and producer have also been of drawing male-dominated audiences. After signing to Night Slugs in 2010 and releasing his *Magic Drops* (2010) and *Waterworx* (2011) EPs, both of which employed elements of early grime and dubstep such as bass weight, half-step tempos, and waveform synth glides, Latham progressively found himself operating in, and limited to, a sphere of masculine audiences and club environments. As he noted in interview:

[A]s you begin to release records—as you become a commodity—you suddenly find yourself playing to crowd after crowd of boys. Because that's the discourse that surrounds your record (Jack Latham, April 2015).

These initial observations raise the question of why gender is so little mentioned in scholarly literature on and media coverage of these musics. Indeed, women's unequal representation on dancefloors is still quite often denied. Rebekah Farrugia sees electronic/dance music's 'gender

⁴⁸ See <http://www.ilovefwd.com/> and <http://www.dmzuk.com/>. This was around the time that the dubstep scene was opening up to students.

problem’ as limited to spheres of production, DJing, and other ‘authoritative’ roles, upholding dancefloors as accessible feminine spaces (Farrugia, 2012: 6). As she notes in her ethnography of female DJs and producers, ‘the freedom women experience on the dancefloor is not reflected on the stage or in the studios’ (ibid: 33). Yet, while dancefloors certainly can be, and have historically been, liberating spaces for women (see McRobbie, 1994; Pini, 2001), to romanticise the dancefloor as normatively feminine and women-friendly in this way is problematic. In particular, it ignores the fact that women often do not even *reach* the dancefloor (Stirling, 2016b).

Where issues of gender have been addressed more directly in relation to dubstep and bass music, the commentary remains invariably essentialising. Simon Reynolds is quick to attribute the label ‘bro-step’ to the distorted ‘chainsaw’ sounds of US dubstep, condemning the music as rowdy, macho, and offensive to women on the basis of its ‘filthy’ ‘wobble bass’ lines (Reynolds, 2013: 702). In so doing, he implies that the sounds of US dubstep are inherently masculine and repellent to women. Similar conclusions are drawn regarding the transition from drum ‘n’ bass to UK garage in the late 1990s, where Reynolds notes that ‘women left the dancefloor *en masse*, bored by the harsh, tuneless dead end [of] drum and bass’ to seek refuge instead in the garage rooms, which satisfied ‘the female demand for singalong choruses, diva vocals and wind-your-waist rhythms’ (ibid: 559).⁴⁹ The problem with such narratives is not that they are historically inaccurate: most writers would agree that UK garage dancefloors were more gender-equal than drum ‘n’ bass dancefloors (Bradley, 2013; Collin, 2010; Gilbert, 2014). Rather, it is the way that these gendered musical dynamics are presented as ‘natural’, for accounts like Reynolds’s exemplify essentialist beliefs that particular sounds and aesthetic qualities are intrinsically abhorrent to ‘women’.

One of the aims of this chapter, then, is to redress these essentialist approaches by turning to questions of time, history, and the intergenerational transmission of affect. Developing the case of

⁴⁹ The term drum ‘n’ bass arose in the mid-late 1990s, when jungle lost its dancehall influences—particularly MCs chatting over the music—transitioning to an instrumental music. UK garage emerged in the late 1990s, reintroducing vocals and MCs.

my participant Simon and the gendering of house and garage in Chapter 3, I seek to unravel the historical processes by which musical genres become imbued with gendered connotations in the first place—connotations that may then work to attract or repel particular gendered identities in visceral, even pre-conscious ways (Born, 2011; cf. Bourdieu, 1984). Further, I show how these orientations of ‘towardness’ and ‘awayness’ can ‘stick’ for long periods of time (Ahmed, 2004: 8-10), becoming thoroughly ingrained, and leading to the persistent absence of certain social groups from certain musical lineages. In this way, I not only shed light upon the historical mechanisms that enable the social to ‘get into’ music—in Born’s terms, how the third plane ‘gets into’ the second and first (Born, 2011, 2012). I also show how these socio-musical connotations can pass across generations via the routing and ‘inheritance’ of particular aesthetic and material gestures (Gilroy, 1993). It is through such processes, I argue, that associations between particular musical formations, on the one hand, and social formations, on the other, become ‘naturalised’.

A further important argument of this chapter, and one that returns in Chapter 8, is that it is not only musical sounds that accrue reified social connotations, but other aspects of the assemblage, such as the spaces, technologies, and material qualities that mediate and envelop the music. This was brought to my attention during fieldwork when a number of women expressed a strong affinity for dub reggae and grime but admitted that they wouldn’t participate in these musics’ live scenes because the vibes and protocols of the spaces in which the music was embedded made them uncomfortable. Such discrepancies emphasise the irreducibility of Born’s second and first planes—the way that a certain social group can be part of a ‘musically imagined community’ while simultaneously feeling unable to participate in that music’s co-present forms. The male-gendering of musical crowds thus cannot simply be taken as a marker of women’s musical tastes or distastes, as Reynolds conveys, since such absences often stem from complex mediations, including the atmosphere discharged by the sites in which the music is performed, and the social, discursive, and technical mediations of the live scene. The flooding of women into dubstep during its global explosion, when the venues and networks of publicity became more accessible, supports this; as does the mixed-gender demographic of dubstep and grime festival crowds—for example, Rampage

Sound System at Notting Hill Carnival—in comparison to the male-dominance of these genres at regular venues. As noted in Chapter 2, such complexities highlight the importance of theorising music as an ‘assemblage’—a theme that I return to in Chapter 8.

In what follows, I illustrate the workings of music’s multiple mediations by analysing the evolution, development, and relations of influence between dub reggae, dubstep, and post-dubstep. Through this analysis, it becomes possible to grasp what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls ‘the nature of culture’ (Trouillot, 1992: 30): the continuous processes of ‘retention and renewal’ that underlie apparently ‘natural’ socio-musical formations in the present. In so doing, I offer a non-essentialist, affect-oriented understanding of musical and social stabilities.

Come Meditate on Bass Weight

The earliest FWD>> and DMZ dubstep nights that I attended were dark, slow-moving, heavily corporeal spaces. The sound pulsating from the sound systems was more powerful than I had ever experienced. As Latham reflected in interview, these nights were largely comprised of the ‘heads’, the listening crews, and the ‘trainspotters’—those who were in it for the tune, the mystery of the dubplate test pressing. They weren’t hyperactive drug-fuelled spaces, nor were they (seemingly) aggressive, predatory, or sexual, as the name DMZ, or ‘de-militarized zone’, suggests. They were also significantly mixed in terms of race, age, and class. Nevertheless, such nights brought in very few girls and women, and in so doing, generated a particular kind of masculine energy that put ‘gender’ at the forefront of my experience.

The dub reggae influence at these early dubstep nights was manifest in a plethora of ways. Most palpably, the music itself was saturated by a dub aesthetic. Evaporative reggae vocal samples and reverberating snatches of ‘Rastafari’, ‘Jah’, and ‘Bury the Bwoy’ would echo across the dancefloor, while almost every tune possessed a hard-hitting syncopated bass line, minimalist drum patterns,

cracking snares, and an ambient spacious aura.⁵⁰ Other dub reggae traces included a certain ‘sonic dominance’ (Henriques, 2003), owing to the wide frequency response of the sound systems at the venues—Plastic People and Third Base/Mass—where FWD>> and DMZ took place; as well as the introverted and serious atmosphere, with stacks of (mostly male) ‘eyes-down’ listeners dancing minimally in their own psychic headspaces, or hovering in controlled stationary poses in the midst of the subs. Practices such as flashing lighters in the air, which is a symbol of approval in Jamaican dancehalls (Cooper, 2004), and a preference for marijuana as the drug of choice, also set these events in the dub reggae lineage; as did agents of the dubstep micro-media who used such slogans as ‘Come Meditate on Bass Weight’, invoking the Jamaican sound system tradition through ‘bass weight’ and the historical theme of dub as a music of ‘meditation’ (Veal, 2007: 202).

Of course, stylistically, things were more complex. Dubstep fused influences not only from dub and roots reggae, but also from 2-step garage and jungle—genres that, initially at least, were both popular with and accessible to women (Bradley, 2013: 360; Gilbert, 2014; Reynolds, 1999). Dubstep’s aesthetic influences were therefore not only multiple and composite, but explicitly tied to women-friendly genres too. Crucially, however, what dubstep innovators retained from 2-step, UK garage, and jungle were the (male-connotated) bass and drums, hard-hitting syncopations, and rhythms, rather than the (female-connotated) R&B vocals, fast-chat, or swing.⁵¹ In this way, dubstep dropped the soul and funk influences along with the supposed ‘femininity’ that were central to the earlier genres. Indeed, the very name ‘dub-step’ arose from the premise that the sound was a ‘dub’ approach to ‘2-step’, with pioneers stripping the vocals from 2-step garage records to produce instrumental ‘versions’—as dub did to reggae—that were darker, more experimental, and less pop-inflected. In spite of its multifarious influences, then, dubstep’s overall aesthetic was far closer to dub and roots reggae than it was to the more playful, danceable, sexualised vibes of UK garage or

⁵⁰ For further listening on dub-influenced dubstep: Digital Mystikz & Loefah ‘Ten Dread Commandments’; Digital Mystikz ‘Give Jah Glory’; Mala ‘Bury the Bwoy’.

⁵¹ Fast-chat was an English take on the Jamaican dancehall aesthetic of ‘toasting’—improvised rapping over bass lines—and was central to jungle.

jungle. Dubstep was thus, in a sense, gendered from its inception: an effect of new boundaries drawn against aesthetically ‘feminine’ musical features and elements (Straw, 1993).

Roots Reggae, Stillness, and Black Masculinity

How and why is it that sonic qualities such as bass weight, percussive minimalism, and half-step tempos have become naturalised as ‘male’ or ‘masculine’ in this genre lineage? Why is it that other sonic qualities such as swing, sung vocals, and mid-range sounds are perceived as more ‘feminine’ or ‘girly’? Moreover, how have these extra-musical connotations been ‘projected into’ musical sound, such that they are now perceived as deriving or originating from those sounds (Born, 2011)? What historical and cultural processes have contributed to this socio-musical ‘naturalisation’, and how do such processes work to orient particular social groups towards or away from particular musical lineages over time?

To answer these questions, I want to uncover how gender saturates one of dubstep’s key influences, dub reggae. I do this by drawing upon my dub reggae fieldwork together with historical accounts of dub reggae. As introductorily described in Chapter 3, the contemporary dub reggae dance is a highly specific material, socio-cultural, and historic space. Many of the dances that I attended during fieldwork took place at one of London’s West Indian Cultural Centres, although more mainstream nightclubs such as the Scala in King’s Cross and Village Underground in Shoreditch also hosted regular reggae nights.⁵² Upon arriving at one of these events, it is common to find three or four different sound systems in attendance (e.g. Channel One, Jah Youth, Spartacus Sound...), positioned in opposing corners of the room. As one crowd member emphasised, this is generally not for the purpose of ‘clashing’ but represents a peaceful ‘meeting’ of sounds so that, as a dub follower, you can listen out for the sound system you like best and go out to hear them again in the future. In comparison to more commercially popular reggae nights such as Jah Shaka, which are always busy, events taking place at cultural centres are often relatively empty, with crowds of no

⁵² Specifically, my dub reggae fieldwork centred on Caribbean-run venues such as the Caribbean Edge in Bruce Grove, the Golden Palace in Edmonton, and Orleans Wine Bar in Finsbury Park, in addition to University of Dub at the Scala, Jah Shaka at the Dome, and Channel One at Village Underground.

more than 100, even on a Friday night. Yet, like Jah Shaka, the music is fervently Rastafari-themed, with classic roots records such as Black Uhuru's 'I Love King Selassie' and Dennis Brown's 'Revolution' dominating the sets, and often some up-beat steppers rhythms at the end of the night.



Figures 14 and 15: A regular sound system event at the Golden Palace, Edmonton.

One distinct similarity between these dub events and early dubstep nights is the energy: the slowness, the dedication and passion of those listening, and the meditative atmosphere. Frequently, audience members at dub reggae nights would stand in lines against the walls or listen with their backs or ears pressed to the stacks to ‘get a flavour’ of the different sound systems, while others would occupy the centre of the room in relatively still, controlled poses, nodding their heads to off-beats. These socio-musical spaces, then, can best be described as introverted, bass-driven, weed-soaked, and buoyed by an immense wattage of sound and vibration, just like FWD>> and DMZ were. With the exception of more mainstream reggae events such as University of Dub and Jah Shaka, which, as noted in Chapter 3, tend to draw more socially diverse crowds, these events are also 95% black and male. Indeed, while dances would occasionally draw a small contingent of older black women, and even of white women, there was very rarely a young black female presence. When asked about this situation, men replied that ‘it wasn’t [their partners’] kind of music’, or that women ‘prefer having a dance’, and so tend to go to dancehall nights instead. One said of his British Jamaican girlfriend: ‘She knows it’s my night... I don’t really like dancehall. So, we’ll just go out separate’. That dub reggae events are predominantly male is thus widely accepted as a ‘natural’ fact, not only among my participants but in much of the dub literature too (Chang & Chen, 1998; Henriques, 2011; Henry, 2011; Veal, 2007).

I want to suggest that this gendered dynamic has specific historical roots. During the 1970s, roots reggae became firmly established in London. Departing from earlier Jamaican musical styles such as ska, which were heavily influenced by American rhythm and blues, roots reggae marked the point at which Jamaican music became darker, more bottom-heavy and brooding, ruminating on themes of African repatriation, blackness, and cultural resistance. In Britain, this more militant aesthetic mood was exacerbated by the extreme racism, hostility, and violence that black communities faced at the time. As Gilroy notes, black men in Britain in the 1960s and ‘70s were stigmatised *a priori* as criminals, agitators, and illegal immigrants, subjected to severe forms of racist policing and police malpractice (Gilroy, 1982a; Hall et al., 1978; Riley, 2014: 105). That their empowerment and political strength were achieved through a musical sociality of ‘conscious’

introspection, militant marching, and politicised chanting, as opposed to one of frivolity and light-hearted leisure, is thus not surprising.⁵³ What comes to the fore, in a manner similar to Keil's (1992) *Urban Blues*, are the mutual mediations that occur between wider social identities and historical conditions, on the one hand, and music's performance socialities, on the other. Legacies of colonialism and displacement, an abhorrently racist police force, and the vulnerabilities associated with black masculinity—all coalesce in the slowness and stillness of the reggae dance to produce a sensibility of controlled calm that not only reflects the slow tempo of the music, but also constitutes an expression of blackness at a moment of deep historical anxiety. As André Lepecki puts it, 'standing still' against the flow of the present, against 'the busy background of historical agitation' is a resistant act; an act of defiance that inverts temporality, privileging 'presence rather than movement' (Lepecki, 2000: 354-6). In stark contrast to the mannered bourgeois stillness of the concert hall, stillness in reggae is thus a politicised corporeality: a posture of resistance against enforced movement, displacement, and deportation—and one that takes on renewed significance in the context of the recent Windrush scandal and the ongoing hostile environment in the UK.

In tandem with this musical-corporeal shift, the transplantation of Rastafari to the UK proved particularly influential among British Caribbean men, with its explicitly anti-Euro-American—although also, at times, anti-female—dreadlocks symbolism and dread vocabulary, both of which retained aspects of the creole counterculture 'reputation' that had made the crossing to London in the form of male street life and 'crews' in the 1950s and '60s (Hebdige, 1987: 78).⁵⁴ Again, the adoption and transmogrification of Rastafari politics and theology played a central role in mediating the performance socialities of reggae. As Matumbi band-member Dennis Bovell said of the early 1970s: 'The whole vibe at reggae dances in London chang[ed], it got darker and oppressive, and as the music became more about roots and rockers it became very macho and male-dominated. Women

⁵³ Indeed, a decade and a half later, musical forms rooted in ecstasy and hedonistic abandon were still felt by many young black people to be inappropriate, hence both the 'whiteness' of hardcore rave, and the emergence of jungle in the 1990s, which constituted the 'black' take on rave. See Chapter 8.

⁵⁴ As Barry Chevannes establishes, the Rastafari dreadlocks phenomenon 'symbolized both a rejection of social control... [and] a triumph of male power over the female' (Chevannes, 1995: 97). While Rastafari was very different in the UK than it was in the Caribbean—more stylistically and politically oriented than religious—negative ideas about women nonetheless informed certain strands of British Rastafarianism (Gilroy, 1982b). On the values of 'reputation' and 'respectability', see Wilson, 1995; Besson, 1993, 2002.

used to talk about “Rasta-for-*him*, not Rasta-for-*I*”, and dances used to be full of a whole heap of man’ (Bovell, quoted in Bradley, 2013: 228). This is, indeed, supported by the experiences of Dubplate Pearl, a female reggae DJ from South London, who recalls making trips to record shops in the ‘70s, and having men behind the counter point at her and say: ‘She’s not part of a sound system, don’t sell anything to her’ (Pearl, quoted in Finamore, 2016).

Lovers’ Rock, Love, and Resistance

As is often the case with musical movements, however, roots reggae motivated a counter-reaction in the form of a new subgenre. Lovers’ rock, as this subgenre came to be known, responded to the problem that for second-generation black British teenagers, particularly girls, who had grown up with Top of the Pops, Youth Club discos, and American soul, roots ideologies ‘framed predominantly through male vocal chords’ made little sense (Palmer, 2011: 188; Bradley, 2000: 438-9). In particular, many young black women could not relate to the male-dominant worldview of Rastafari and righteous love, especially against the backdrop of the glamorous black cultural currents that were circulating out of Detroit and Philadelphia in the form of groups like the Supremes and the Jones Girls (Bradley, 2013: 218).⁵⁵ Detecting dissatisfaction, Bovell and others like Lloyd Coxson started using their crowds as ‘focus groups’ and soon recognised the demand for soul and R&B as well as reggae (ibid: 222). Particularly telling was the abundance of female contestants queuing up to sing reggaefied versions of pop songs at Coxson’s weekly Star Search talent contest in Dalston, to which Coxson responded by creating suitable riddims. Through this reciprocal creative process between Coxson and his audiences, a unique diasporic subgenre of soulful reggae gradually began to emerge, and in 1975, the first lovers’ rock single was pressed: Louisa Mark’s ‘Caught You in a Lie’. It was a massive hit, and it inspired young women all over the UK to put themselves forward as singers, leading to the formation of the Lovers’ Rock label. Lovers’ rock, then, evolved through a process of mediation between musical publics—specifically,

⁵⁵ As lovers’ rock singer Janet Kay put it: ‘So many of us loved reggae music, but didn’t feel part of the Rastafari movement, of roots and back to Africa. I understood what it was about, but I didn’t feel it related to my life’ (Kay, in Bradley, 2013: 218-9).

black British teenage girls—and musical producers, with the former decisively influencing the aesthetic choices of the latter. As I show later, it is precisely this ‘focus group’ approach that fuels Latham’s musical process today, with his male-dominated crowds acting as a catalyst for his questioning of whether things can be done differently in creative practice to initiate social change.

The significance of lovers’ rock accommodating young black Britons’ tastes for American soul and R&B was that these were musical genres in which black women were audibly and visibly prominent. By incorporating such influences, lovers’ rock facilitated the emergence of a socio-musical space within British reggae culture that was more ‘loving’ and less hostile to black women (Palmer, 2011; hooks, 1992): a space in which women had a degree of authority, were able to take control of the mic, and were afforded the opportunity to become superstars through the democratic (traditionally Jamaican) process of auditions.⁵⁶ While still remaining part of the roots reggae scene, then—often, indeed, sharing the same blues parties—lovers’ rock signalled a rhetorical departure both from the male-dominance of reggae sound system dances and the androgenic eroticism of Rastafari-inspired roots reggae (Cooper, 2004: 3, 82; Palmer, 2011: 180, 183). As Lisa Amanda Palmer notes, it was a subgenre that articulated for the first time a ‘narrative that said black males *and* females were deserving of a space to express an erotic interlocking politics of desire, joy, pleasure, love, and justice’, providing ‘safe countercultural spaces for the erotic expression of black sexual subjectivity’ (Palmer, 2011: 189, 183). For Palmer, lovers’ rock must therefore be seen as politically equal to ‘conscious’ roots reggae, carving out an alternative but equally insurgent politics of blackness through the furnishing of ‘hot spaces, sensual sanctuary and intimate communion’ (ibid: 183).

Building on Palmer’s work, I want to suggest that lovers’ rock not only constituted a new site of black British Jamaican-influenced music-making—one that drew mixed-gender audiences and

⁵⁶ In their search for new female artists, those involved in the Lovers’ Rock label employed a standard Jamaican studio strategy of holding weekly open auditions. While women’s presence increased with lovers’ rock, however, the reggae scene as a whole remained profoundly male-dominated. As Palmer notes, women’s agency in lovers’ rock was ‘compromised by [young] age, a lack of female ownership of recording studios [and] the rarity of finding female musicians [who were not vocalists] to form female bands’ (Palmer, 2011: 186).

transformed the erstwhile gendering of reggae culture. It also served to kick-start a new trajectory of black female-oriented subgenres that became increasingly distanced from roots reggae and dub in the UK—a ‘non-assimilatory’ set of musical styles that began with lovers’ rock, continued with women’s (and younger men’s) gravitation towards the more gregarious and sexualised spaces of UK soul and dancehall in the 1980s, and escalated with jungle and UK garage in the 1990s. Indeed, across all of these genres, a transgressive ethics of black sexual expression, female eroticism, and public intimacy is retained and carried forwards.

How exactly did this ‘routing’ of black femininity and musicality take place? First, the assertion of gender equality in lovers’ rock, where young black women *and* men both ‘made’—through crowd response—and produced the hits, resonated with the comparably gender-conscious UK soul scene the following decade, exemplified by former lovers’ rock singer Caron Wheeler mobilising a ‘blak’ politicised and feminised sensibility both as lead vocalist of UK soul act Soul II Soul and in her solo album *UK Blak* (1990).⁵⁷ In turn, this sense of feminine agency fed into dancehall’s more sexually-oriented oppositional ethos of ‘women giving as good as men’ (Cooper, 2004: 11), where, as Bibi Bakare-Yusuf notes, black women began to respond to patriarchal conservatism through a hyper-feminine, openly sexual ‘bare-as-you-dare’ fashion, rendering women ‘highly visible’ and disrupting conventional conceptions of respectable feminine comportment (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006: 470-1, 465).⁵⁸ Second, rather than mimicking the musical and technical set-up of British roots reggae, lovers’ rock reinvigorated the Jamaicanism of talent contests and the democratic practice of ‘passing the mic’—something that came to full fruition with the rise of deejays (MCs) in 1980s dancehall, and continued with fast-chat in 1990s jungle. And third, as lovers’ rock evolved, the

⁵⁷ As William ‘Lez’ Henry notes, ‘By omitting the letter “c”, Wheeler was making a profound Africentric political statement that reflected a conscious move by certain members of the black community to distance themselves from the negative connotations of black’ (Henry, 2006: 27, quoted in Palmer, 2011: 181).

⁵⁸ This reading of dancehall as a feminised space draws on Carolyn Cooper (2004), who argues that women’s preference for the sexualised spaces of dancehall in Jamaica is comprehensible when understood as a desire to empower and celebrate the black female body, women’s sexuality, and fertility (ibid: 17). Rather than condoning patriarchy through female objectification, as critics suggest, Cooper’s view is that—both at home and in the diaspora—dancehall can be theorised as a radical, liberating space for women (ibid: 11). Bakare-Yusuf and Donna Hope support this view, though unlike Cooper, both acknowledge the contradiction central to dancehall: that while women are able to express sexual power and agency, their excessive femininity simultaneously enables ‘male scopic mastery’ (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006: 472; Hope, 2004).

sounds themselves grew progressively distinct from dub reggae. In addition to the soul influence, lovers' sound systems rebalanced away from the extremes of weight (bass) to incorporate the entire sonic spectrum (Bradley, 2013: 235), foreshadowing the reduction of bass and conventional reggae bass lines in a number of the later genres, notably soul and dancehall. Moreover, toasting and chatting, which did not feature prominently in 1970s British reggae, but proved central to dancehall, jungle, and UK garage as a medium of humour as well as social critique, also first emerged in the UK on lovers' sound systems (ibid: 250). Finally, the stylistic traits of reverb and echo so fundamental to dub reggae were gradually phased out to the point of near abandon in soul and dancehall of the mid-1980s (Veal, 2007: 199).

The black erotic, politicised, and feminised genres of lovers' rock, UK soul, and dancehall, and later, jungle and UK garage, thus evolved in part through a series of sonic and stylistic mutations: reduced bass weight, reduced reverb, reduced Rasta-derived lyrical content, along with more soulfulness, toasting, and chatting, and a sexually celebratory fashion and ethos—sonic social qualities that would in turn be reversed when dubstep reinvigorated the dub reggae sound in the early 2000s. In other words, the sounds, spaces, and atmospheres of dub reggae, which had been the province and practice of men since the music's inception, were reinstated or 'inherited' by dubstep; and this inheritance occurred despite, or possibly even in reaction to, the way that dub reggae's intervening musical offshoots largely took feminised directions in terms of both musical sounds and other aspects of their cultural forms.

'Awayness', Embodied Inheritance, and Generational Musical Attachment

So far, I have drawn upon social histories of British reggae and electronic/dance music in an attempt to unravel the complex processes by which musical genres accrue gendered social 'identities', which then work to attract or deter particular social groups, seemingly—in this musical lineage—in enduring and naturalised ways. To enrich understanding of this historical form of 'stickiness', I want to turn to the work of feminist and critical race studies scholars who have engaged with notions of embodied genealogical connection. In particular, I wish to suggest that the male-gendered

qualities of both dubstep and dub reggae have become naturalised through a sustained history of female ‘awayness’ (Ahmed, 2010). Here, I adapt Ahmed’s use of the term ‘awayness’ to describe an historically mediated orientation ‘away from’ an object. As she notes, the histories of contact through which cultural forms become ‘sticky’, imbued with value, and associated with particular bodies and social identities, may, if enacted again and again, generate ‘affective biases’ that incline ‘other’ bodies towards ‘rejecting the proximity of those cultural forms’ (ibid: 32; 2004: 12, 90-1). ‘Awayness’, Ahmed writes, ‘help[s] establish the edges of our [bodily] horizon... the things we do not wish to have, touch, taste, hear, feel, see’ (ibid). Ahmed’s concept taps into wider feminist and post-colonial concerns regarding the temporality of affect: how, rather than circulating freely or randomly, affects tend to ‘travel’ along particular lines of social and cultural investment, reinforcing the psychic legacies of gender, racial, sexual, and class oppression (Cvetkovich, 2012; Hemmings, 2005). The temporal passage of affect—its tendency to ‘stick’, accumulate, and radiate out of sites of historical and social tension—is, then, one way of explaining how intergenerational attachments and detachments gain force (Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012: 124).

In the case of dub reggae, genealogies of female ‘awayness’ have seemingly worked to reinforce the male-gendered insularity of the scene. Indeed, while considerable effort is now expended on inviting women into dub reggae, such events remain at the periphery of women’s musical horizons. I found in fieldwork, for instance, that, if present at all, young black women tended to occupy the literal fringes of events, working on the door, at the bar, serving food, or selling hand-made merchandise, apparently fulfilling traditional gender roles of entrepreneurial enterprise and domestic labour, while men assumed the position of wordsmith, artiste, and selector (cf. Hope, 2004). At the same time, these women did not appear to experience their roles as gendered, with many expressing an explicit preference for R&B, soul, hip-hop and other nights that were *not* dub reggae, and voicing their relief at being able to remain at a physical distance from the sound system.⁵⁹ One woman admitted laughingly that she couldn’t ‘*stand* it in [the dance]!’ because the

⁵⁹ As I discuss in Chapter 6, however, these responses are complicated by my own positioning. As a white female ‘outsider’ to the dub reggae scene, it is possible that these black women did not wish to speak openly about their experiences of gender, in case of criticism, misrepresentation, or negative stereotyping.

bass vibrations ‘shake [her] insides’, making her feel physically sick. The naturalisation of both female ‘awayness’ and male ‘stickiness’ in dub reggae is thus striking. Crowds remain almost uniformly male, while women are resistant to inclusion. It is as if, to quote Avery Gordon, an historical event has been ‘passed on’, has travelled through time as ‘a deeply social memory’ or ‘rememory’ (Gordon, 1997: 164-5). Women entering into and occupying the margins of these spaces do not appear to question their own disaffection or invisibility but embody the ‘awayness’ of those who preceded them: the young black women who acquired agency and autonomy by distancing themselves from roots reggae in the 1970s and carving out a sexually expressive and ‘loving’ socio-musical space for women through lovers’ rock, soul, and other genres from thereon.

It is not only particular sonic qualities that accrue masculine associations, however. It is also the affective atmospheres invoked by those sonic qualities. As noted earlier, the slowness of dub reggae—the bodily quietness, the delay of the bass frequencies moving through the dance, the micro-movements of crowd members standing at the stacks—can be interpreted as an act of defiance and political resistance: a rehearsal of radical forms of embodied repose (Lepecki, 2000). At the same time, I would argue that in the reggae context, as well as in other musical contexts, stillness is a distinctly masculine form of embodiment, engendering spaces of androgenic sexual expression (or repression), ‘serious’ introspection, and musical political intellectualism from which women are/were excluded. Indeed, it is telling that it was partially through bodily movement and erotic dance that black women were able to create an autonomous zone and demarcate themselves from the masculinity of roots reggae in the genres of lovers’ rock and dancehall. Seen in this way, a static ‘eyes-down’ atmosphere of bodily composure and slow gesticulation becomes another way in which ‘male-ness’ is routed in music, and often appeared to be a factor in women’s sense of exclusion from particular scenes during fieldwork. As one of my female interlocutors reflected, explaining why she didn’t go out to dubstep and grime nights: ‘You know, [like when] you love something, love the sound, but feel you could never go to that night, because it’s totally different when you’re in that space’.

From these genealogies, it becomes possible to grasp the mechanisms by which musical assemblages become gendered. As sounds, spaces, and postures acquire male connotations through the complex processes of genre formation, so these connotations can become ‘sticky’, can transmit through time, and can manifest in predictable or even stereotypical ways, not only through the demographics of crowds via the literal absence of women, but also through the affective responses of bodies in crowds—for instance, via the visceral disconnection felt by young black women working at dub reggae events. Put differently, a sustained history of proximity between particular sounds and particular gendered bodies can and does tend to lead to those sounds and bodies getting ‘stuck together’. Consequently, ‘other’ gendered bodies may distance themselves from such socio-musical formations, generating patterns of ‘awayness’ that get passed on and memorialised through the ‘routing’ of particular aesthetic, spatial, and material gestures (Ahmed, 2004; cf. Gilroy, 1993). If musically incited affect appears to differentiate along lines of gender, then, or even conform to a gendered stereotype, this isn’t due to a ‘natural’ difference between men and women. Women are not biologically inclined towards soul or UK garage, just as men are not to dub or dubstep. Rather, such musical affective orientations are mediated by deeply gendered historical processes of genre evolution, which continue to linger, repeat, and renew in the present. This suggests that Gilroy’s (1993) notion of ‘anti-anti-essentialism’ applies in the context of gender as well as race, with (black) women coalescing around particular musical styles not because of any essence of ‘femininity’, but because these are the musical aesthetic forms that have historically provided sanctuary, autonomy, political identity, and solidarity for women.

Following this, it becomes possible to see why dubstep was experienced as a gendered aesthetic turn. By reinvigorating the bass weight, reverb, and Rasta-derived vocals of dub reggae, and discarding the R&B, soul, and funk of UK garage and early jungle, dubstep rolled back the very sonic qualities that had accompanied women’s ability to become visible in these musical lineages, invoking instead the sounds and spaces of female ‘awayness’. This is not to suggest that music’s gendered connotations are fixed or fully determined. Indeed, they may not even be conscious among those consuming and producing the musics in the present. But when musical publics continue to

segregate along lines of gender, it becomes important to acknowledge the capacity for certain aspects of history to persist through time and penetrate the present, albeit in naturalised ways. I am suggesting, then, that the gendered historical associations of these and other genres come to be experienced teleologically: as essentialised, always-already there (Born, 2011: 383-4).

Addressivity and (A)symmetry

Having traced the historical reverberations of affective ‘stickiness’ in this musical lineage, I now shift focus to the aesthetic choices made by DJ/producers, examining the ways in which musicians have used their creative practice either as a means of attempting to (re)produce a collective male-gendered musical affectivity, or as a means of resisting and transforming such an affectivity.

In the case of dubstep, practitioners mobilised aesthetic qualities reminiscent of dub reggae seemingly in order to shift musical identity formations and fuel an (implicitly male) ‘underground’. For some dubstep pioneers, such as Dave Jones (Zed Bias) and Peter Livingston (Loefah), this was a conscious move, evident from public interviews in the media and elsewhere in which they expressed their desire to strip away the ‘handbag’, ‘glitz’ elements of UK garage that had become prevalent with the genre’s embrace of commercial pop singers.⁶⁰ As Jones put it: ‘By making the statement with FWD>> we were saying, “Look, a lot of this [garage] is cheesy bollocks... we’re not up for it, we want the beats, the basslines”’ (Jones, in Bradley, 2013: 373). Gender was thus tacitly implicated in the UK garage-dubstep transition—a notion made plain by Jones’s use of linguistic innuendo in phrases such as ‘cheesy’, ‘beats’ and ‘basslines’. Further, FWD>>’s regular venue, Plastic People, was a notoriously male-dominated club. And along with dubstep’s darker, bass-oriented sound came all the spatial, technological, and affective signifiers of a rejection of (implicitly female) populism: an educational rhetoric of the need to ‘understand the music’ (cf. Born, 1995); a ‘trainspotter’ mentality concerned with technical and musical mystery/mastery; rib shaking sound systems and ‘wall-clinging’ bodily comportment (Straw, 1993); and accumulation

⁶⁰ As Livingston put it, ‘We weren’t into the glitz and bottles [of garage]’ (Livingston, quoted in Martin, 2015). See https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/9bgm5e/an-oral-history-of-dubstep-vice-lauren-martin-610.

of knowledge via homosocial ‘rites of passage’, like learning your history in record shops, through Internet forums, or via paternal and fraternal family ties (Bradby, 1993: 162). In addition to its musical genealogy, then, dubstep’s heavyweight technical set-ups and occupation of urban and online spaces with male associations all worked against women’s access to the genre.

In this way, the evolution of dubstep signalled a conscious and successful effort to re-direct existing musical identity formations. Through aesthetic, spatial, technical, and social gestures, dubstep diverted the feminine glamour and ‘champagne-and-girls’ vibe of its predecessor, UK garage, giving birth to a new male-dominated ‘underground’. Such a shift, in which aesthetic change helps to initiate or catalyse a particular pre-imagined form of social change, once again finds articulation in Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of ‘addressivity’. By mobilising specific musical gestures, together with other socially charged spatial and material qualities, dubstep producers ‘addressed’ and successfully attached a particular envisaged male-centred sociality to their music. This example thus stands in contrast to the Nonclassical case study of the previous chapter, where the desired public and altered set of socio-musical relations did not materialise in the way that curators envisaged or espoused. When it comes to conceptualising these aesthetic-social relations, however, both tendencies are clearly important. As Born (2011) and Brackett (2005) emphasise, the fact that a musical utterance may be directed towards a particular social constituency does not imply any inevitability with regard to that social constituency actually being aggregated in reality. Genre categories, in short, do not *reflect* social categories, since the anticipated public or sociality being ‘addressed’ may well fail to materialise, or may be thwarted by unanticipated alignments between musical gestures and social groups for whom those gestures were *not* intended (Brackett, 2005: 77; Born, 2011: 382). In addition to the Nonclassical case study, Hesmondhalgh’s essay on 1990s UK black and Asian fusion musics provides a further example of this kind of asymmetry. As he notes, artists signed to Nation records in the early ‘90s specifically sought to build new multicultural and black-Asian alliances through the merging of particular aesthetics (posthouse, hip-hop, global diasporic musics), but instead ended up appealing to white institutions and drawing overwhelmingly white left-liberal audiences (Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 299). Such aesthetic interventions thus largely

worked to reinforce rather than dissipate racial divisions, illuminating both the cultural limitations of musical ‘hybrids’ and the frustration of producers’ expectations (ibid).

On the other hand, it may be that, on occasion, musical formations *do* come to reproduce wider social formations in ways that are consciously or semi-consciously desired. Dubstep is an important and powerful illustration of this, revealing that a particular anticipated audience-hood *can* be achieved in reality, rather than frustrated or overturned—in this case, as a consequence of musical affective attachments and associations that have accrued over generations. The point, as Born emphasises, is that such questions are empirical and historical ones, and cannot be decided in advance (Born, 2011: 383). On this basis, the contingency integral to Bakhtin’s concept of ‘addressivity’, along with Born’s development of the uncertainty and potential ‘split’ between ‘addressed’ and ‘achieved’ public, is preferable to the more deterministic Althusserian notion of ‘interpellation’ employed by Warner in his discussion of how cultural publics are hailed. While Warner does diverge from Althusser on the point that ‘public address’ is indefinitely plural and ‘impersonal’, rather than individual and ‘personal’ (‘Hey you!’), he still assumes that texts—by virtue of speech genres, idioms, stylistic markers, and so on—successfully ‘go out’ into circulation and find or realise their desired publics (Warner, 2002: 57, 82). My fieldwork indicates that while this kind of achievement may occur with musical genres, it is not an inevitability.

Wot Do U Call It?

A further important point to note is that even if an ‘imagined’ musical public is successfully achieved in reality, this does not mean that it will endure or survive the passage of time. Here, it is instructive to trace the trajectory of dubstep during and after its mainstream explosion. As dubstep started to grow in popularity and become visible to wider audiences in 2006-7, dubstep artists such as Benga and Skream welcomed the chance to play at London superclubs such as the O2 and the End. In so doing, they helped to re-draw gatekeeping boundaries, making the dubstep scene more accessible to women as well as to students and white middle-class groups. Concurrently, the dubstep sound mutated, with exaggerated ‘wobble bass’ and mid-range frequencies taking precedence over

the spacious, bass-heavy roots reggae aesthetic characteristic of dubstep's early days.⁶¹ With these shifts, audiences largely reached gender parity.⁶² Female participants were seemingly drawn into the scene by the more accessible networks and forms of publicity that were emerging, as well as by the greater emphasis on mid-range sounds as opposed to 'big bad basslines and darkness' (Cook, 2007). Moreover, these shifts revealed the contingency of electronic/dance music publics in the sense that, unlike the intractability of classical music, changes to the venues, sites, and aesthetic parameters of dubstep seemed to shift musical identity formations quite dramatically.

This becoming-mainstream—and becoming-feminine—of dubstep, however, stimulated a backlash from the genre's gatekeepers. In particular, early dubstep-era producers such as Kode 9 lamented the new 'wobbly', treble-heavy dubstep sound, claiming that its formulaic drops and 'hype' mentality were brashly uniform and 'macho' ('bro-step').⁶³ Indeed, the narrative that 'nu-skool' dubstep involved 'lairy, musclebound university-age pissheads' moshing together quickly became dominant in the music media, as the earlier quote from Reynolds regarding the 'chainsaw' sounds of US dubstep exemplifies. Yet, the paradox of this is that it was precisely this transition that brought *more* women into dubstep, not less—a point that Reynolds himself concedes in a later edition of his book (Reynolds, 2013: 683).⁶⁴

The complex trajectory of dubstep, then, was one in which the genre's cross-over to mainstream and simultaneous opening up to (mostly white) women was the moment at which the genre was denounced as 'over'—as having 'sold out'. Further, it was ironically seen to have 'sold out' on the

⁶¹ The global explosion of dubstep in 2006-7 was what gave rise to US dubstep, which, like its UK counterpart, involved increasing amounts of 'wobble', distortion, and mid-range frequencies. For further listening: Caspa 'The Terminator'; Skrillex 'Sprites and Monsters'.

⁶² Importantly, however, the women who gained access to dubstep at this time were predominantly white and middle class. This relates to my finding in fieldwork that in both dub reggae and dubstep, complex articulations occur between race and gender with regard to access. White women become increasingly present with changes in venue and publicity, whereas black women remain absent.

⁶³ Kode 9 describes the moment when dubstep turned 'aggressive and wobbly' as a 'fucking disaster' (Goodman, quoted in Martin, 2015). Similarly, James Blake claimed in his 'US dubstep rant' that: '[T]here's this machoism being reflected in the sounds... It's [about] who can make the dirtiest, filthiest bass sounds' (Blake, quoted in Pelly, 2011).

⁶⁴ In an update chapter for the 2013 edition of *Energy Flash*, Reynolds redresses his previous statements, observing that: 'although nu-dubstep has a macho reputation, there're plenty of girls on the dancefloor' (Reynolds, 2013: 683).

grounds of becoming brash, aggressive, and ‘macho’. In turn, a new wave of ‘post-dubstep’ musical innovation started to emerge—one that took bifurcating aesthetic directions thanks to the then-recent ubiquity of broadband and the creative avenues it facilitated, and that came to see itself as a counter-movement to so-called mainstream ‘bro-step’. What manifested in the late 2000s, then, was a multitude of distinct but related post-dubstep ‘microgenres’ that didn’t constitute a singular musical movement so much as a cluster of smaller musical tributaries or ‘themes’. Producers and consumers alike seemed increasingly reluctant to ‘name’ or classify these musical ‘themes’, exemplified both by the catch phrase ‘Wot-Do-U-Call-It’ that was taken up in the music media as an appropriation of grime producer Wiley’s track of the same name (Clark, 2008; Williams, 2009); and by the swollen category labels ‘post-dubstep’ and ‘bass music’ that industry and marketing were forced to prolong (Harper, 2012). Mirroring this, cross-genre club nights and DJ sets gradually started to replace the genre tribalism of the 1990s and early 2000s, while London in particular saw a surge in the growth of ‘multi-purpose’ venues. By 2010, these shifts had culminated in an aesthetic-economy in which ‘genre-defying’ or ‘genre hybridism’ had itself become a genre (Harper, 2011, 2012).

Given the amalgamating nature of these shifts, it would be reasonable to expect post-dubstep’s multifarious ‘themes’ and genre-defying club nights to have alleviated the male-gendering of the dubstep lineage, particularly given that producers working within this broad musical sphere—not only Latham but also David Kennedy, aka Pearson Sound—expressed explicit discomfort regarding the male-dominance of the electronic/dance music field when I met them during fieldwork. And yet, similar to Hesmondhalgh’s (2000) account of the failure of black and Asian cultural hybrids to ‘address’ a multicultural public, so these new musically compound post-dubstep scenes were seemingly unsuccessful in ‘addressing’ mixed-gender publics. As club nights hosted by Rinse FM, Night Slugs, and Hessle Audio made clear during fieldwork, overwhelmingly male-centred club environments persisted in this genre lineage, both in terms of demographic, and with respect to the static contemplative socialities that predominated. It would thus seem that the hybrid aesthetics of

post-dubstep and bass music continued to be experienced as gendered in many instances, in spite of this being at odds with a number of producers' intentions.

In a final analytical move, I want to propose that in the same way that dubstep 'addressed' a male-dominated audience-hood by re-invigorating a dub reggae aesthetic and dispensing with the sentimentalism and swing of UK garage, so producers working under the guise of 'post-dubstep' in the aftermath of dubstep's mainstream explosion similarly oriented themselves away from the pop-inflected, mid-range (feminised) 'wobble' that had globally become known as 'dubstep'. The difference was that, firstly, this aesthetic shift was multi-directional; and secondly, unlike early dubstep, it did not appear to constitute a consciously gendered series of aesthetic moves. Post-dubstep producers such as Kennedy and others affiliated with the label Hessle Audio (est. 2007), for instance, took dubstep's syncopated bass weight in a techno-influenced direction, emphasising a stripped down, drums and bass aesthetic that both harked back to dubstep's early days, and added a more cerebral—or less bodily-oriented—techno flavour. Yet, as Kennedy relayed, these aesthetic shifts simply reflected the inspirations of those on the label who had come of age precisely during the dub-influenced dubstep era, and who wished to partially retain/return to this aesthetic as a means of rejecting what they perceived to be a 'macho', aggressive, and standardised form of dubstep. Similarly, producers on Latham's label Night Slugs (est. 2009) blended US dance genres with the hard-hitting aspects of early dubstep, grime, and UK funky (bass weight, half-step tempos, syncopated rhythms), often replacing the R&B vocals of funky with the bold stabs and square wave synths of early grime. Yet, once again, as Latham emphasised, these aesthetic moves were not intended to invoke a male-gendered audience-hood or environment, in spite of the fact that these tend to be characteristics of Night Slugs nights.⁶⁵

What comes to the fore, then, are two distinct but related kinds of 'addressivity'. The first pertains to the UK garage-dubstep transition in the early 2000s, whereby dubstep producers mobilised

⁶⁵ It is important to note a parallel shift that took place with these post-dubstep scenes, which was towards a whiter, more middle-class audience. With this came a greater emphasis on experimental, rhythmically sparse music, examples of which can be found on both Hessle Audio and Night Slugs: Ramadanman 'Blimey'; Pangaea 'Inna Daze'; Egprixix 'Everybody Bleeding'.

specific aesthetic gestures as a means of deliberately rejecting populism and appealing to an ‘underground’ implicitly male-gendered sensibility—a mode of address that was successfully achieved. The second relates to the dubstep-post-dubstep transition in the late 2000s, where a similar rejection of populism occurred—here, along multiple tributaries of genre hybridism rather than as a single generic movement—which similarly initiated the growth of a multitude of male-gendered publics and ‘micro-styles’.⁶⁶ This time, however, such a move did not appear wholly conscious on producers’ behalves. Rather, the direction taken by most strains of post-dubstep in the late 2000s was seemingly the result of an *incidental* rather than attempted addressivity, occurring as a consequence of producers such as Latham and Kennedy subconsciously ‘inheriting’ the gendered bass-heavy sounds and raw drums aesthetic of early dubstep and grime that had so inspired them when they were young. It was, after all, only after the fact, after releasing records and moving along a particular aesthetic path, that Latham became aware that he was playing to ‘crowd after crowd of boys’. The effect, in other words, was that of a generation of post-dubstep producers accidentally finding themselves caught up and entangled in, and reproducing, male-dominated socio-musical formations as a consequence of their creative and aesthetic orientations and choices.

In the next and final section, I quote an extract from my Skype dialogue with Latham, in which he illuminates his creative response to these issues. As will become clear, Latham’s intention is not to create a stereotypically ‘feminine’ sound in order to attract more women to his nights as, for him, this makes a gendered assumption. Rather, the potential he sees for change lies first, in recognising the difficulty of destabilising the public identity with which he has been endowed as a DJ/producer due to his early grime-influenced releases—namely, as a ‘bass music’ artist; and second, in using creative techniques to intervene in, and potentially re-orient, the atmospheres of the male-dominated spaces that he hosts. Key for Latham, in this process, is the question of how to express feelings of political anger and frustration through music in a ‘non-oppressive’ way: how to articulate the angst of male urban subjectivity, sonically, in ways that are more ‘calming and healing’, with

⁶⁶ There were/are exceptions, notably nights hosted by Steve Goodman aka Kode 9’s label Hyperdub (est. 2001), which attract very mixed gender and multi-racial crowds—something I’d be inclined to link to the label’s dancehall and UK funky influences, as well as the large number of female artists on its roster.

more groove, than in the initial direction taken by dubstep, grime, and their abrasive instrumental offshoots.

'Love is Resistance'

The phrase 'love is resistance' appears as a hand-painted badge pinned to Latham's jacket in the video to 'Unhappy', a track from his 2015 album *Dream a Garden*. It is a captivating political statement—one that Latham repeats in interviews with the music media and openly attributes to bell hooks (1992).⁶⁷ That hooks's notion of love as an insurgent political practice has been key to Latham's reflections on gender politics in/and music is both significant and historically logical. As I have shown, the gender-egalitarian spaces engendered by lovers' rock in the mid 1970s hinged upon a 'love ethic', in which 'loving blackness' functioned as a form of political resistance as well as a negation of the loveless, nihilistic situation that black women (and men) found themselves in (Palmer, 2011: 179). By choosing to reinvigorate this historically feminised aesthetic of love, care, and eroticism, Latham's *Dream a Garden* disrupts the male-gendered aesthetic of the dub-dubstep-bass continuum in which he is himself embedded. Talking over Skype in April 2015, he explained:

JL: [I]f you release a record that sounds grimey, you're not going to get booked to play soulful house in a [mainstream venue]. So, the type of music that I've released has narrowed me into a certain sphere, and it's begun to represent a lot of things that I feel are alienating. There's this angsty male energy that I feel persists at a lot of the places I get booked for.

CS: How can you confront that, creatively?

JL: It's difficult. But I'm realising that perhaps there's a responsibility, in terms of releasing records, to take control of the path one goes down as a DJ/producer. So, to ask: 'okay, as a DJ, as a producer, am I communicating [expansively]? Are these the kinds of tracks people could dance to? Or am I making sounds that require a specific education to understand?' [Because] this is the problem with these all-male [grime and bass] scenes: there tends to be a cult around music production, around who can do the most complex feat of engineering, and it creates a culture of complexity and technical competence that does not lend itself to dancing in *any* way. So, at a lot of the shows I play, it'll just be boys standing around, maybe even peering over to see what [I'm] doing.

CS: As a producer, how could you do things differently, in terms of confronting that technical reverence... [and] that non-danceability? You mentioned how grime was initially made on Play Stations: that idea of a hyperactive 'videogame' aesthetic.

⁶⁷ See for example <http://thequietus.com/articles/17459-jam-city-interview>.

Is that a relevant factor?

JL: Yeah, absolutely. I think the non-danceability largely comes from the density and busyness of sound, the kind of onslaught, like a kind of ‘videogame violence’. And to link that to production, Ableton, the program I use, it very much steers you towards using it like you would a videogame, in the sense that... When you open the program, it has a default tempo and time signature. You know, it’s designed to be very user-friendly and fun and tactile, which, to me, only encourages one to produce more complex music. [By contrast] something rudimentary like a hip-hop drum machine requires you to start from scratch and to play live, thus limiting you in some way. So, it’s partly... to do with production software, where, because it’s fun and easy to draw lots of lines of automation, you end up adding all this detail and all these layers without thinking about how that’s going to affect people in the clubs. And then, when that gets translated [into a club], it’s like this War music! It just does not mobilise dancers. [And] I’m exhausted by it. I think there are other ways you can express yourself with a politically angry energy that isn’t just this onslaught of sound. Which leads to tempo. With, say, hip-hop, DJ Screw, stuff like that, you realise that a type of anger and alienation can still be expressed—lyrically as well—but at tempos that are massively slower. You can still have energy at those [slower] tempos, but there’s more of a *groove*... So, I try to bring that into my sets. You never hear records at 90bpm in the clubbing spheres I get booked for. And I like how that [slower tempo] surprises people. It’s not half-time like dubstep [140/70bpm], so it’s not so slow it’s non-danceable. It’s this in-between space [and] it subverts what people expect. It makes them think and move and engage differently.

CS: Your new release *Dream a Garden*, is that very different to your earlier records, in tempo and aesthetic?

JL: Yeah, it encompasses all of this. So, the main thing to me is, now that I’ve made a record that is much slower, and song-based, how can I [use] it to re-orient that [male club] atmosphere... to twist it into something more empowering, or positive maybe? *Dream a Garden* is mostly around 100bpm, so already there’s a relationship with other 100bpm stuff, like rap and reggaetón and dancehall. And that makes a difference to the [musical] environment. So, I’m not trying to distance myself [from my crowd], but I want to basically say: this is how I feel it should be.

Regrettably, I was not able to conduct fieldwork on Latham’s attempts to experiment with the social relations of his audiences, since the release of *Dream a Garden* and the interventions it brought with it occurred after my fieldwork had ended. Nonetheless, I want to briefly cite two instances that signal the potential efficacy of Latham’s aesthetic alterations. The first relates to my own experience of playing a DJ set in 2016, where I chose to incorporate ‘Crisis (Special Mix)’, a track from Latham’s *Earthly Versions* (2015), released the same year as *Dream a Garden*, into my mix. In the days leading up to a gig, I tend to select a number of records from my collection that I think I might want to play, and loosely work out which other records these could fit with in terms of tempo, style, and sound. Generally, my DJ sets sit at 130-140bpm and involve a mixture of UK funky, bass

music, UK garage, and techno. Sticking Latham's 90bpm 'Crisis (Special Mix)' on the turntable at home, however, I realised that if I wanted to mix this record, it would require a very different repertoire of music, which would completely shift the genre combinations that I was accustomed to playing. Digging into my collection for inspiration, I tried to bear in mind not only the slow tempo of *Earthly Versions*, but also the melodic stabs and ethereal vocals central to 'Crisis (Special Mix)'. The pile of records that I eventually amassed consisted of a handful of hip-hop/bounce records that I'd picked up in New Orleans; Sahara's 'Love So Fine' and various UK street soul tracks; a number of dancehall tunes (Shabba Ranks ft. Crystal 'Twice My Age'; Beenie Man 'Bookshelf'); and some slow soul/RnB classics, including lovers' rock.

In undertaking this compiling process, I was struck that, as a result of wanting to incorporate Latham's record into my set, the music I would be taking to this gig would set in motion an entirely different genre and tempo range to the 130bpm+ UK bass music sets that I usually played. Specifically, in being compelled to dig out records pitched at roughly 90bpm, I was simultaneously obliged to select genres of music such as R&B, soul, and dancehall—genres with a (black) feminised history and genealogy, which are imbued historically with 'female' connotations. Further, upon performing the set itself, I became aware of the considerably different kinds of dancefloor vibes that records like Jam City's 'Crisis (Special Mix)' or Girl Unit's 'Glass' afford compared to the faster, more abrasive and percussive sounds of LD's 'Woodblock' or Lil Silva's 'Golds to Get', which are my usual go-to tunes.⁶⁸ While, to an extent, these experiments were inconsequential given that I am not a DJ with any status, and while the question remains as to whether the 'angsty' competitive male energy that Latham describes continues to persist at his gigs, the experience of using 'Crisis (Special Mix)' as a tool for sonic-social experimentation nonetheless enabled me to think in more practical ways about the kinds of shifts that might have been taking place at Latham's nights as a consequence of using slower tempos and genres. For my part, I had

⁶⁸ Upon reflection, I believe there is a degree to which my attraction towards up-tempo, bass-heavy, percussive selections as a DJ at this time stemmed in part from a desire to be taken seriously by my male counterparts. Since becoming more reflexive, I still enjoy playing hard-hitting bass records, but I'm less afraid to incorporate—for example—a garage remix of Destiny's Child's 'Bills' too.

numerous friends come up to me after my set—female friends who usually complain that they find my music ‘inaccessible’ and hard to dance to—telling me how much they enjoyed the record selection. It was clear, in short, that such aesthetic divergences ‘made a difference’, even if only in the form of an observation or renewed engagement with my music by my friends.

The second instance pertains to my participant Harvey’s account of hearing Latham perform *Dream a Garden* live at the nightclub Oval Space in 2015. On this occasion, Latham was supporting Holly Herndon, an experimental electronic composer and sound artist, which is in itself relevant. Latham’s shift into an arts-associated assemblage so soon after the release of *Dream a Garden* demonstrates—contrary to what he expected—the power of dramatic or sudden aesthetic change to destabilise DJ/performer identity. Evidently, Latham was perceived by promoters to be a suitable support act for Herndon following the release of his new album. His creative practice had thus instigated a ‘sliding’ motion, moving him from one musical assemblage (the Night Slugs post-dubstep/bass milieu) into another (experimental pop/electronic). And yet, this ‘slide’ was not fixed or permanent. On the contrary, Latham continues to DJ and play live at Night Slugs events, bringing his newer ‘dream pop’ reverb guitar sounds to a post-dubstep/bass music audience, while at the same time, according to Harvey, retaining a ‘rowdy’ streak reminiscent of his early EPs at experimental gigs such as Herndon’s. By consciously altering his aesthetic in response to the gendering of his crowds, Latham thus appears to have fashioned a more flexible ‘identity’ for himself and is able to occupy a broader range of musical and social spaces than previously.

Relatedly, the demographic of the crowds that Latham plays to also appears to have shifted. As Harvey reported, rather than the heteronormative all-male scenario typical of instrumental grime and bass nights, the crowd at the Herndon event constituted a much more heterogeneous demographic in which ‘pretty much all genders [were] represented’ (Harvey, correspondence 2015). This was plausibly attributable to the gender fluidity of Herndon’s own musical ensemble, which included queer drag artist and musician Colin Self, in addition to Herndon herself; but it is also conceivably a reflection of the experimental vocal electronic/pop genre of music, and the

mixed-gender crowds that appear to associate with it. Finally, the new aesthetic of Latham's *Dream a Garden* reportedly had a considerable impact on the kinds of microsocialities that circulated and emerged at this event. Harvey described the audience for Latham's set at Oval Space as 'in touch with their bodies' and keen to dance to the 'ethereal, reverb drenched vocals' and 'hard grooves' of Latham's live set, which were interspersed with more abrasive sounds played on CDJs. Even this, Harvey noted, was a 'far cry' from the technically reverent, masculine social atmospheres generally found at the club nights Latham plays.

The case of Latham, then, constitutes another example of a high-profile DJ/producer using his creative practice to challenge the habitual affective experiences of his audiences. Whereas, in the case of Juan Atkins in the previous chapter, the aesthetic interventions brought about by 'diabolical' DJ mixing had the effect of destabilising the hierarchical 'DJ worship' of the techno club space, in the case of Jam City, the aesthetic changes of *Dream a Garden* appear to have wrought a radical shift in the tempos—and therefore genres—of Latham's live/DJ sets, bringing unfamiliar sounds and styles to a post-dubstep/bass music public, while also moving Latham himself into new musical realms of performance. In this way, the male-gendered socialities that permeate grime/bass/dubstep are confronted and conceivably challenged: first, by virtue of Latham rejecting musical devices that are heavily associated with 'male-ness' in this lineage (sonic density, extreme bass, non-danceable abstraction), and thereby potentially subverting the expectations of his male-dominated post-dubstep/bass audience; and second, by moving away from—and thus in a sense rejecting—the male-dominated post-dubstep/bass crowds altogether, as Latham has done in making himself amenable to more gender-diverse electronic/avant-garde pop audiences, collaborating, more recently, as a producer on R&B singer Kelela's debut album, *Take Me Apart* (2017).

But what is also significant is that Latham is not alone in his reflexivity regarding the gendering of electronic/dance music. In the last five years—largely since the end of my fieldwork—the institutions and discourses surrounding these genres have demonstrated a growing awareness of gender and racial inequality and an increasing effort to redress the under-representation of female

and transgender producer/DJs. This is reflected in the rise of all-female/non-binary DJ collectives, such as Resis'Dance (est. 2015), Siren (est. 2016), and Video VEXens (est. 2016), which prioritise the musical outputs of women of colour, trans, and queer women, and re-appropriate male-dominated subgenres such as UK bass and grime. Their success is paralleled by the popularity of queer bass music and techno nights, Chapter 10 (est. 2013) and Opulence (est. 2017), which host a range and balance of DJs, including white male vanguards of the post-dubstep scene (Ben UFO, Joy Orbison), as well as cross-genre female artists of colour such as Honey Dijon and Nkisi. Finally, and perhaps most profoundly, a spate of female reggae selectors and sound system operators have risen to prominence in the last four years with the likes of Rebel Rock sound system (est. 2014), CAYA sound system (est. 2016), and Sisters of Reggae—the first UK based all-female selector collective (est. 2016). As Thali Lotus, founder of CAYA, described, there is a certain freedom that comes with being a female selector in a heavily male-dominated musical tradition, in that one does not necessarily feel constrained by the 'posturing atmosphere' and 'competitive' obsession with musical obscurity that prevails among male sound systems. Instead, she noted, in an interesting development of Latham's creative techniques, one can undermine these characteristics by playing 'as "femininely" as possible', owning gender stereotypes, and selecting records 'because we like them', rather than for their exclusivity (Lotus, quoted in Finamore, 2017).

This recent drive towards change in electronic/dance music and dub reggae, which has primarily taken place at the level of music's institutional conditions as they intersect with wider social identity formations (Born's third and fourth planes), indicates that Latham's reflections around questions of gender when I first interviewed him in 2014 formed part of a wider set of critiques that were just beginning to emerge at the time.⁶⁹ With the benefit of hindsight, it thus becomes clear that Latham's aesthetic experiments around these issues—and the period of time captured by my fieldwork

⁶⁹ See, for example, 2014 and 2015 articles in the music media: <https://mixmag.net/read/we-need-to-talk-about-sexual-harassment-in-nightclubs-blog>; and: https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/aecqgbg/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-the-lack-of-women-in-dance-music

generally—occupied a pivotal place in this transition, prefiguring a broader movement towards gender equality in electronic/dance music that is now rapidly developing.

Conclusion

As an extension and development of the previous chapter, this chapter has shown how ‘stickiness’ can manifest as an ingrained collective orientation towards or away from a particular musical lineage. More than this, it has demonstrated how such an orientation can be historically enduring, transmitting intergenerationally via the ‘routing’ and ‘inheritance’ of particular musical, spatial, technical, and material gestures. Specifically, I have drawn upon social histories of dub reggae in conjunction with post-colonial and feminist affect theories to argue that, in the dub-dubstep-bass continuum, a sustained male-gendered affective ‘stickiness’ has been passed on through generations via particular male-connotated sonic qualities, complex heavy weight technical set-ups, and controlled modes of corporeality. Moreover, this ‘stickiness’ has been paralleled and intensified by a genealogy of female ‘awayness’, in which women have actively distanced themselves from these musical lineages and coalesced around alternative musical trajectories. Through such processes, historical patterns of social reproduction and demographic absence have penetrated through to the present, with musical publics continuing to segregate along lines of gender. Yet, rather than interpret this in essentialised ways, as much of the electronic/dance music literature appears to, I have drawn upon Gilroy’s (1993) notion of ‘anti-anti-essentialism’ to argue that the gendering of these musical lineages arises from the complex historical routing and re-routing of gendered aesthetic conventions. Women’s (and men’s) aggregation around particular musical and cultural forms, then, derives not from any ‘essence’ of gender identity but from the fact that these musics have historically provided havens of (fe)male solidarity, autonomy, and political opportunity.

In a further contribution, this chapter has shown how the routing of musical affective orientations can be modified, channelled, and potentially disrupted by the aesthetic choices of musical producers. In contrast to the Nonclassical case study in Chapter 4, which demonstrated how

historically ingrained forms of embodiment can *frustrate* the achievement of a novel imagined musical public, this chapter exemplifies the reverse: how a pre-existing musical affective attachment can be successfully tapped into by cultural producers, thus *aiding* in the achievement of an anticipated musical public. The most palpable example I have given of this is the dubstep practitioners of the early 2000s, who mobilised a dub reggae aesthetic, technical set-up, and socio-spatial infrastructure that rejected the feminised populism of UK garage, and, in so doing, successfully ‘addressed’ and engendered a new male-centred ‘underground’. Complexifying these issues, I have also demonstrated how such forms of ‘addressivity’ can be *incidental* rather than attempted. Post-dubstep producers, for instance, were seen to become increasingly reflexive around issues of gender, but nonetheless continued to draw overtly male-gendered publics due to their subconscious ‘inheritance’ of musical aesthetics with gendered historical and socio-corporeal associations. This chapter, together with the previous, then, makes a significant contribution to existing work on genre and creativity. Specifically, it posits affect as central to an understanding of the relations between aesthetic change and social change, and particularly to an analysis of the uncertainty that can arise between an ‘addressed’ audience and an ‘actual’ audience. Further, the chapter shows that it is not just the sounds that contribute to this uncertainty and potential asymmetry; it is all mediations of the sound, including its social, spatial, technological, and aesthetic associations, as they orient affective experiences.

Together with Chapters 3 and 4, the insights of this chapter mark a ‘mid-way’ point in the thesis towards the development of a new theory of musical and sonic affect. Taking as central Born’s (2011, 2012) conceptualisation of music’s four planes of social mediation, the theory that I advance is one that conceives of musical and sonic affect as ‘ambivalent’: as capable of ‘fixing’ and reproducing wider socio-historical relations, as well as potentially inverting and transforming them. So far, I have developed an analysis of the former tendency, drawing upon Ahmed’s (2004, 2010) concepts of ‘stickiness’ and ‘awayness’ to demonstrate how people can become affectively attached or ‘stuck’ to particular socially imbued musical assemblages in ways that cannot be easily averted, and that instead work to entrench a prior social identity or difference. In Chapter 3, I showed how

this can occur on an individual scale; while in Chapters 4 and 5, I turned to the ways in which this can translate to the collective, the historical, and the intergenerational. Chapters 3-5 thus amount to a theory of musical affect predicated upon affect's complex but irrefutable relationship to the social and the temporal, thereby moving away from Deleuzian imaginings of affect as autonomous.

In Chapters 6 and 7, by contrast, I develop an analysis of musical affect's *irreducibility* to the social and the historical, showing how sonically incited affect can, via particular constellations of mediations, become associated with radical change and social transformation. Chapter 4 already hinted at this irreducibility, illustrating how moments of collective ambivalence and openness can be brought to the surface among audience members by the introduction of aesthetic, spatial, and other differences into the musical assemblage. Such openings were most apparent in the antagonisms and reflexive conversations roused among classically trained audience members at the Nonclassical event, with numerous participants voicing ideas about how 'new music' curation could be done differently to effect change. In this chapter, Latham's creative experiments in relation to the male-gendering of grime/bass music, as well as the challenges wrought by new female DJ and selector collectives, similarly signal a potential opening out of a long, gendered history of closure. The politicisation of these kinds of aesthetic and affective interruptions will be returned to in the Conclusion to this thesis. Where I turn next, however, is to the transformative potential of ingrained musical affective attachments and bodily habits themselves. I address this in Chapter 6 through an examination of music's ability to 'stick' or bind an emergent and/or historically marginalised social group together in ways that challenge wider social hierarchies and power structures.

Chapter 6

Radical Habits: Affective Continuities and the Politics of Community

‘What is needed is not a model but a refrain, like children in the dark, who hum under their breath in order to summon the courage to walk’

Isabelle Stengers (2008: 42)

Introduction

In this chapter, I turn to musical and sonic affect’s relationship to change. Specifically, I argue that musical affective ‘stickiness’ is not simply a mechanism of fixity, social reproduction, and resistance to change, but can itself be transformative. Drawing upon my electronic/dance music and dub reggae fieldwork, I give two examples, first noting how shared musical affective attachments can work to ‘stick’ an emergent and unorthodox social coalition together; and second noting how ingrained musically embodied habits can empower and unify an already existing marginal or historically oppressed community. In both instances, I demonstrate how resilient affective attachments to particular musical assemblages can work to initiate and amplify social transformation. A key contribution of this chapter, then, is that it illustrates how musical affect’s transformative capacities are not the result of an unruly, unmediated logic but emerge from a throng of intersecting histories, habits, and stabilities. As I go on to argue in Chapters 7 and 8, this importantly nuances and potentially limits the kinds of social and political potentials that are at stake in discussing musical and sonic affect.

Theoretical and Ethnographic Overview: Affect, Habit, and Community

Conceptually, this chapter serves two key functions. First, it elaborates on the concerns of Chapters 3-5 by continuing to develop a revised theory of musical and sonic affect. It does this by showing

how ‘sticky’ musical affects and bodily habits can themselves have creative and transformative social effects. The chapter therefore works as a critique of Massumi’s reductive concept of ‘tired habit’—habit as ‘the ballast that chains the dog to its vomit’ (Massumi, 2015: 66; 1992: 48). As noted in Chapter 3, Massumi treats habit as a biological reflex that resides inside the singular body, ‘in the flesh’, as a fixed bodily automatism (ibid, 2002: 11; 2015: 66). In so doing, he erases bodily habit’s personal, socio-cultural, and historical contingency, as well as its plasticity and capacity for mutation. Further, he equates habit with negative notions of fixity, reproduction, and ideology, conceptualising it as the antithesis of ‘pre-personal’ affect, which, by contrast, is seen to reside ‘out there’, in the virtual, as the promise of radical possibility and invention. In this chapter, I delineate the ethnographic grounds upon which I contest this binary view. Specifically, I show how resilient musically embodied habits can have life-changing consequences, thereby equating musical affective ‘stickiness’ not just with fixity and inertia, but with alterity and social change too.

One way that habituated musical affects become associated with change, I argue, is through their powerful collectivising potential: their ability to ‘stick’ or bind a co-present musical public together in ways that abide over time. In demonstrating this, the chapter thus additionally invokes discourses on ‘togetherness’, community, and solidarity. These are, however, discourses that are contested and, in some cases, maligned. In music research, the concept of ‘community’ has been critiqued for idealising a stable population group that is unable or unwilling to accommodate change (Straw, 1991; Hesmondhalgh, 2005). As Straw notes, ‘community’ points towards ‘the stabilization of local historical continuities’, and is thus largely a conservative tendency, while ‘scene’ captures musical practices that ‘cosmopolitanize and relativize’ such continuities (Straw, 1991: 373). ‘Community’, like ‘subculture’, then, is seen to circumscribe musical identities too tightly, assuming fixed boundaries and a stable composition, while also idealising unity and cohesion (Straw, 2001: 252). In social and political theory, the language of ‘community’ has similarly attracted scepticism, particularly from those on the Left advocating a politics of pluralism, who argue that such a concept is consensus-oriented and eradicated of otherness and difference (Back, 2009; Deutsche, 1998; Gilroy, 2004). What is particularly problematic, as Les Back notes, is the way in which community

research assumes an ideal of social harmony, failing to acknowledge both the radical potentials of dissent, and the prerequisite that ‘cohesive[ness] for some [is always] imprisonment for others’ (Back, 2009: 7). Above all, notions of ‘community’ and ‘inclusivity’ have become so over-associated with public discourses around social cohesion and the politicisation of ‘diversity’ that, in Gilroy’s words, ‘the very aspiration toward translocal solidarity [and] community... is tainted’ (Gilroy, 2004: 70).

In light of this, a second conceptual aim of this chapter is to reconceptualise the notion of community via musical affect, and to point towards what I see as the radical potentials of affective unity and togetherness. Indeed, while I agree with the logic of the above arguments, I do not believe that ‘community’ is necessarily an outmoded concept, nor that it inevitably equates to an ideal of social stability and cohesion, and thus exclusion. Rather, as I demonstrate through my ethnography, musical assemblages that refer to themselves as communities—relatively stable groups that meet regularly and move through time together—can, through the very forms of publicness and continuity that they make possible, generate collective cultural and political resistance, particularly with respect to the individualistic and aggressively neoliberal night time economy that currently threatens (musical) public life in London (see Chapters 8 and 9). Moreover, ‘community’ and ‘difference’ are not mutually exclusive. As I show in my first case study, affective and social connections can emerge between disassociated coalitions of identities in music in ways that continue to respect the differences between groups, while also producing a shared and abiding togetherness. Thus, while communities do tend to designate points of non-identity—a constitutive ‘outside’ or ‘other’—this doesn’t mean that they cannot at the same time have permeable boundaries or enable a nexus between different lifeworlds that may not otherwise touch each other.

Relatedly, I do not see ‘homogeneity’ and ‘unity’ as automatically oriented towards the anti-democratic process of settling or soothing conflict—of negating heterogeneity and plurality—as Rosalyn Deutsche and others argue (Deutsche, 1998: 270, 281). As I show in my second case study, musical publics that are relatively socially homogeneous, but that comprise historically aggrieved

social groups, such as dub reggae, can work to disrupt and challenge long legacies of racial exclusion and disappearance simply via the unity of the bodies that they bring into ‘alliance’ (Butler, 2011). In such cases, musical conservatism—the preservation and repetition of the musical-cultural past—becomes a mode of rebellion in itself; a stand against historical absence, discontinuity, and erasure (Gilroy, 1993). The key point, then, is that critiques of social cohesion and community do not apply universally. Rather, musical practices that are community-focused and that revolve around powerful affective harmonies can cultivate difference in multiple ways.

In what follows, I first trace a genealogy of embodied habit, noting how the creative and transformative potentials of habit have been distorted and occluded by new affect theorists. I then illustrate, through case studies drawn from my electronic/dance music and dub reggae fieldwork, how habit might be radically reconceived as an affective mechanism of socio-political empowerment and transformation. I conclude by connecting this argument to debates around the politics of community, suggesting that not only ‘habit’ but also ‘community’ are two interrelated terms that, in practice, have the capacity to transform contemporary socio-musical relations in more ways than they are given credit for.

Tracing Habit’s Genealogy

Massumi’s retreat to a physiological concept of habit to explain ‘being’ is, as Lisa Blackman (2012: 96) notes, beset with problems. It is also something of a ‘stereotype’ (Blackman, 2013: 190). Habits are frequently seen to embody ‘fixed, mechanical behaviours’, associated with anti-mimetic bio-physical functions such as the instincts, the reflexes, and the bodily unconscious (ibid). But this has not always been the case. Tracing a genealogy of habit, Blackman gives an account of how, for 19th and early 20th century social psychologists such as Tarde and William James, habit was closely linked to mimesis, viewed as a *relational* rather than mechanical-causal phenomenon (ibid: 189-90). Indeed, for Tarde, habit referred not just to custom and discipline, but to ‘the conditions of possibility for the new’ by providing a substratum for imitative rapidity—the act of copying or

‘following’ (ibid; Barry & Thrift, 2007). Rather than constituting a form of fixity or inertia, habit in Tarde’s reading was thus ‘the [very] means through which innovation might transmit’ (ibid: 195). Far from being antithetical, then, habit and invention were understood as ‘mutually constitutive phenomena’, linked to inter-subjective communicative processes such as hypnosis, suggestion, and imitation (ibid: 188). That this changed in the first half of the 20th century was due to the suppression of mimesis and other supposedly ‘occult’ phenomena, which came to be seen as a threat to notions of a bounded individual subject and a social order predicated on hierarchy (Blackman, 2013: 207; Leys, 1993: 281).⁷⁰ In the academy, this manifested through the ascendancy of Émile Durkheim’s model of social influence over Tarde’s psycho-social model of hypnotic suggestion; the attempts by George Herbert Mead to quash Tarde’s ‘imitation-suggestion’ paradigm with an anti-mimetic theory of the subject (Leys, 1993: 287); and the Freudian conversion of *suggestion* into *desire*, and hence the shift back towards the individual and self/other boundaries. In each case, habit lost its mimetic, relational dimension and became refigured as a mechanical bio-physical function—learned, honed, and enclosed within the singular body. In this way, the seeds were sown for an alignment of habit with fixity and regularity—a reading that persists in the work of Massumi and others in the new affect paradigm.

In philosophy, Elizabeth Grosz makes a similar argument to Blackman, demonstrating that in spite of the propensity for philosophers to treat habit as pathological constraint—as ‘that which reduces the human to the order of the mechanical’—there have always been those who have recognised habit’s ‘fundamentally creative capacity’ (Grosz, 2013: 219). The genealogy that she traces draws a line from Félix Ravaisson to Henri Bergson to Deleuze. Grosz argues that the concept of habit is ‘utterly transformed’ by this group of philosophers, theorised not as something inert that arrests and mechanises, but as a ‘dynamic force that opens up the universe... to radical change’ (ibid). In Ravaisson, we find an understanding of habit as ‘change contracted, compressed, contained’; as the

⁷⁰ Notably, it is precisely these qualities of Tarde’s ‘imitation-suggestion’ paradigm—its challenge to an ideal of individual autonomy, and to a pre-existing social order based on hierarchy—that have made Tarde so attractive to contemporary social theorists such as Bruno Latour (2005).

germ of potentiality and ‘future change’ (ibid: 220-1). In Bergson, similarly, habit provides ‘the energy and intellectual resources for newness’: the stability required to support and enable ‘free acts... [A]cts of great unpredictability and creativity’ (ibid: 228, 225-6). Finally, in Deleuze, we see how difference, as a creative force, requires ‘a kind of cohesion or unity, a continuity over time’ (ibid: 229). Key for these philosophers, then, is an acknowledgement of the ‘paradox’ of habit: like Tarde and James, they recognised habit’s alignment with regulation, obsession, and limitation, but they also saw its radical potential to innovate and initiate change. It is therefore surprising that, given his indebtedness to Deleuze, Bergson, and James, Massumi’s conceptualisation of ‘habit’ comes much closer to the dialectical method of Adorno or Benjamin, for whom habit (the always-the-same) was the antithesis of affect (defamiliarisation, shock). Massumi, in short, reduces habit to the closure or ‘blockage’ of a vital unmediated ‘becoming’ (Massumi, 1992: 57). Meanwhile, affect exists as an autonomous pre-individual force that profoundly disrupts the social and historical trappings of habitual ensnarement (Massumi, 2002: 236).

Against this habit/affect binary, I wish to revitalise the paradox of habit as it was conceived by Tarde, Bergson, Deleuze and others. I do this by showing how ‘sticky’ habituated musical affects are not always or necessarily impeding but can work in creative ways to put existing social orders into question. I argue that a key factor in analysing the transformative capacity of musical bodily habits is the question of who exactly is experiencing them and in what situational context. As seen in Chapters 4 and 5, ingrained musical affective attachments can be powerfully collectivising, and can even have historical and intergenerational resonances. But whether this ‘togetherness’ manifests as socially reproductive and stratifying—as, for instance, in the case of the male-gendering of the dub-dubstep-bass lineage, or the immutability of classical music’s rigid socialities and high-class audiences—or as socially transformative, as I illustrate in this chapter, is contingent upon the coalition of people who are assembled and who share such attachments. This brings into focus the importance of the articulation between Born’s second and third planes—between musical formations and wider social identity formations. In the case studies that follow, I thus pay particular attention to the intersections between these planes, demonstrating that habitual musical affect can

act as a mechanism of social change as well as stasis, and thereby advocating a need for more complex framings of habit when theorising musical and sonic affect.

Lucky Cloud and ‘Affective Anchoring’

In this first case study, I discuss how musical affective attachments can work to ‘anchor’ and unify an emergent social coalition, inflecting wider social identity formations in potentially life-changing ways. To do so, I return to the London Lucky Cloud parties, which provided a focus in Chapter 3 for delineating Simon’s ‘stickiness’ and corporeal inability to become initiated into the contagion of the party. Shifting perspective, I turn now to focus on those I encountered at the Lucky Cloud parties who *were* able to attune and become collectivised by the musical and social affectivity. Specifically, I elaborate on the habitual processes and mechanisms by which psycho-somatic energies are transmitted and shared at these events, and, crucially, who they are transmitted and shared between. Before I do this, however, it is necessary to contextualise the parties historically in order to understand the particular kind of assemblage that they strive to embody today.

David Mancuso, the Loft, and the Downtown Party Network

The Lucky Cloud parties stem from a very particular historical tradition, that being David Mancuso’s New York Loft parties, which began in February 1970 and continue to this day. Originally from Utica in upstate New York, Mancuso grew up in an orphanage in the late 1940s, where, in Tim Lawrence’s words, ‘the combination of brothers and sisters changed continuously’, leaving Mancuso with a ‘perception of families as extended, diverse, and precarious rather than nuclear, homogeneous, and stable’ (Lawrence, 2003: 5). This important premise stayed with him when he moved to Manhattan in 1962 and started hosting gatherings at his loft apartment on Broadway. There, he would invite friends from all backgrounds to experiment with acid and listen to compilation tapes on his Klipschorn speakers, deeply influenced, as he was, by Timothy Leary’s philosophy of mind expansion, the Harlem ‘rent party’ scene, and the 1960s psychedelic

counterculture (ibid: 7-10).⁷¹ With these gatherings intermittently turning into ‘dance parties’, Mancuso made the decision to host his first big, invitation-only dance party on Valentine’s Day, 1970—the ‘invite-only’ element being essential to circumventing illegality. It was a success, and the parties became a weekly occurrence, structured around Mancuso’s unique vision of economic and social egalitarianism and spiritual communion. Entry was just \$2, though if someone couldn’t pay, they could write an IOU; every invitee could bring a guest; and once inside, the parties were commerce-free, with organic food, fresh juice, and LSD on offer to sustain dancers on their musical journey. Balloons were also a central decorative feature, as they had been during children’s parties at the orphanage, seeking to draw guests into a child-like domain of safety and ‘experimental regression’ (ibid: 24-5); and the parties were always socially mixed, assembling rich and poor, black, white and Latino/a, and all different genders and sexualities. This diverse social and collective energy that Mancuso worked hard to build was considered by many to be a new type of family and emulated his childhood experience at the orphanage. As Lawrence remarks, the Loft was a space for ‘New York’s grown-up orphans—people who, for one reason or another were not part of the idealized white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant nuclear family’ (ibid: 27).

The impact of Mancuso’s Loft parties on the emergence and growth of electronic/dance music culture cannot be overstated. Aesthetically, the Loft helped introduce a new ‘egalitarian model of making music’, where dancers and DJ entered into a ‘synergistic alliance’ with each other, ‘leading and following in roughly equal measure’ (ibid: 37). Records would be played over an extended period of time, and ‘musical host’ Mancuso would respond to the energy of the crowd through wildly elaborate selections of R&B, psychedelic rock, African and Latin percussion. In tandem with this, freeform dancing took on a whole new corporeal and spiritual significance: the crowds at the parties would ‘take their shirts off and dance and sweat’ in an expression of freedom that paralleled the social and political rebellions of the time, providing a jubilant and exploratory counterpart to

⁷¹ Klipschorn speakers are a model of high-end audiophile loudspeaker launched in 1946 by the American audio company Klipsch. Mancuso bought his first pair of Klipschorns from the audio hobbyist Richard Long in the early 1960s after hearing music played through them at a friend’s house (Lawrence, 2003: 6).

the political street protest (ibid: 40). Frankie Knuckles and Larry Levan, two African American gay men who went on to become seminal DJs in their own right, were transformed by the Loft (ibid: 49); Nicky Siano's decision to open the infamous Gallery in 1973 was almost singularly inspired by the Loft; and it was also the Loft that 'planted the seed' for the Paradise Garage and the Warehouse—both clubs instrumental to the evolution of the US garage and house sounds. More than this, though, the Loft was part of a network of discotheques, parties, and after-hours clubs that performed a crucial socio-political role at this time. In particular, the Loft brought together the 'diverse components of the often-segregated rainbow coalition', generating a space for it to explore its 'sameness and difference' (ibid: 52-3); while, as a non-gay-identifying party—as Mancuso put it, '[it wasn't] a gay party... [it was] a mixture'—the Loft also offered a safe space for closeted gay people. The downtown parties of 1970s New York, then, became literal 'sanctuaries', embellishing the civil rights, feminist, anti-war, and gay liberation movements of the 1960s, but also providing shelter in the aftermath of such movements turning dangerous or sour, as exemplified by the Stonewall rebellion (1969), the Kent and Jackson State shootings (1970), and the repression of the Black Panthers.

The London Lucky Cloud parties stem directly from this musical historical tradition. Specifically, they date back to the release of the first Nuphonic *Loft Classics* compilation in 1999, which was put together by Mancuso and his protégé, Colleen Murphy—a long time New York Loft regular who assisted Mancuso as 'musical host' from the late 1980s onwards. The release of the compilation prompted Nuphonic to bring Mancuso to London to host a party at the Shoreditch night club 93 Feet East. At this time, Tim Lawrence was in the process of writing his book, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-79*, from which the above historical detail is taken, and had become close to Mancuso during the research process. Lawrence invited his UEL colleague, Jeremy Gilbert, who—as detailed in Chapter 2—was among the first to bring Deleuzian affect theories into music, to attend the Nuphonic Loft party with him. And upon experiencing a Loft-style party for the first time, Gilbert had a transformative experience. As he told me in interview:

[N]othing really prepared me for... hearing David [Mancuso] play. David had this incredible selection of music, all of which I loved, and hardly any of which I could even identify generically, never mind who it was or the track name... [And] the sound they managed to get that night in 93 Feet East was fantastic. I was absolutely blown away by it (Jeremy Gilbert, August 2014).

From this point on, Gilbert was intent on bringing Mancuso back to London, and when it became clear that Nuphonic were not going to facilitate this, he suggested to Lawrence that they invite him themselves. As it transpired, Mancuso was already considering the possibility of starting something in London and approached Murphy and Lawrence to help, who in turn brought in Gilbert. This coming together of Mancuso, Murphy, Lawrence, and Gilbert, plus a few others, signalled the birth of what would eventually become the Lucky Cloud Sound System—aptly named after an Arthur Russell song;⁷² and by June 2003, the group were ready to host their first Loft-style party. From the outset, the London parties have sought to be as faithful as possible to Mancuso's specifications—not just 'for the sake of it', as Gilbert put it, but because Mancuso's formula is 'the product of a very intense research programme, which no one has really had any opportunity to replicate'. As such, the initial venue for the parties was a loft-type attic in a converted power station in Shoreditch called the Light, which—like the New York Loft—had wooden floors for better sound and livelier dancing. Personal invitations were sent out to friends and friends of friends; a buffet was included in the ticket price; the room was decorated with a sky of balloons; and, with the help of a bank loan in 2005, three sets of Klipschorn speakers were purchased, together with Koetsu turntable cartridges, and several years later, a Mark Levinson amp.⁷³ Over time, the décor, space, technical set-up, sound, and musical aesthetic of the New York Loft were thus translated more or less exactly to London, even if there were limits as to how far this could be taken.

⁷² Arthur Russell was an American cellist, singer, and producer who was heavily involved in the downtown New York party scene of the 1970s. He was a regular at Nicky Siano's Gallery as well as the Loft. He died of AIDS-related illnesses in 1992. Lawrence came up with the name Lucky Cloud two or so years into the running of the parties when the sound system was purchased and a collective of volunteers established.

⁷³ Koetsu turntable cartridges were designed by Japanese audio expert Yoshiaki Sugano. In his quest for sonic perfection, Mancuso had purchased two of the extremely sought-after high-fidelity phono cartridges at \$3,000 a piece in the 1970s along with an equally high-end Mark Levinson amp. The combination was considered fundamental to the New York Loft sound system and has been transposed to London.

What was of course more difficult was establishing the kind of heterodox social community so integral to the New York Loft. Although a solid crew of dedicated Loft-advocates was established very early on—many of them Europeans living in London who knew Mancuso through the Deep House Forum⁷⁴—the first few years of the party also drew a number of ‘club tourists’ who simply came to see Mancuso and showed little interest in building a wider community that went ‘beyond and above David’, as Gilbert put it. There was also the fact that Mancuso was adamant that the parties shouldn’t be advertised on Timeout or any other commercial platform, meaning that it was difficult to expand beyond the party’s private mailing list, which consisted of friends and friends of friends, a few industry figures, and a number of people from the club night Faith—a disco and house music party established in 1999 that didn’t adhere to quite the same principles as Lucky Cloud, and that brought in a bit of ‘beer swilling’ and ‘blokes on coke who [would] shout’ (interview with Gilbert, 2014). The situation reportedly changed in 2005 when the collective agreed to start advertising on Timeout, while, simultaneously, Lawrence sent an email to the party’s mailing list emphasising their commitment to Mancuso’s philosophy and to creating an integrated dancefloor where people respect one another (and take care not to spill beer). Accordingly, the parties shifted: numbers initially dropped as a lot of the Faith contingent fell away, but—with the help of Timeout—the parties also became less white, more intergenerational, and more aligned with the desired ethos, if very consciously articulated. Further shifts occurred in 2011 when Mancuso stopped hosting the parties for health reasons and Murphy took over, which again initially caused numbers to drop, but also diminished the number of people who, in Gilbert’s words, ‘just [came] to see a superstar DJ’.

An initial significant point to make about the Lucky Cloud parties, then, is that they are the product of a deeply conscious and reflexive cultural-political project fronted partially by two prominent academics—Lawrence, a major historian of disco, and Gilbert, a major theorist of music, affect, and politics. Indeed, reflections and debate over the nature and success of the London parties vis-

⁷⁴ The Deep House forum was founded in 1997 and provided a platform for iconic New York and Chicago house music mixes to be posted, listened to, and discussed. It drew together house music affiliates from around the globe, while also notifying the community of forthcoming house music events.

à-vis the ethos and paradigm of the New York Loft continue to circulate today, not just among Lawrence, Murphy, and Gilbert, but also—via an active email thread—among the 25 plus volunteers who continue to help set up and run the parties. As I will argue, it is partly for this reason that Lucky Cloud succeed in assembling a broad social demographic of people to their parties, who engage with one another socially and affectively; but it is also the case that, as with any musical historical iteration, the parties are thoroughly different to the New York Loft and undoubtedly less racially mixed, among other differences.

The Potency of Repetition

The Lucky Cloud parties today assemble people of different class positions, gender identities, sexual orientations, nationalities, and ages. There are multiple explanations for this diversity besides the reflexivity of the organisers noted above. With regard to gender and sexuality, a key contributing factor concerns the styles of music that get played—disco and deep house—which are tied historically to discourses of sexual liberation, women’s rights, and the downtown New York party scene of the 1970s. The queer and/or feminised legacy of these musics largely persists today, as evidenced by the disco- and house-heavy London gay scene, with nights like Horse Meat Disco and My Little Gay Brother playing disco, soulful and deep house as their staple genres. Where Lucky Cloud differs from these is that, like the original Loft, it is not a designated ‘gay night’, yet still manages to draw a large queer, trans, and non-binary (as well as straight) crowd.⁷⁵ This is uncommon: the sensibility and demographic of most ‘non-gay’ London club nights is distinctly heteronormative. Other specific protocols orienting Lucky Cloud’s diverse public are its commitment to egalitarianism and community-building via the legacy of Mancuso—principles that seem to appeal to a wide spectrum of social groups; its anti-corporate ethos, which draws together many different social flows from diverse class backgrounds; and its inclusion of children for the first few hours, plus the time of day it takes place (5pm till midnight), both of which extend the age

⁷⁵ In a questionnaire completed by 30 Lucky Cloud participants, 35% of people identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or ‘other’, supporting the notion that the parties provide a ‘safe space’ for queer subcultures.

range typically present at a dance party.⁷⁶ Although a predominantly white crowd, Lucky Cloud's close ties to Japan and Europe—partly via Mancuso, who started hosting a Loft party in Sapporo in 2000, and partly via the impact of the London and New York Loft parties on European music culture—also diversify the nationality and ethnicity of the parties considerably.⁷⁷ All of these factors, combined with the broad musical programming and socio-spatial atmosphere, help to configure a socially mixed coalition of people.

While the heterogeneous identity coalitions assembled by Lucky Cloud are a crucial factor in my analysis, my primary interest is in the ways in which this diverse group of people relate to one another microsocially, and specifically how musically-incited affect works to 'stick' those that aggregate together in the live situation of the parties (the interrelations between Born's first and third planes). Indeed, a striking feature of the Lucky Cloud parties is the high level of engagement and integration that takes place on the dancefloor. The social groups that gather at the parties do not, that is, simply bifurcate into distinct 'micro-publics', as is often the case at club nights. Straw observed this segregating tendency when he described the dance club as a 'cultural space... characterized, more than most others, by the marking of distinction and the drawing of boundaries' (Straw, 1991: 379); and in my own fieldwork, the electronic/dance music audiences that were often the most socially diverse—those found at UK House/funky house nights and/or mainstream club venues such as Egg—were often also the most unambiguously fractured, with clusters of dancers representing distinct crews or 'posses' marked by racial, gender, class, and age differences. Excerpts from my field notes highlight the commonness of this fracturing:

February 2014, Familia @ Egg LDN, King's Cross

The crowd members that I spoke to consisted of a group of young white guys on a night out from Sutton, young black guys and girls from the Ladbroke Grove area, and a large Spanish contingent from all over London. None of these groups seemed to engage with each other. The suburban lads made inappropriate drunken comments to me and other women; the young black crowd were busy shuffling⁷⁸ to funky house in the top room; and the Spanish group danced and drank with each

⁷⁶ In the same questionnaire (see previous fn), the age of participants (excluding children) ranged from 18-55—a wide spread of ages that is not typical of London dance/club nights.

⁷⁷ The influence of the Loft and Lucky Cloud on European music culture is evident from the number of partygoers who have set up their own Loft-style parties in Portugal, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Ireland.

⁷⁸ Shuffling refers to a form of dancing associated with UK House music. See also Chapter 8.

other all night. Clearly, there were levels of difference among crowd members that persisted on the dancefloor, with fragmentary groups continually breaking apart from the bigger crowd, creating pockets of semi-private space.

April 2014, Garage Classics @ Warehouse LDN, Edmonton

Although socially mixed in terms of race, gender, and class, the dancefloor was quite segregated, with a group of black men dancing in a circle together, and groups of white men also dancing together. This was almost certainly to do with friendship groups... But what was significant was that these social distinctions were upheld in the space of the club, rather than obviously reconfigured. [...] It was a pretty mixed space, and a tolerant one too, but people mainly stuck together in cliques, which tended to be quite black and white (literally).

Rather than splintering into micro-publics, as in these descriptions, the various social groups at the Lucky Cloud parties relate and attune to one another through particular mechanisms of repetition and shared habit. Indeed, unlike the irregular one-off events described above, highly specific rituals, structures of anticipation, and collective memories/recollections punctuate the Lucky Cloud parties and are specifically cultivated by the organisers for the purpose of engendering a unified public. As Gilbert put it in interview, ‘repetition’ (of sounds, records, musical styles, spatialities...) is itself ‘community-building’, providing people with shared affective markers or ‘signposts’ that they can latch onto. It also resists what he referred to as ‘that post-Fordist, hyper-consumerist disposition of obsolescence, novelty [and] disposability’. The idea behind the parties, then, is that multiple continuities, including the regular time of year/day that they take place, the regular venue, the provision of food, the balloons suspended above the dance floor, the high-fidelity Klipschorn sound system, and the musical aesthetic, generate an intense sense of stability and endurance: a cultural space of belonging or a ‘home’ that can be returned to time and again.⁷⁹ And indeed, the potency of this repetitiousness was reiterated by many a Lucky Cloud regular. As one woman, Cora, 41, who lived in Plaistow and worked for a human rights charity, put it:

Just as the regular occurrence of the parties provides a much-needed release from the pressures of the outside world, so the parties themselves, with their dependable formula and uplifting atmosphere, are like a big pair of arms wrapped around me. The very nature of returning to them systematically has provided a genuinely healing [and] protective space... [And] having that shared experience to look

⁷⁹ The importance of longevity was brought to the fore during the Lucky Cloud’s search for a new venue after the Light closed down in 2014. Having become involved with the parties as part of my fieldwork, I suggested a number of spaces that I felt could be suitable as a new ‘home’ for the party. Quickly, however, I was made to realise that unless the new space replicated the old one in highly specific ways—a wooden floor, windows for natural light, deep corners, a high ceiling, an open spatial layout, and a non-commercial establishment—it would not be considered as a possibility.

forward to every three months throughout my 30s has helped me sidestep a whole set of societal pressures... (Cora, June 2016).

The methodical return to the parties, the rituals and habits that structure the curve of each event, and the meticulous musical selections that configure the shape of the evening all contribute to what Martin Beck calls ‘the connective tissue that constitutes togetherness’ (Beck, 2015: 1). Routine practices such as the shaking of talcum powder on the dancefloor to lessen the traction underfoot, the collective blowing up of balloons and decorating of the room by volunteers before the party, the dismantling of the room afterwards, and even the hazy van rides to deliver the sound system back to its various places of storage once the party is over—all are important elements of this ‘connective tissue’. Indeed, many Lucky Clouders compared the networks of care, trust, friendship, and belonging elicited through the regularity of the parties as analogous to, or standing in for, ‘family’. As another partygoer, Karen, a makeup artist from East London, also in her 40s, noted:

Over the years, it’s become like a family... You know, and I really do feel there’s an affinity between everyone who comes regularly. Even if you don’t speak to some people much, or don’t have their phone number or whatever, you still feel this connection... [because] there’s a collective cause, you know? A bond between everyone involved. You know you can trust them all (Karen, March 2014).



Figure 16: Set up for Lucky Cloud at the Rose Lipman Centre, Dalston.



Figure 17: Lucky Cloud dancefloor at the Rose Lipman Centre, Dalston.

As I discuss in the Conclusion to this thesis, the severe lack of forms of musical collectivism and community in London currently is one reason why the stability and continuity of Lucky Cloud is insurgent, building a sense of public life and habitual togetherness that rejects the individualistic ‘drifting in and out to see your favourite DJ’ characteristic of many dance club nights.

Loft Classics: Distributed Embodiment and Mimetic Desire

How, then, does specifically musical affect enter into this process of community-building, this collectivisation across social difference? One of the key ways that the diverse groups at Lucky Cloud attune to one another is through the cyclic repetition of certain tunes. These ‘Loft Classics’, as they are known, are records that have either been handed down via the legacy of Mancuso and the release of the Nuphonic *Loft Classics* compilations; or slowly introduced into the Loft paradigm by Colleen ‘Cosmo’ Murphy, who hosts the London and Japan parties. An example of the former is War’s ‘City Country City’, a record that returns episodically to the London, New York, and

Sapporo parties, and that, as Murphy told me, was ‘huge for David [Mancuso]... because he’d always be doing the city-country-city thing... Straight after the Loft, taking a bus up [from Port Authority] to his place in Woodstock’. Then there are so-called ‘London songs’: Loft Classics that Mancuso would have played relatively frequently, but that have somehow become much bigger in London than they ever were in New York, such as C.J. & Co.’s ‘We Got Our Own Thing’ or The Joubert Singers’ ‘Stand on the Word’. As both Murphy and Gilbert noted, ‘We Got Our Own Thing’ is ‘especially massive’ for the London ‘family’ because—lyrically and symbolically—it taps so well into the notion of inheriting an organic tradition while developing and evolving that tradition, allowing it to become its ‘own thing’.⁸⁰ Finally, an example of a newer ‘Classic’ that has been introduced into the parties by Murphy recently is Gregory Porter’s ‘1960 What?’ Again, repetition has been crucial to the assimilation of this tune into the Loft canon. As Murphy put it in interview:

I think I played that [Gregory Porter] tune at every party for a year... It was so good, and it deserved it! Then after that, I’d bring it along in case someone asked for it, and then gradually phased it out. But it’ll come back at some point, in a few years. I think it’s a Classic now, you know, in the Loft ‘canon’ (Colleen Murphy, August 2014).

Not just any record can become a Loft Classic, however. As Tim Lawrence relayed to me, there has to be a certain holistic ‘arc’ to the tune: a sonic dynamism that allows listeners to travel out of themselves and back again. In short, the tune has to ‘peak’. In an article for *Electronic Beats*, Lawrence further described this aesthetic as resembling the various stages of an acid trip: ‘David [Mancuso] learned from Timothy Leary that the acid trip is comprised of three stages... and he selected his records [to] match the intensity of these phases: the gentle, playful beginning or “entry”; the deeper, more introverted, transcendental “circus” that follows; and the more open, more social, more uplifting experience of the “re-entry”’ (Lawrence, 2014: 31). Not only does each individual Loft record tend to follow this shape sonically, often with long, abstract percussive breakdowns deviating out of the main groove; the musical selections over the evening as a whole do too, starting

⁸⁰ The emphasis on change as well as continuity is very important to the Lucky Cloud collective. As Murphy emphasised, ‘We’re influenced and inspired by the [New York] culture... But you know, we’re not just doing a Paradise Garage party in Room 3 at Fabric!’ Similarly, Gilbert noted that, ‘We would really, really object strongly if anyone said we were a sort of “retro” project’.

slow, building to ‘peak’, and then winding down, culminating in a musical journey that intentionally mirrors the social habits and emotional contours of an evening, regardless of whether people are on LSD or not.⁸¹

Within this musical-temporal passage, the Classics function as what I will call ‘affective anchors’, heralding an explosion of jubilant energy as soon as they become audible that pulls people from all corners of the dancefloor into a shared sonic-bodily familiarity. Gilbert described such tunes as taking on the role of a ‘mantra’—an incantation shared by the different individuals and groups in the room which, when played and collectively danced to, has ‘a sort of intoxicating potential’, while also marking a point of continuity with an historical tradition. But as well as affirming shared musical affinities, the Classics also help to forge powerful social bonds by affectively grouping different people together, binding them through their collective-corporeal attachment to particular musical records. As one participant, Danny, who was in his early 30s, described:

One of the first parties I went to, I heard Tamiko Jones’s ‘Can’t Live Without Your Love’. The room literally exploded with this... almost *spiritual* energy! I didn’t know what the tune was so I Shazamed it.⁸² I wanted to know so I could listen at home [...] In the next year or so, I heard that tune and some other [Classic] tunes again [at the parties] ... And each time, that same energy would re-appear and spread across the room, and each time... I felt as though the loose friendships I was making were sort of made stronger... Just by getting to know the tunes and feeling that shared, kind of instant elation with the other people around you (Danny, December 2013).

Danny’s words indicate the creative potential of embodied habit in two ways. First of all, he describes other crowd members’ affective attachments to known and loved records—specifically, Tamiko Jones’s ‘Can’t Live Without Your Love’—and notes how these attachments are made visible or ‘public’ by the simultaneity of their explosive responses upon hearing such records, engendering a powerful, even ‘spiritual’ connection. This process, in which a heterogeneous

⁸¹ Murphy articulated this musical journey clearly in recalling that, ‘David always said start quiet, more mellow. People are coming in and they’re seeing each other for the first time... And there are kids around. They don’t need like, “boom boom boom boom!” at that time. You know?! It’s how you build it’.

⁸² Shazam is an App (application) used to identify music. It works by capturing a 10 second sample of the song and analysing it against a database of over 11 million songs. It means that one is able to discover what a particular tune is while on a dancefloor, at a bar, in a shop, or elsewhere.

coalition of people are bound together in time and space by a shared set of pre-existing musical affections, is an example of what Gilbert, after Bernard Stiegler, refers to as ‘collective individuation’ (Stiegler, 2008: 39). Through the mobilisation of ‘collective retentions’—forms of ‘externalized group memory’ invested, in this case, in the Classics—an emergent public is brought into existence and affectively fastened together (Gilbert, 2013: 688). Blackman describes something similar when she talks of a ‘distributed embodiment’, in which certain modes of consciousness and physical/mental experience are shared or distributed among a collective via mutual mnemonic devices, enabling an intimate connection to the psyches and somas of others (Blackman, 2012: 10).

Perhaps most fitting in the context of the Loft Classics, though, is Christopher Haworth’s notion of ‘exteriorisation’: the human capacity to ‘externalise knowledge in objects, texts [and] scores’, imbuing them with an agency and ability to ‘pass[...] on material memory traces for future generations to inherit’ (Haworth, 2019: 4). Indeed, as Danny goes onto describe above, it is not only through pre-existing musical affective attachments that individuals are collectivised and socio-musical alliances formed in this assemblage. Attunement also occurs through the way in which such musically embodied knowledges are picked up, imitated, and retained by others who were not in possession of them previously. This was the case for Danny himself, who, feeding off the elation of other people’s affective energies, felt compelled to ‘Shazam’ the tune, to become invested in the same habitual musical structures, to make such an attachment his own, and to thereby share in the energetic exchange blooming among those around him. While, as I articulate in the next chapter, Danny’s ability to become open in this way was intimately tied to his personal history and musical biography, his account nonetheless demonstrates a second way in which habit can act as a mechanism of difference and innovation—namely, by eliciting a sense of mimetic or imitative desire in those who do not (yet) share that habit, drawing them into the collectivity and thereby altering that collectivity. We see, then, through Danny, and indeed, through the way in which affective attachment to the Classics has been passed on through historical time and across global space (New York, London, Europe and Japan), how habit is not reducible to a fixed bodily

disposition or mechanical reflex. Rather, it is a relational, plastic process able to innovate and initiate change, particularly in the form of ‘copying’ or following, as Tarde theorised (Tarde, 1890).

Habit, Affective Togetherness, and Social Change

Habit’s creative and transformative potential is, however, also contingent upon who or what is present, and therefore who or what is systematically absent. Whether functioning to ‘stick’ emergent musical collectivities together and enhance their sense of connection, or to enlist a new person into such a collectivity via imitation-suggestion, the key point about the ‘affective anchoring’ that takes place at Lucky Cloud is that it involves multiple, divergent social groups who might not otherwise encounter each other. The ‘affective alliance’, in short, refracts and inverts wider social identity formations, most prominently, sexuality, class, age, nationality, and gender.

As Martin, a young medical student who identified as gay, put it in interview:

The [Lucky Cloud] parties are unique, because... the other nights I go to, it’ll mostly be young people, people who are probably my own age, in their 20s. Whereas at Lucky Cloud, people are all different ages, sexualities, backgrounds... some of them have kids, and bring [their kids] earlier in the night, so...there’s this whole close-knit community of people that you wouldn’t really find anywhere else (Martin, November 2013).

Martin’s reference to a community of people that he ‘wouldn’t really find anywhere else’ indicates the improbability of forming such relationships via other channels of social life, and was something reiterated by another, older interviewee, Peter, who was in his late 40s and had previously worked as Manager at the Light in Shoreditch:

I used to work at the Light [*former Lucky Cloud venue*], and that’s what got me hooked [to the parties]. It’s the only thing I regularly volunteer for and feel proud to help organise... I’ve also made a large number of friends there that I wouldn’t have found at a regular club night or down the pub (Peter, August 2014).

Again, it is Peter’s hunch that the socio-musical networks he has become a part of via the parties are networks that would have been unlikely to materialise in other domains of his social life. Moreover, as Peter implies, the unorthodox social relationships that the parties facilitate tend to outlive the events themselves. In other words, it is not just within the spatio-temporal frame of the

live musical event that transformative encounters with difference occur, but on a long-term basis external to the parties too. For many, but particularly for those who have migrated to London from other parts of the world, the longevity of these affective-social ties has been key to their assimilation and ability to ‘belong’ in London. As José, 38, of Hispanic origin, related to me:

Not only the party has enabled me to forge new friendships with like-minded people, but it has also given me a sense of belonging... [You know] because it’s a real melting pot of people from vastly different horizons coming together, and a lot of them I continue to see between parties. It’s utterly refreshing in a society which appears more and more fragmented as time goes (José, June 2016).

It must be noted, however, that in spite of the different social identities that are brought together in this musical assemblage, the Lucky Cloud events are also—unlike the original New York Loft—predominantly white, with few British African or Caribbean attendees, and even fewer South Asian. Notwithstanding the relatively unusual socio-musical formations that are engendered by the parties and strengthened by the ‘affective anchoring’ of the Classics, then, certain social groups remain conspicuously absent from this convivial ‘togetherness’. This is something that will be returned to in Chapter 8. For now, the important point to note is that, in this musical assemblage, habitual musical affective attachments function in ways that are both amenable to social change, and reproductive of social divisions and exclusions, thus amounting to an ambivalent politics (cf. Guilbault, 2010).

This case study has shown how habitual musical affects, when shared by an emergent social assembly, can simultaneously be transformative. By rousing what Gilbert calls ‘collective retentions’ (Gilbert, 2013: 688), the Loft Classics take on an adhesive, public-making function by binding a not-quite-pre-existent collectivity together. In so doing, they enable participants to encounter difference and otherness in rewarding, non-verbal ways, while also facilitating opportunities for group life that potentially re-organise prevailing social divisions. This comes across particularly powerfully in José’s account above, for whom the parties provide a sense of belonging and friendship that contradicts the ‘fragmented’ nature of social life that he feels prevails outside of them. In this musical assemblage, then, musical, spatial, technical, and material

repetitions help to build social and affective alliances that not only challenge wider social hierarchies within the parties, but that also spiral outwards from the events themselves in the form of enduring friendships and connections (Born, 2011; Grossberg, 1984). With regard to the theoretical concerns of this chapter, this importantly demonstrates that, contrary to Massumi (2002), bodily habit and ingrained affective attachment are not reducible to mechanisms of fixity that act as a barrier to change but can themselves be collectively empowering and life-changing.



Figure 18: Entry phase/warm-up at Lucky Cloud, Rose Lipman Centre, Dalston.

Reggae, Spatial Recursion, and the Seditious Habit

In this second case study, I turn to another way in which habitual musical affect can form the basis of change. I show how, rather than ‘sticking’ an emergent public together, musically embodied memories and other sensory attachments can sustain continuity and generate political solidarity between historically marginal and oppressed communities. My specific focus here is on the sanctuary that dub reggae has provided, and continues to provide, for black Britons and other

minority ethnic groups in London. Again, as with the ‘whiteness’ of Lucky Cloud, there are contradictions and paradoxes in interpreting dub reggae in this way. As I have shown in Chapter 5, women (particularly young black women), as well as expressions of queerness, are markedly absent from the dub reggae assemblage, and this must not be overlooked when analysing the extent to which habitual participation in dub reggae engenders collective socio-political solidarity. Nonetheless, it is certain that, particularly with regard to contesting racialised identities and cultivating insurgent spaces of love, protection, and care among diasporic groups, the dub reggae assemblage has acted over time as a bastion of resistance and transformation. And, like Lucky Cloud, it is largely through habitual sensory-affective markers and repetitive musical devices that this has been achieved.

Racism, Affective Dissonance, and Cultural Intermezzo

As with the previous case study, it is important to understand the social makeup of the musical assemblage in question before analysing the habitual affective mechanisms therein. With a few exceptions, dub reggae events in London draw crowds that are predominantly black British/British Asian, male, heterosexual, and mixed but mostly working-class. Age tends to vary, with participants ranging from young (teenaged) to relatively old (in their seventies), which is unusual for a music scene and points to a trans-generational binding that has been cultivated over time.⁸³ In certain ways, then, those who participate in reggae dances hail from historically oppressed social positions, rather than from the dominant social order. That is, the black/Asian, working- and lower-middle class groups who make up the majority of the audiences are enmeshed in a specific set of historical power relations that renders them vulnerable to subjugation, criminalisation, economic, ideological, and

⁸³ Notably, the demographic of dub reggae events varies according to venue and artist. University of Dub, held at the Scala in King’s Cross, draws a large student crowd owing to its central location and accessibility as a night club. By contrast, dances held at further-out venues such as the Caribbean Edge in Tottenham draw crowds that are predominantly black, male, and working- or lower-middle class, as do sound system events taking place at West Indian cultural centres in and around greater London, though age is still a varying factor at these events.

political oppression (Back & Solomos, 2002; Gilroy, 1987, 1993, 2005; Solomos et al., 1982). This will become important to my analysis later.

Similar to *Lucky Cloud*, a number of mediating factors underlie the particular social coalitions drawn together by dub reggae. Some of these I discussed in Chapter 5—for instance, female ‘awayness’—but other aspects require further attention. During the period 1964-70, race became a core theme of negativity in British politics. Black Britons were constructed as a national problem—as ‘the enemy within’ (Solomos et al., 1982: 23)—systematically denied access to education, health care, employment, and welfare, and the victims of violent racist attacks.⁸⁴ The black working-classes in particular were brutally policed and incarcerated in what was widely perceived as an inducement to ‘go home’ (Gilroy, 1982a: 143, 175). In such a context, where repatriation was the preferred solution to the ‘problem’ of an ‘alien black presence’ in Britain, black Britons transformed the categories of their oppression into a source of political strength (ibid: 175, 289; Solomos et al., 1982: 32). Taking up the call for repatriation via their own ‘roots’ ideologies of Ethiopianism and back to Africa, African Caribbean immigrants subverted the negative and exclusionary demand to ‘go home’ into a radically imaginative and utopian longing for a ‘future home’, embodied and enacted in the reggae dance. With its persistent riddims, lyrical commemorations, and constant references to the past and future—a ‘before’ and an ‘elsewhere’—roots reggae helped build a sense of temporal progression into the lives of black Britons: a ‘permanence in everyday life’, as well as an imagined route out of it (Daynes, 2010: 13; Hebdige, 1987). In this way, the reggae dance of the 1970s not only constituted the driving force required to survive the present; it also served to project its followers into an idealised future: Zion, the pre-colonial utopia that is symbolically ‘marched’ towards at dances (Daynes, 2010: 151; Chude-Sokei, 1994: 80). It was a space of hope, salvation, and safety for black Britons; a space in which a shared ‘affective dissonance’—a shared misery at

⁸⁴ As Solomos et al. note, this was attributable to the discourse of Powellism and the ‘violent society’, which constructed race as an ‘alien malaise afflicting British society’ (Solomos et al., 1982: 26).

the friction between self and world—could be transformed into a shared ‘affective solidarity’ (Hemmings, 2012: 148).⁸⁵

Yet, African Caribbeans were not the only group to experience racial prejudice at this time. New cycles of racism directed at Asian immigrants in the 1970s meant that race became a major political issue for British Asians too. The ‘bussing’ of Asian children out of West London schools in the 1960s (Brah, 1999; Shukla, 2003); the ‘Paki-bashing’ and violent assaults against Asians throughout the 1960s and ‘70s; and the National Front’s meeting at Southall Town Hall in April 1979 protected by a police blockade that immobilised thousands of anti-fascist protestors—all indicated ‘a community under assault’, in Sandhya Shukla’s words (Shukla, 2003: 106). One productive outcome of these events, however, was that they galvanised Asian Londoners into more explicitly politicised forms of action alongside other anti-racist and anti-fascist forces. The year 1976 thus saw the uniting of African Caribbean and Asian Londoners in Notting Hill to protest against police racism and assert a ‘new British political identity’ (black British/British Asian). It also saw the emergence of the Southall Youth Movement, which articulated the struggles of people of colour worldwide (Brah, 1999: 19). By 1978, local women’s organisations had combined to form the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), which organised on the basis of Afro-Asian unity; while, during the Southall riots of 1979, Asian and African descent residents came together to collectively mourn the arrest of 700 people of colour and lament the brutal police assault on Southall black reggae band, Misty in Roots (ibid: 20; Baumann, 1996).

Such moments of ‘intermezzo’ between black and Asian collectivities materialised in music as well as in grassroots politics (Back, 1996). Indeed, music became a key platform for inter-cultural dialogue and anti-racist exchange at this time. As Back notes, the ‘fusion of elements of south Asian

⁸⁵ The experience of ‘affective dissonance’ is described by Sam Selvon in his 1956 classic, *The Lonely Londoners*. Seeking to understand the force of racial prejudice, Galahad turns to his hand and ‘talks’ to the colour Black: “Colour, is you causing all this, you know. Why the hell you can’t be blue, or red, or green, if you can’t be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world. Is not me... is you!” (Selvon, 1956: 88-9). The experience, as described by Selvon, is that of the dissonance between an embodied sense of self, on the one hand, and the social expectations and treatment of that self, on the other.

culture [with] the rituals of the reggae dance hall' in the late 1970s signalled new modes of 'inter-being and mutual identification' and can largely be understood as a product of the flows of migration that coalesced in various niches of London (ibid). West London's Southall, for example, has long been home to a multitude of South Asian nationalities and religions, initially drawn to the area by post-war labour needs (Shukla, 2003: 92). At the same time, Southall is 'a mecca for reggae' (Dhaliwal, 2007)—a legacy that can be traced to *Misty in Roots*, as well as to the iconic Southall community centre and the Caribbean night club the Tudor Rose (est. 1988), which brought regular dub sessions to Southall right up until its closure during my fieldwork in 2014. Historically, then, Southall has proffered an unprecedented intermingling of Asian and African Caribbean diasporas and sounds. In particular, Asian youth who grew up amid the economic decline of the 1970s and experienced intense white resentment were drawn to, and accepted by, roots reggae's ethos of defiance and political resistance (ibid). In the same way that reggae dances generated a contemplative, seditious, and powerfully collectivising environment for black Britons, so they also opened their doors to British Asians in need of an outlet through which to channel their own (different but related) 'affective dissonance'.⁸⁶

Of all the sound systems that passed through Southall in the 1970s, it was Jah Shaka who garnered the biggest Asian following. Shaka directly 'answered the call' of the South Asian diaspora, incorporating special Vaisakhi and Diwali chants into his West London sets, and continuing to hold dances in Southall for over 25 years. In so doing, he tapped into a collective cultural-religious history and linguistic familiarity that 'addressed' and enlisted a new social group into the music—the South Asian diaspora (Bakhtin, 1986).⁸⁷ Parallels can be drawn here with Chapters 4 and 5, particularly regarding the relations between aesthetic change and social change, and the emergence

⁸⁶ There were other anti-racist movements in music at this time, many of them involving white groups. Collaborations between British punk and Jamaican immigrant youth in the 1970s, for instance, fuelled new black-white musical and social exchanges, giving rise to the Rock Against Racism festival and the 2 Tone ska revival (Hebdige, 1979, 1987). Nonetheless, such collaborations were not unproblematic, often evidencing a 'unidirectional' flow of ideas and cultural borrowing (Straw, 1991: 382). Further, the punk-reggae connection largely dissipated following the death of Bob Marley in 1981.

⁸⁷ Importantly, the flow of musical influence was not one-way: while reggae assimilated South Asian sounds and lexical elements, Asian musicians in the late 1970s and '80s forged the British Asian subgenre, bhangra, which was heavily informed by dub as well as rap and Punjabi folk. See Back, 1996.

of new multi-cultural coalitions as a consequence of musical hybridity (Born, 2015; Hesmondhalgh, 2000). But what is more significant is the longevity of the black/Asian ‘intermezzo’ engendered by Shaka’s 1970s Southall sessions: to this day, he retains a huge Punjabi Sikh and Hindu following, with devotees travelling from the outer reaches of London to attend his Tufnell Park sessions. It is thus not only the case that Shaka’s Southall sets ‘spoke’ to the South Asian diaspora during a time of crisis and emergency in Britain. This once-embryonic, multi-ethnic musical public has also solidified into a stable, habituated, even ‘naturalised’ socio-musical formation, in spite of changing social and political conditions, and multiple failed attempts by other black and Asian producers to draw mixed race audiences (Hesmondhalgh, 2000).⁸⁸

In what follows, I suggest that this musical public, initially brought into existence by hybrid aesthetic gestures and a shared desire to move from a position of ‘affective dissonance’ to one of ‘affective solidarity’, has both stabilised and transformed over time via the repetition of particular rituals, sensory atmospheres, and musical techniques. In particular, I argue that the continuity of the dub reggae assemblage generates an aura of sustenance that is life-saving and deeply motivating for the historically oppressed populations who, in turn, sustain it. In order to make this argument, I first turn to the plethora of mediations beyond musical sound—the sensory-material qualities and spatial-architectural devices—that persist as proxies of attachment in this milieu.

Camouflage, Recursion, Protection: ‘Homing Desire’ and Habitable Spaces

Like the Lucky Cloud parties, reggae sound system dances are comprised of specific material, social, technical, and spatial qualities, which repeat and recur across events. The repetitious element that I will focus on in most depth here is the space. By space, I refer both to the type of building or venue that dances typically take place in, and to the materialities of the dances themselves: the spatial organisation of musical equipment in relation to crowd, merchandise, bar, and food stalls;

⁸⁸ Regarding the ‘naturalisation’ of this musical public, numerous times during fieldwork, I asked interviewees about the Asian Sikh/Hindu presence at Shaka reggae dances, and the answer was almost invariably: ‘no one knows, they’ve just always been there!’

the surfaces, textures, and stylistic décor of the room; and the smells, tastes, and other sense-making experiences that saturate the atmosphere. The hyper-repetitiveness of these spatial and material qualities is, I suggest, indicative of what Avtar Brah (1996) calls a ‘homing desire’: a desire to create habitable, liveable spaces through practices of ritual, tradition, and collective memory, but also to ensure that a veil of safety is drawn around oneself and one’s community in the undertaking of such practices.

The concept of ‘home’ is central to the dub reggae assemblage. It is a concept that is complex and multi-referential, assuming many guises and spanning multiple timeframes and places, both imagined and real. To the outsider, the most salient manifestation of the ‘home’ lies in the physical and material homeliness of the reggae dance. As noted in Chapter 5, many of the reggae events that I conducted fieldwork on took place at Caribbean cultural centres in outer London, rather than at established central London nightclubs. The Caribbean Edge in Bruce Grove, the Golden Palace in Edmonton, and the West Indian Cultural Centre in Hornsey are all examples of regular reggae fieldwork destinations that did not constitute archetypal nightclubs or commercial music venues. What was striking about these sites was both their particularity and their similarity. Journeys to events would involve travelling long distances to residential neighbourhoods like Tottenham and Turnpike Lane, while fellow attendees would often drive and forgo drinking to save them the infrequent bus journey from Silver Street station to Cooks Ferry roundabout, or the half hour walk along the North Circular to the Golden Palace. Comparably inconspicuous, the venues themselves tended to loom out of the dark: a single door to a basement on the Finsbury Park ring-road; an upstairs room in the middle of an industrial trading estate next to Tottenham marshes; a windowless restaurant on a deserted local high street. Indeed, from street-level, it was often hard to tell that any event was taking place at all—something I later discovered to be a deliberate ‘camouflage’ strategy: an attempt to blend into the urban surroundings and thereby remain protected (from police, outsiders). Indeed, had it not been for the giveaway bass vibrations shuddering out onto the pavement, I would frequently have assumed I was at the wrong address.



Figure 19: The Caribbean Edge, Bruce Grove, from street level.

Stepping over the threshold into one of these events, however, was an utterly transporting experience. Immediately, one would be hit by a physical warmth, together with the pungent smell of Caribbean cuisine (jerk meat, curries, and stews), both of which instantly invoked a sense of (someone else's) 'home'. At the point of entry into the building, the bass would probably already be inside your body, rattling your insides and buzzing fixatedly in your throat; and the smell of weed would become increasingly prevalent the further you stepped into the venue, mixing with the culinary aromas to create a distinct 'smellscape'. It was, on every level, to pass through what Nadia Seremetakis calls 'sensory gates': thresholds or openings that 'signif[y] entry into a separate space' (Seremetakis, 1996: 29). Equally pertinent was the specific décor that appeared ubiquitous across events. The Golden Palace in Edmonton resembled a dimly lit, old-fashioned community centre, furnished with a worn red carpet, a tiled ceiling, and a small hatch through which hot food was available. The different sound systems would be arranged in a circle formation facing each other, taking it in turns to emit bone-juddering levels of sound as crowd members stood poised in their midst; while the texture of the carpet underfoot invited a bizarre lack of movement or dancing in favour of an intensely focused listening environment. As one of my key research participants, Pat, who I enlisted as part of my 'musical mapping' project, described after attending an event at the Golden Palace for the first time:

It didn't feel like a club or a music venue at all. It felt like a town hall or... [a] community event. Like a community centre... Just people standing by the sound systems, listening to the music... And just really into the vibe, just absolutely relishing the sounds. Yeah, it was unlike anything I'd come across before. Like stepping into a communal living room or something... People just listening to the records like they might do at home on a Sunday afternoon (Pat, October 2014).

For Pat, a white middle-class male in his early 30s, and an 'outsider' to the reggae scene, the overwhelming aura invoked by the Golden Palace was that of a community living room or 'home': an intimate, informal, historical and cultural space of belonging. Such specific spatial and material qualities recurred near-identically at every sound system event. At the Dome in Tufnell Park, the room was habitually set up like the front room of a home, with white sash curtains, dim intimate lighting, a wooden floor with benches to the sides where people could eat, drink, and talk, and a portrait of Hailie Selassie hanging DIY-style above Jah Shaka. Likewise, visiting the Caribbean Edge in Bruce Grove for the first time, I described in my field notes that:

June 2014, Oneness Dubsound @ The Caribbean Edge, Bruce Grove.

[I]t was almost as if we'd walked into the Golden Palace—uncannily similar! Same red carpet, tiled ceiling, jingling chandelier, community centre vibe, sound systems set up in the corners, and a smattering of people (mostly men) standing against the walls or in the centre of the stacks, listening and nodding their heads.

Again, the carpet at this venue marked the crossing of a material threshold: the absorption of a new kind of lifeworld through the feet, as one moved from the concrete streets to the soft tactility of the carpeted dance. And again, quite unlike the slippery talcum-powdered wooden floors of Lucky Cloud, which sought to enhance danceability, the adhesive texture of the carpet seemed to make for a less dance-oriented, more home-like environment. A dining area with laid tables enhanced the notion of 'home-making', while at the edges of the dance, young women were sewing embroidered patches onto merchandise, before pricing them up in order to sell to attendees.⁸⁹ The typical roots reggae dance, then, materialises out of the urban landscape as a hidden alcove: a bolthole of habitual

⁸⁹ As noted in Chapter 5, within the 'homely' spaces of the reggae dance, patriarchal gender norms appear to be reinforced. The few black women who were present at reggae dances tended either to be selling merchandise, serving drinks, or working on the door. At the same time, these women did not necessarily see their roles as subordinate to men's, often viewing the events as a chance to sell their hand-crafted merchandise and/or support a black cultural tradition. This, in turn, invokes theories of intersectionality, referring to the ways in which gender is differently constituted by race, as well as by other social divisions (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990).

socio-cultural and historic belonging. Camouflaged from the outside, such spaces are—owing to their recursive nature—uncannily familiar inside, evoking no stronger sensation than that of arriving or ‘coming home’, as my black British participant Andrew described.



Figures 20 and 21: Inside the Caribbean Edge (top) and dinner time at the Golden Palace.

When and why did these replicative spaces of 'home' emerge? And what is their significance for those who participate in dub reggae today? Recalling the racist political discourse that accompanied the post-war settlement of African Caribbean people in Britain, the London roots reggae scene evolved at a moment when the domestic space of the 'home' was one of very few relatively safe environments in which black people could gather. Particularly in 1950s and '60s Britain, African Caribbean immigrants were excluded from a large number of public spaces owing to a so-called 'colour bar'—a ban on people of colour (Waters, 2017a, 2017b). Music clubs and late-night drinking spots were no exception. Indeed, some venues prohibited entry to black audiences and musicians so vehemently that they came to symbolise 'site[s] of whiteness' and 'shiny beacon[s] of apartheid' (Cohen, 2011: 239). A crucial way that black groups circumvented the 'colour bar', then, was by creating their own musical spaces at home, in their living rooms and basements. These 'shebeens', as they were known, formed the bedrock of an evolving black house party scene throughout the 1960s. Every weekend, furniture would be pushed back, tunes would emanate from the Blue Spot gramophone, curry goat and cheap beers would be passed around, and, as Jah Vego, a selector on the late Duke Vin's sound, noted, there you would have it: 'your own little function every Saturday night' (Vego, in Bradley, 2000: 116). Elaborating on these weekend 'functions', Jah Vego recalled:

[S]o many places in London wouldn't let black men in. So, we have to do our own thing, keeping dances in houses, in basements, in the shebeens... I think people that had come to England was more receptive to a Jamaican-style dance than even they had been in Jamaica; at home [in Jamaica], it was simply a part of their lives—here [in London] they look forward to them as *one of the only bits of Jamaica they can still partake in* (Jah Vego, in Bradley, 2000: 115-6).

Jah Vego's account draws attention to the historical function of the black British home as a place of deep sanctuary, community, and spatio-temporal multiplicity. Indeed, not only did residential homes at this time provide physical refuge from the racial discrimination and danger of public life, both for black men and women—a factor that situates 'the home' as more than a gendered site of

domestic labour and patriarchal violence (hooks, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).⁹⁰ Through its weekly transformation into the ‘shebeen’, the black home also functioned as an arena in which to recreate and reimagine a remembered version of ‘home’ (Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad...): a cultural-collective home or ‘yard’ within the domestic space of the private home.⁹¹ The compound, subversive black residential home was thus a safe haven, a ‘public home’, and a transnational dwelling all rolled into one, eliding private and public spheres in ways that were necessary for survival and dignity, as well as for political solidarity and collectivity.

As basement and living-room dances grew in popularity during the 1960s, a move to host larger-scale dances at public venues arose, which saw the ‘shebeen’ expand into public space. Enlisting the help of churches, town halls, youth clubs, and schools, black groups began to create their own venues or ‘cultural centres’ as early as the mid-1950s, which replicated and magnified the space of the home on a public scale. In this way, the key aspects of the ‘shebeen’ remained—curry goat, cheap drinks, friends and family, Caribbean music and dance—but dances could accommodate considerably more people than a house could. The move was, in short, an incursion of private into public, or the making-public of that which had been forcefully privatised, including the labour of cooking and nourishing, as well as the leisure of dancing and talking. Prominent early examples of such cultural centres included the Mango Club on Coldharbour Lane, which functioned as a ‘social work centre’ for Brixton (Waters, 2017a); and All Nations Club in Hackney, which consisted of two dance rooms, a reading room, a restaurant, two bars, and a tea bar (ibid). These early African

⁹⁰ Recounting childhood journeys through racist neighbourhoods, bell hooks notes how feelings of danger dissipated upon arriving home; the black homeplace, for her, has thus always constituted a site of potential resistance (hooks, 1990). Similarly, Kimberlé Crenshaw describes the black home as a potential ‘safe haven from the indignities of life in a racist society’ (Crenshaw, 1991). Seen through such an intersectional lens, the gender dynamics on display at reggae dances today are complicated, since, in a context where racial oppression has historically been fought through the site of the ‘home’, it is difficult to say whether black women performing domestic roles at reggae dances necessarily wield little authority or experience domesticity as a site of subordination in the way that white women often do.

⁹¹ In Jamaica, a ‘yard’ refers to ‘a public clearing for dances that is generally sponsored by an adjoining bar [or] restaurant’ (Veal, 2007: 42). Similarly, for my interviewees, ‘yard’ tended to conjure an image of ‘people hanging out, food cooking in one corner, music in another corner’. Yet, for Jamaicans, ‘yard’ is also slang for ‘home’, denoting either a private home, a social space, or, if abroad, Jamaica itself (Homiak, 1999). A level of porosity between private and public spheres thus appears to have predated migration to the UK.

Caribbean cultural centres were indebted to local town halls and church-owned properties in much the same way as they are now, and constituted alternatives to the official (white) music venues from which black groups were so forcefully excluded. Before long, a network of self-sufficient African Caribbean venues had arisen amidst a largely hostile, white cultural terrain.

The twin histories of the ‘shebeen’ and the African Caribbean cultural centre, then, can be seen to account for the unique atmospheric blend of ‘home living room’ and ‘community centre’ at reggae dances today. What is so significant about these spatial retentions is that they preserve and embody the critical ‘material supports’ (Butler, 2011: 1) that enabled the appearance, assembly, and self-expression of black people in early multicultural Britain. By seizing and reconfiguring the material environments of the living room, the school canteen, and the youth club, black communities in the 1960s were able to produce spaces of survival and cultural resistance that were tangential to the policed ‘public’ spaces from which they were violently excluded. Following Judith Butler, it can thus be argued that the spatial properties of these environments—the carpets, the curtains, the pictures on the walls—as well as the sound systems themselves, formed ‘part of the [political] action’ (ibid: 1-2, 5); part of the hegemonic struggle for mobility and access to institutions, and part of an intervention into the spatial organisation of power. Far from being arbitrary, then, the ‘homely’ qualities of reggae dances today connect to the very spatial ancestral history that enabled black Britons to bring a black public sphere into being. Seen in this way, the material surfaces of contemporary reggae dances—the scuffs and marks on the stacks, the adhesive carpet underfoot—retain a certain ‘texture’: an ‘ineffaceable historicity’ (Bora, 1997; Sedgwick, 2002: 14-15). They preserve, that is, tactile evidence of how, physically and historically, they came into being, as well as bearing traces of the historic social spaces that they in turn helped bring into being.

Scents of Attachment, a Bath of Affect, and the Creativity of Habit

I want to suggest that the ‘textured’ material qualities of dub reggae dances today, including the smells and tastes of Caribbean cuisine and the sounds and styles of music, act as shared markers of

familiarity and embodied knowledge in a manner both comparable and different to the Lucky Cloud parties. Like Lucky Cloud, specific sensory structures are returned to and repeated in the dub reggae assemblage in ways that conjure a deep sense of being held or ‘anchored’. As Natty, a 48-year-old British Jamaican man from Hackney, who worked for a commercial cleaning company and regularly participated in the London dub scene, noted:

The smell of the dinners, you know, the jerk, the boiled rice, the plantains, yams... It's like... [inhales] Ahhhhh! It's a real comfort, you know. And being in the warmth, having a drink, having a smoke... you forget it's pissing [with rain] outside, you know what I'm saying? It helps you feel it in your heart, feel the music in your heart. [...] It provides a lot of comfort, man, it does, truly (Natty, July 2014).

Similar to Cora's experience of the Lucky Cloud parties as a ‘big pair of arms wrapped around’ her, Natty's description reflects a sense of being encased—held within a sensory and psychic sanctuary that is entirely enveloping, analogous to Claudia Gorbman's ‘bath’ or ‘gel of affect’ (Gorbman, 1987: 63-4). But in a different way to the American-imported Lucky Cloud parties, the affect-saturated ‘homeliness’ of the British dub reggae dance holds a temporal-historical potency that is seemingly much more proximate, personal, and immediate for participants. As Joshua, an interviewee in his late twenties, also of African Caribbean descent, illuminated:

The smells of food [at reggae nights], and the flavours... It takes me straight to my grandmother's. Cos we always went to my grandmother's on a Saturday night, ever since I was born, and she'd cook for us. Plantains, rice, curry... It was such a strong part of my growing up. I'm not saying... It's not an exclusive thing, you get me. Anyone can enjoy [the food]. But for those of us who have these smells and tastes in our past, it's powerful, I think. It carries memories and... feelings of comfort and family (Joshua, June 2016).

Joshua's experience points not just to an atmosphere of familiarity and safety that is continually returned to, but to a larger process of historical and cultural continuity. Describing the process of arriving at a dub reggae dance, inhaling the Caribbean-infused aromas, and experiencing the feelings of comfort and home that they invoke, Joshua makes a connection between his affective experience in the present, and the origin of such an experience in his personal and cultural past. Indeed, he implies that the atmosphere he feels is not ‘his’ *per se* but distributed among others who live in past as well as present epochs, including his own grandmother. Moreover, when placed

within the context of black British history, Joshua's olfactory memories take on a socio-political as well as cultural-historical continuity, emanating not only from the intimacy of his grandmother's home, but from the politicised space of the post-war black British home ('shebeen'), the memorialised and/or imagined Caribbean cultural home ('yard'), and even, for those who adhere to the idea of a 'return' to Africa (Rastafarians), the utopian future home, from where the smells and tastes of yams and plantain originate. Seen in this way, the 'smellscapes' of dub reggae potentialise, for certain participants, an affective experience *of* intergenerationality. Unlike Lucky Cloud, where the repetition of material elements is oriented towards the 'sticking together' of an emergent social coalition in a way that generates socio-historical difference, the materialities of dub reggae engender a sense-enabled historical proximity or temporal collapse—a socio-historical superimposition—in which past generational histories are drawn into, and grafted onto, present biographical experience via material artefacts such as ingredients, spices, and recipes. Smell and taste are, then, rendered as markers of kinship, historical repetition, and togetherness in this musical assemblage; affective continuities that provide, in Amina Doherty's words, 'a kind of survival, a closeness to the many homes [that are] left behind' (Doherty, 2016).

At this point, it would be easy to reduce habitual affective attachment to fixity and repetition. Indeed, Massumi might be inclined to see such socio-corporeal continuities as exemplary of habit's antithetical relation to difference: its alignment with the non-disruptive, linear, and predictable, as well as with the reproduction of history and ideology. In the remainder of this section, I therefore illuminate three ways in which these same embodied habits and affective continuities can be understood as creative and transformative, thus reiterating what I call the 'paradox' of habit outlined at the start of this chapter.

i. Imitation and invention

First, it is clear from my account that habitual affects in this assemblage are transmitted or imitated diachronically. This is most obvious from the way that olfactory and other sensory attachments

span multiple generations, and indeed, generate a generational closeness, highlighted both by the age difference between Natty and Joshua, and by Joshua's biographical story. As Joshua recounts, the affect-laden smells and tastes of African Caribbean food at reggae dances constitute embodied forms of knowledge that have been passed down to him through relations of kinship and familial contact. Particular materialities that, for an older generation, were invested with particular kinds of affect—survival, warmth, 'home away from home'—are thus imitated and picked up by that generation's descendants, enlisting them into an historical-cultural paradigm familiar, though never identical, to their parents and grandparents. In the process, however, a transformation takes place, in the sense that this intergenerational process of 'copying' and absorption works to expand and regenerate the dub reggae collective, drawing in and attaching new, often younger members such as Joshua, and thereby recomposing the musical collective.

More than this, however, the diachronic transmission of such sensory attachments is not reducible to those of Jamaican or African Caribbean heritage. As Joshua emphasised, '[i]t's not an exclusive thing'. British Asian groups, who have become enlisted into the dub reggae assemblage at particular points in history, also appear to 'pass on' their attachments to younger groups and family members. This is apparent from the large number of young Sikh and Hindu followers consistently found at Jah Shaka dances, who travel long distances from areas like Wembley and Greenford to attend, and for whom a commitment to Jah Shaka stretches back to at least the 1970s. Talking to one young British Asian man, Gurdeep, at a Shaka dance at the Dome, I asked about the closure of Southall's infamous Caribbean venue, the Tudor Rose, which had just been announced at that time (2014). He responded that the community was 'gutted', that his parents had gone to the Tudor Rose in the '80s, and that 'it's a historic venue for us people of Asian and Caribbean backgrounds'. In a manner similar to Joshua, then, Gurdeep retained a strong sense of historical connection and affective attachment to the dub reggae assemblage—Jah Shaka, in particular—and again, this had been imparted to him via the 'going-out' rituals and socio-musical attachments of his parents. These multiple lines of cross-cultural imitation and diachronic transmission, whereby a habituated affective attachment is both transmitted and transformed, thus complicate any notion of habit as

anti-mimetic or fixed. As with the spatio-temporal transmission of Loft Classics, not only is habit revealed as relational, aligned with imitation as a form of ‘copying’ and osmosis (Tarde, 1890); it is also linked to change, in the sense that it is through such imitative processes that a multi-ethnic musical collectivity is continually regenerated, subject to growth and mutation through the passing on of particular musical, socio-spatial, and sensory attachments to diverse, younger members.

ii. Collective security: an ‘aura of safety’

The second way that habit becomes aligned with transformation is via the immersive sensory cocoon into which participants are subsumed as soon as they arrive at a reggae dance, which creates what I will call an ‘aura of safety’, enabling great degrees of freedom and absorption in and through the music. Here, Natty’s experience is revealing. As he notes in the earlier quote, the warmth of the dance, the hazy ganja-filled air, and the taste of well-loved food and liquor enable him to ‘forget’ the bleak weather outside, and ‘feel the music in [his] heart’. What is particularly significant, however, is that this sense of immersion and stability is reinforced by the venue security themselves, who tend to be ‘insiders’, and who take great care to enshroud and protect the dance by carefully monitoring the crowd. This first came to my attention at a Caribbean-run venue in Finsbury Park, where a plain-clothed security guard would routinely stand at the entrance to the toilets surveying those going in and out. Initially ignorant, my research assistant Pat and I soon discovered that this bouncer was not on alert for the reasons we assumed—to bust people dealing or consuming drugs—but, on the contrary, to protect those wishing to indulge inside the venue. As Pat reported:

Everyone in the men’s loos was just happily blazing! Like eight or nine guys. I thought people had left [the club] or gone home, but turns out they were just all in the toilets, smoking cigarettes, smoking weed... And just hanging about, chatting about quite mundane things... And then on my way out, it hit me that the guy standing outside [the toilets], the one who looked like a bouncer... He was just guarding the toilet (Pat, March 2014).

Pat’s observations were affirmed by my own experience of finding two women sharing a joint in the female toilets on a different occasion, who told me, laughingly, to go ahead and use the toilet

as they ‘sure [weren’t] waiting’. When I asked if they were worried about being caught, they replied casually: ‘oh, they [*the venue*] know about us, don’t worry!’ Indeed, crowd members at the Dome and the Caribbean Edge would openly smoke weed on the dancefloor. ‘Everyone smokes inside’, my participant Andrew told me at a Shaka dance. ‘No one minds... [The security] do it too’. Encasing reggae dances, then, is an ‘official’ shell of protection: a sense of ‘collective security’ (Homiak, 1999: 113).⁹² This has two important effects. First, it enhances a sense of trust among audience members: a background awareness that bouncers are there to protect them from external surveillance, rather than acting as accomplices to such modes of policing. And second, it allows for the continuity and survival of a specific smell- and taste-scape, namely, Caribbean cuisine mixed with weed smoke—a sensory environment that would undoubtedly have been suppressed after the smoking ban in 2006, had dub reggae ever operated within the dominant night time economy.



Figure 22: Jah Shaka at the Dome, Tufnell Park. Note the sash curtains and lingering smoke under the lights.

⁹² The careful management of relations of trust in this assemblage conceivably stems from the historic stigmatisation of both Rastafarians and reggae culture. In such a context, personal relationships of trust are vital to ensure the ‘collective security’ of the community and its members. See Homiak, 1999.

The weed-infused atmosphere at reggae dances today, considered by many to be elemental to their ability to ‘tune in’ to the slow vibrations of the music, has thus primarily been safeguarded by the scene’s self-sufficiency: its socio-economic autonomy, its resistance to cultural assimilation, and its occupation of non-commercial venues dating back to the 1960s. As I show next, it is the habitual return to this ‘aura of safety’ that enables dub aficionados to engage in radical forms of psychic departure, ecstatic contemplation, and intense thrill via the music.

iii. The refrain

Leading into the third way that habit becomes associated with transformation, I want to suggest a mutually dependent relationship between dub reggae’s spatial-material qualities, which, in their recurrence, infold participants into an intoxicating stability, and the ability for participants to access radical states of metamorphosis, disappearance, and deviation through the music. This productive relation between habit, creation, and transgression was theorised by Bergson (1896, 1907). As Grosz writes, for Bergson, habit constituted a ‘kind of substratum’ of continuity that, in supporting and assuring our routine daily activities, helped release the ‘energetic forces of the body’ (Grosz, 2013: 226). Habit, then, for Bergson, enhanced our very capacity for ‘free actions’ by ‘routinizing and containing all other actions’, providing an ‘anchor in [the] world’ (ibid: 229). In the dub reggae context, this Bergsonian relation plays out in a striking way: while the spatial and material elements of the dance revolve around extreme forms of habituation and repetition, music and sound work in an opposing direction, perpetually dissolving the familiar in ways that generate intense thrill and shock. I have already discussed one method by which this occurs, that being the technique of ‘disruption’ (Chapter 3), whereby the selector abruptly terminates the music with a view to cultivating a moment of sudden adrenaline-fuelled astonishment. Usually accompanied by frenzied leaps into the air, these sonic interruptions constitute an ongoing abandonment of the musically familiar/repetitive, symbolising, in Veal’s account, the shattering of existential peace at the level of the ‘cultural nervous system’ (Veal, 2007: 205). But other disruptive and defamiliarising musical techniques persist in dub reggae too: for example, the employment of delay/echo, where resounding

sonic fragments are offset with the underlying riddim, working to de-centre the groove; the extensive use of reverb to disguise recognisable sonic features, which disappear into a ‘reverberating void’ of ambient confusion and noise, where even the riddim is camouflaged (Veal, 2009: 8); and the deconstructive ‘X-ray’ technique of dub itself, in which familiar layers of a song are stripped away and/or partially erased, casting the listener into an unknown skeletal soundscape of absent melodies and (re)imagined lyrics (ibid: 196).

In contrast to the incessant continuity and predictability of the space, then, the sonic techniques of dub deliberately emphasise rupture and dislocation. As I argued in Chapter 3 with reference to Jan, the ability to experience such vehement swings in rhythm and sound as convulsively ecstatic or cathartic is contingent upon multiple mediating factors, including personal and socio-cultural history. But I also want to suggest that the exhilarating explosions of energy summoned by the unexpected disruption of a much-revered record, or the pleasurable disorientation generated by the undulating delay of a dub siren, are also only possible because of the sensory cocoon and ‘aura of safety’ out of which they occur. This was implied in talking to participants about their affective experiences of dub techniques. In describing the feeling of delay, Natty explained how sounds and riddims move ‘out of kilter with each other’, splitting into repeating sonic layers and causing him to feel ‘out of step’. He continued:

When you hear the ‘da...da...da...da...’ [imitates delay unit], it sends you like... *spinning!* You know what I’m saying? The sounds ain’t in time with each other. You ain’t in time with the sounds. It’s a head fuck! It’s trippy, man [laughing]. But you go with it... You go with it ‘cos you know you’re [in the dance] and... ain’t nothing gonna happen (Natty, July 2014).

Natty’s description perfectly encapsulates dub reggae’s ability to produce an affective ‘shock’: a corporeal dislocation that moves you out of yourself and ‘sends you... *spinning*’. Through violent manipulations of familiar songs, members of the crowd are intermittently cast into what Berlant terms ‘a space of internal displacement’ (Berlant, 2011: 48): an affective state dominated by misrecognition, uncertainty, and deferral. In this way, the interruptive affective function of the music in dub reggae stands in contrast to the affective ‘anchoring’ incited by the Loft Classics at

Lucky Cloud parties. Indeed, rather than affective ‘anchoring’, the dominant musical experience of a reggae dance might better be characterised by affective ‘unmooring’, with the selector continually driving wedges into participants’ expectations, causing their bodies and minds to hesitate and falsely anticipate, and suspending them in threshold states where everything feels volatile.

Most significant, though, is what Natty describes as his ability to ‘go with’ this ‘trippiness’ because of the stability of the environment. It is, in short, the historical repetition of the space, as well as the ‘aura of safety’ engendered by the repeating sensory atmosphere and underlying riddim, that enables a sense of experimentation and transcendence in the musical experience. Once again, Bergson comes to the fore here in his theorisation of the way in which freedom and unpredictability emerge from a ‘backdrop of assured actions’ (Grosz, 2013: 226). But Deleuze and Guattari’s related concept of the ‘refrain’—of the modes of repetition that mark beginnings, transitions, and endings—is also relevant (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003). Stengers captures the logic of the refrain when she writes of ‘children in the dark, who hum under their breath in order to summon the courage to walk’ (Stengers, 2008: 42). The hum, the sensory ‘bath’ or ‘gel’ of affect, returned to again and again, like the incantatory refrain of a hymn, is a technique of structured repetition. It is a way of ‘holding steady’ while summoning the courage to take a leap into the dark. It is the bathing of oneself in something recognisable so as to begin to move out of oneself; the continuity required for the opening of difference. That habit and repetition can produce an invention such as this is not only relevant to dub reggae; it also forms a key part of my argument in Chapters 7 and 8 on musical affective emergence as mediated by multiple histories and continuities.

Intimate Publics and Affective Solidarity

In Chapters 2 and 5, I made reference to Gilroy’s concept of ‘anti-anti-essentialism’ and what he refers to, after Leroi Jones, as a ‘changing same’ in black Atlantic cultures (Gilroy, 1993: 101). For Gilroy, the routing and re-routing of black aesthetic conventions in diasporic musical contexts creates channels through which hybrid racial identities and politicised solidarities can be cultivated.

The dub reggae assemblage in the UK in many ways points towards such a process: through the constant repetition of specific material, spatial, and sensory mediations—mediations that are tied historically to the emergence of a black public sphere in Britain—dub reggae has acted over time as a habituated space of safety and ‘home’ not just for British Caribbeans, but for other black African and Asian immigrants too, as well as opening up at different times to white working- and middle-class groups and increasing numbers of (white) women. Within this musical assemblage, then, there persists *both* lines of intense socio-cultural and historical continuity, with participants absorbing the affective rituals and musical attachments of their parents and grandparents, and Caribbean cultural centres continuing to function as ‘safe spaces’ for black diasporic people; *and* lines of radical change, with the cultural and musical flows between African Caribbean and South Asian groups stabilising and evolving over time, and a wide range of ages consistently found at dances, indicating continual growth as well as intergenerational closeness.

At the same time, compared to Lucky Cloud, the social identities that coalesce around dub reggae and that share in its habitual structures are relatively narrow, comprised primarily of black and ethnic minorities who are largely the same gender (male), sexuality (straight), and class background (lower-middle-class). Such socially homogeneous tendencies are sometimes perceived to be at odds with pluralism and progressive liberal politics, aligned instead with notions of unanimity and cohesion, and thus exclusion and regression—the erasure of difference (Deutsche 1998; Gilroy, 2000: 237). I would argue, however, that it is from within an aggrieved historical context such as that from which dub reggae has emerged—one marked by racial and class oppression, mass displacement, multi-directional re-settlement, and continual precarity and attempted exile, exemplified most recently by the Windrush scandal—that mechanisms of habit, social uniformity, and the reproduction of tradition *can* become aligned with difference and social change. The successful transmission of kinship ties, sensory memories, and cultural spaces that, in the colonial past, were destroyed or endangered in an extreme way, for instance, signals both a physical stand against historical absence, and a performance of resilience that ensures future regeneration and historical change. On the other hand, similar cycles of historical-cultural reproduction in the

classical music assemblage do not hold the same potential, perpetuated as they are by an almost exclusively white, upper-middle-class, educated public who already occupy the dominant position within the current hegemonic order.⁹³ In other words, while classical music may draw a comparably narrow coalition of identities to dub reggae, as well as affording similar affective continuities through an enduring material-cultural paradigm, classical music is not counter-hegemonic in the way that dub reggae is. Those that participate in it are not drawn together by a shared historical ‘affective dissonance’; their well-being does not hinge upon the ability to move from a position of stigmatisation into one of solidarity and healing; and the autonomy of the classical music assemblage is not under threat of cultural appropriation and power-saturated ‘whitewashing’. I am returning here, then, to the importance of the articulation between Born’s second and third planes—between the musically imagined community, and the social identities that it draws together—when thinking about the radical potentials of musical practices that are habitual and historically enduring.

In light of this, it is significant that, like Lucky Cloud, the sense of community and belonging generated by reggae dances extends beyond the dances themselves. For many of my interlocutors, it was not just that the spaces *felt* like community centres in their décor and physical atmospheres; they actually *functioned* as community centres too, existing in the collective imagination as places of freedom, comfort, and leisure that could be returned to time and again. Speaking to my participant Andrew about this, he articulated:

Well, in some ways, the dances *are* the community centre, you know. It’s about having somewhere to go where you can hang out and meet people... Dances are the place where you can go to relax and be yourself, you know, have a dance, hear some tunes, see your friends... That’s what it’s always been. Back in the ‘80s... back in the day, in Deptford, New Cross, Holloway Road... all over man, it was the same. Somewhere for us to go (Andrew, August 2014).

Andrew’s account makes clear that the sense of community embodied in the dances both predates and outlives the events themselves (Born, 2012: 262). As he puts it, referring both to the future and

⁹³ Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 4, this is recognised by new classical music initiatives (e.g. Nonclassical, LCMF), who are attempting to divert and prevent the reproduction of the classical music assemblage through changes in venue, programming, and performance site.

the past: ‘It’s about having somewhere to go... That’s what it’s always been’. Indeed, particularly revealing was the fact that when I first met Andrew, he had come to a Jah Shaka dance alone, affirming the sense of trust that he places in an already-existing community. But it is the ability to hold onto this in daily life—the knowledge that dances exist as places of safety where one can ‘go to relax and be yourself’—that seems key to an analysis of this assemblage as socially transformative. As my participant, Curtis, who worked for the parcel delivery company DPD, articulated:

Sometimes I get sick of the work process, you know. Sometimes you think what’s the point of it? It’s barely covering my rent even *with* benefits. So, I come here [to dances] to let off steam, see my friends, meet new faces... It’s *friendly*, you know? Everyone’s coming together... You bring the different [sound] systems all in the same room and they test their sound... And that way, they start a following, ‘cos next time you see a flyer with their name on, you can say “yeah, I want to see them again!” And you see some of the same people too... So... Being in an environment like this, where it’s friendly, where you can get release from financial, family problems... It gives you strength for the coming weeks and months (Curtis, July 2014).

Like Andrew, Curtis’s account emphasises the role of dances as spaces of friendship and sociability, but also as havens of escape where relief from everyday pressures can be sought. In their habitual recurrence, dances appear to provide, for him, the social and psychic resources required for the management of everyday life. Here, again, it is the reference made to the time *between* dances—the ‘imagined’ aspects of the musical community that resound during those difficult ‘weeks and months’—that is especially significant, highlighting the powerful social and political impact that this community-oriented musical assemblage has in realms of life external to the dances themselves. Pertinent here, then, is how the first and second planes in Born’s model can mutually reinforce each other, with dub reggae’s performance socialities generating powerful imaginaries that sustain participants in their daily lives between events, and this sense of ‘imagined community’ in turn imbuing the live event with affective and socio-musical significance.

I want to summarise this case study by emphasising that the transformative capacity of habitual musical affects is contingent upon the particular social groups that are brought into alliance and

affectively connected. As seen in the case of Lucky Cloud, shared musical affective attachments can work as the binding agent for an emergent social coalition or public, inciting transformative encounters with difference while also reconfiguring existing social divisions. But it is also true that habituated musical affects—in the form of sensory memories and retained bodily knowledges—can take on an equally transformative function when harnessed to support processes of cultural resistance and socio-political solidarity among subordinately positioned groups. To use Berlant's concept, if a musical public is also an 'intimate public'—a public in which 'one senses matters of survival are at stake' (Berlant, 2011: 226)—then repetitive, even unchanging musical infrastructures can plausibly act in service to socio-political transformation, promising to those that face insecurity and violence in life a 'sense of being held' inside something solid: a route 'out of the *impasse* and struggle of the present' (ibid: 100, 226). It is this notion of an 'intimate public', I would argue, that makes the affective continuities and cultural-historical longevities of dub reggae subversive and seditious, rather than regressive or socially reproductive.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that musical bodily habits and affective attachments are not reducible to fixity and social reproduction, but can themselves be life-changing and socially transforming. Further, it has shown that the innovative qualities of habitual affect can take contrasting forms. Drawing upon two distinct musical assemblages, I have illustrated how a sense of community, intimacy, and socio-political solidarity can be achieved in music through very different kinds of ritual and habitual mechanism, oriented around a different historical idea of 'home'. The first case study focused on the convivial social relations that germinate at the Lucky Cloud parties as a consequence of shared affective attachments to particular musical materials and sensory-spatial features. Through the repetition of Loft Classics, the social groups drawn together by the parties are 'affectively anchored' to the dancefloor and to each other by moments of shared jubilation and habitual affective response. Further, such energetic exchanges have the capacity to be picked up and imitated by newcomers, who may then become initiated into, and so transform, the collectivity.

Since the social groups brought into alliance by this event are diverse in terms of age, gender, sexuality, class, and nationality—though notably, not race—musically embodied habit thus becomes a key mechanism by which a novel public is brought into existence, with the affective and social bonds formed at parties extending beyond the events themselves. Parallels can be drawn, here, with Guilbault’s work on live soca in Trinidad, which demonstrates how specific structures of familiarity and habit (call-and-response, dance routines, shared knowledge of lyrics) help to precipitate a ‘visceral sense of collective belonging’ among different genders, races, ages, and classes, while also ‘reinforc[ing] bonds of affection among friends and kin’ (Guilbault, 2010: 19-21, 23-4). In this way, habitual musically incited affect becomes a mechanism of social change.

In a different way, the second case study examined the ethnically diverse and intergenerational musical public aggregated by dub reggae—a musical public that is also, however, distinctly male-gendered and heterosexual. Here, shared bodily habit primarily centres around the repetitious smells, tastes, and textures of the dances, which generate intense atmospheres of familiarity and feelings of solace for those who participate. More than this, in their temporal as well as spatial recursion, such cultural spaces engender a deep physical and affective proximity to history—to family members of previous generations whose politicised struggle against racial, class, and other oppressions is routed and memorialised through the continuity of particular ‘material supports’ (Butler, 2011: 1). Through this diachronic transmission, habit again reveals itself to have an imitative, relational quality: particular affective attachments are ‘copied’, retained, and carried forwards by younger, multi-ethnic generations, working to expand and regenerate the community. Moreover, the refrain of the ‘bath’ or ‘gel’ of affect—the galvanising sensory cocoon of the dance—enables participants to achieve great degrees of corporeal freedom in and through the music, once again highlighting habit’s productive relationship to creativity and difference. In contrast to the social heterogeneity of Lucky Cloud, the individuals and groups brought into alliance by dub reggae are relatively socially homogeneous, although particular forms of ‘intermezzo’—between black and Asian men, between elders and youth—are notable. Nonetheless, due to the intersecting histories of oppression that mark this musical public, I argue that the habitual forms of embodiment that bind

it hold a transformative as well as reproductive potential, providing spaces of security and freedom to those who continue to face hostility and uncertainty in everyday life. This, in turn, bears a degree of resemblance to Kezia Page's analysis of similarity and uniformity in dancehall and calypso. Noting the contested nature of the Afro-Trinidadian context, she describes how 'performative sameness', via repetitive actions and 'affective bonds', acts as a call to solidarity and unification, offering an alternative form of national and cultural identity and government resistance (Page, 2005: 4).

These case studies deepen my analysis of musical and sonic affect in the previous chapters. While Chapter 3 demonstrated how musical attachments can 'stick' for long periods of time, reproducing social identities at an individual level, Chapters 4 and 5 discussed how such attachments can manifest collectively, as public feelings, contributing to the reproduction of uneven socio-musical formations over time. But a third potential of musical affective attachment, as I have shown in this chapter, is its ability to amplify social change by acting as the binding agent or 'anchor' for an emergent musical public that refracts wider social identity formations, or for an 'intimate' musical public that buttresses an already existing marginal public sphere. Conceptually, then, this chapter rescues habit from its rigid alignment with 'being', automatism, and inertia, as seen in the work of Massumi (1992, 2002), and returns it to its 'paradoxical' character—as potentially a fixing mechanism, but potentially also the condition of possibility for innovation and change, with these differing manifestations as co-existent, contingent upon the musical assemblage's shifting constellation of mediations. Indeed, what is particularly notable about the case studies in this chapter is how each potentialises an *ambivalent* politics, with habituated musical affects working both for and against social liberation and change (cf. Guilbault, 2010). Dub reggae, for instance, exhibits marked social absences, deterring young black women and expressions of non-heterosexual sexuality. In this sense, my reading of dub reggae as generative of collective solidarities and insurgent political strategies constitutes only one facet of the analysis. Taken in conjunction with Chapter 5, it could equally be argued that the incessant repetition of particular spatial, aesthetic, and material qualities in dub reggae, experienced as so life-affirming for some, is

precisely what detaches and disassociates gendered ‘others’. Similarly, the deeply historical practices of black British ‘home-making’ associated with dub reggae, along with the musical continuum that has evolved from dub reggae (dancehall, jungle, grime), are plausibly what partially account for the ‘whiteness’ of Lucky Cloud, which, as a musical assemblage, has little genealogical or historical connection to black Britishness. In turn, this similarly renders ambivalent the ‘affective anchoring’ and modes of sociability that take place at Lucky Cloud, which, in transgressing certain social boundaries, also reinforce others. These questions of relationality and (dis)affiliation between and within musical and sonic publics are returned to in Chapter 8.

Finally, revisiting the concept of community, this chapter has shown how difference can be sustained and nourished in myriad ways through musical practices that are community focused. In the Lucky Cloud assemblage, this is achieved through an affirmation of ‘community’ and ‘difference’ at the same time, with elements of social heterogeneity drawn into, and transformed within, a tight-knit musical public that persists through time. With dub reggae, this is seen in the way that a musical community that is relatively socially homogeneous, but that is comprised of historically oppressed social groups, can, through the unity of those brought into alliance, work to challenge majority forms of power and consensus, and thereby re-assert difference and minority. It is clear, then, that when talking about musically imagined communities, critiques of ‘community’ as consensus-oriented, prescriptive, and anti-democratic do not necessarily apply, even though, as with any model of social inclusion, there will be elements of exclusion too. These debates are revisited in Chapter 9. In the next chapter, I examine the conditions under which ‘sticky’ musical affects can shift and become flexible, drawing people into new socio-musical alliances that contradict wider social hierarchies and identities. Rather than seeing this process as unmediated or ‘pre-personal’, however, I trace its emergence from the collision of multiple mediations, which, in resonating together in certain ways, allow an event to deviate into invention.



Figures 23 and 24: Set up for Sound System Sound-Off at the Golden Palace, Edmonton (top); Instrument of Jah Sound System, University of Dub, the Scala, King's Cross.

Chapter 7

Theorising Emergence: Affect, Temporality, and the Aesthetic Event

'[The] becoming irregular... of rhythms produces antagonistic effects. It throws out of order and disrupts... It can also produce a lacuna, a hole in time, to be filled by an invention, a creation'.

Henri Lefebvre (2004: 44)

Introduction

An important aspect of Ahmed's concept of 'stickiness' is her recognition of the capacity to become 'unstuck' (Ahmed, 2004: 15). As she notes, whatever form 'stickiness' takes, whether it is a feeling that 'sticks' to a body, a body that has become 'stuck', or a 'blockage' that stops a person moving, there is always the possibility that these different forms of adhesion will lose their 'stick' (ibid: 91). Developing this notion, this chapter turns to the ways in which 'sticky' musical affective attachments can loosen and mutate with potentially transformative effects. Complementing Chapter 3, I focus on individuals from fieldwork who, at certain points in their lives, reported to have experienced 'turning points' or 'openings'—alterations to their musical selves and identities that enabled them to move into new 'affective alliances' (Grossberg, 1984). As I demonstrate through my ethnography, such processes can have surprising outcomes, enlisting people into new musical and sonic imaginaries that uproot long-held preconceptions around genre and identity. Yet, rather than viewing these moments as random or unmediated, as Deleuzian affect theorists tend to, I argue that it is from the unanticipated collision of musical, personal, social, and temporal currents that uncertainties and affective disturbances arise. Even where musical affect is confounding or unpredictable in its effects, then, it still requires a subject to register and is still oriented by multiple intersecting histories and contingencies, just as 'stickiness' is. This develops the arguments put forward in Chapter 6: that habit and invention, fixity and change, repetition and difference, are contiguous; they emanate out of the same processes, each oriented by an 'assemblage' of mediations

(Born, 2011, 2012). Knowing which prevails and why cannot be decided in advance but is an empirical question.

Theoretical and Ethnographic Overview: Retentions, Protentions, and Revelations

Conceptually, this chapter, together with the next, concludes the theory of musical and sonic affect that I have advanced throughout the thesis. Specifically, the current chapter develops new ways of thinking about how musical and sonic affect can initiate and effect change, without reverting to an account of affect as ‘autonomous’ or pre-mediated. Drawing upon Born’s anti-structural model of music’s social mediation for conceptual insight, I demonstrate through my ethnography how musical affective experiences that are emergent and unstable are nonetheless shaped by a host of mediations—personal, socio-cultural, historical, aesthetic, spatial—which interfere in unexpected ways in the present. This means that, while wider social relations and historical conditions are always present within music’s affectively charged performance socialities, so they can also be inverted and transformed by such affective socialities. Musical affect, then, is inextricably tied to the social and historical, while also being *irreducible* to them.

Music and Time

Taking these notions forward, the two case studies in this chapter focus on instances of affective emergence in which intersections between genre, aesthetics, technology, and personal history became prominent. The first case study deals with different subgenres of electronic/dance music, while the second focuses on sound art and dub reggae. In particular, both examples bring forth the ways in which musical materials (sounds, genres, genealogies) have the propensity to ‘act’ within assemblages in relatively autonomous and unanticipated ways (Born, 2015; Latour, 1999); how, as Haworth (2019: 8) puts it, cultural artefacts can be ‘picked up, selectively interpreted, mistaken, and inflected with other influences that the original did not foresee’, working to modify social and aesthetic relations. In this way, the two case studies are concerned with the history and agency of

the musical object: its ability to generate unexpected affective disruptions and connections at both individual and collective levels, and thus to produce aesthetic, social, and temporal effects. This introduces a new sub-theme of the thesis—theories of music and time.

In Chapter 5, I introduced issues of music and time through a focus on the intergenerational transmission of affect and the ‘routing’ of particular musical, spatial, and social qualities. Describing the attempts by dubstep practitioners to invoke an implicitly male-gendered ‘underground’ in the early 2000s, I illustrated how, in ‘retaining’ aspects of an older male-dominated genre (dub reggae), dubstep reconfigured existing musical identity formations along gendered lines. This case study thus exemplified how an anticipated or ‘imagined’ future musical public can be achieved in reality through the mobilisation of historically and socially charged aesthetic gestures. By contrast, in the first case study of this chapter, I show how the same musical genre (dubstep) can have unexpected social and temporal effects that were not envisaged by its creators. Indeed, at the same time as dubstep disassociated a female audience-hood by rejecting aspects of its musical forebears considered as ‘feminine’, so it also created an unanticipated ‘opening’ for my participant, Danny. By ‘retaining’ and modifying aspects of another earlier occurring genre (UK garage), dubstep created an aperture in Danny’s affective register that prompted him, over time, to disaffiliate musically and re-emerge as part of an entirely different socio-musical milieu to that in which he was previously embedded. The effect, as I argue later, was thus that of a new genre initiating a retroactive ‘re-hearing’ of an older genre, leading to a subversion of musical affective biases and a transformation of subjectivity and social identity.

In the second case study, I develop similar ideas, showing how, at a particular point in time, dub reggae ‘protended’ an opening into a cluster of co-evolving ‘arts’ genres, including sound art, glitch, and noise. I demonstrate how this opening was acted upon and ‘inhabited’ by particular individuals from my fieldwork, who moved from one assemblage to the other; and suggest that, in making such a move, these individuals simultaneously created new genealogical lines of connection that undermined the ways in which ‘arts’ genres like sound art and glitch have been discursively

constructed and institutionalised. Particularly relevant to this chapter, then, is the recent reworking of Edmund Husserl's 'retentions' (traces of the past) and 'protentions' (anticipations of the future) by Born (2005, 2015) and Haworth (2019), and in particular, what Born refers to as the 'bidirectional mediation of music and time'—the mutual mediations that occur between 'protending' musical works or genres, which project into the musical future, and later occurring musical works or genres, which may, in their 'retention' of earlier musical works, retroactively transform their forebears (Born, 2015: 371; Haworth, 2019; Gell, 1998). As I argue through the case studies, it is clear that such bidirectional mediations, and the 'torque' (Pinney, 1997, in Born, 2015: 371) that they potentially exert upon how genres and genealogies are perceived and experienced, have the capacity to instigate 'turning points' and affective 'epiphanies' in people's lives that enable them to move into new musical and sonic publics.

Affect and 'Newness'

In delineating the mediated nature of affect's relationship to change, my stance not only diverges from Massumi's 'chance-ridden' approach to affective emergence (Massumi, 1992: 52); it also differs considerably from theories of affect developed within feminist and critical race studies, in particular, the work of Avtar Brah (1999) and Teresa Brennan (2004). While both of these writers offer rich analyses of affect's social mediation, rejecting the 'pre-personal' view of affect put forward by Deleuzians, both also diminish the question of how affect can, nonetheless, exceed and transform the social via unprecedented combinations of mediations. They do not clarify, that is, how a socialised account of affect can *also* incorporate social change. In Brah's case, affect is more or less fully determined by the social, specifically by class. As she writes in her ethnography of 1970s Southall: 'class is something under your skin, in your reflexes... at the very core of your being' (Brah, 1999: 24). The social, for Brah, is thus located in the biology of the body, as a physiological automatism or 'reflex'—much like Massumi's reductive concept of 'tired habit' (Massumi, 2002). Indeed, parallels might also be drawn with Bourdieu's class-based habitus, which sees the body as the most indisputable materialisation of class distinctions via a deep 'somatisation'

of the social relations of domination (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990). As Chris Shilling puts it, this makes it ‘extremely difficult for Bourdieu to account for significant social change’, since his formulations ‘cannot explain how people sometimes deviate from the class-based trajectories assigned them by their habitus’ (Shilling, 2004: 479). In a similar manner, Brah’s socially determined concept of affect leaves little room for the question of how we become suggestible, volatile, or open to change.

Brennan, for her part, seeks to explain the mechanism of affect’s transmission through the transfer of pheromones, drawing upon biochemical literature from within neuroendocrinology (Brennan, 2004: 69). Brennan argues that such chemical exchanges are ‘pre-eminently social’: they exist before us, ‘outside as well as within us’, and exceed any notion of a self-contained individual or self/other boundary (ibid: 65). Thus, as she puts it, ‘social interaction shapes biology’ (ibid: 74). In emphasising the sociality and relationality of affect, however, Brennan appears to omit a theory of individuation (ibid: 55; Blackman, 2012: 84). Her account of the transfer of hormones does not allow, for example, for the ways in which some individuals may be more open than others to particular social and cultural environments as a result of their personal genealogy, psyche, and capacity for suggestibility—what James called the ‘problem of personality’ (James, 1890, 1902; Blackman, 2008). Rather, comparable to Massumi, Brennan sees the transmission of affect purely in socio-physiological terms—effected through changes in pulsation, heart rate, and the effect of one nervous system on another, in ways that bypass the individual. Where, for Massumi, this lack of a subject/psyche becomes affect’s radically unpredictable or ‘pre-personal’ potential, for Brennan, it is a certain social determinism that becomes paramount. This is evident in the empirical studies that she cites, which emphasise how ‘[male] testosterone is elevated in relation to an aggressive image’, or how ‘one of the family of masculine hormones, androstadienone, stimulates human female olfaction’ (Brennan, 2004: 70, 83). In both cases, the social (gender) becomes the driving force for changes in physiology, ‘causing’ the secretion of particular hormones. She risks, in other words, reducing socially mediated affects to ‘hormonally produced effects’ (Blackman, 2012: 85); to socially driven chemical exchanges that are immune to modulation by psychic influence and subjectivity.

Not dissimilar to Brah, then, Brennan retreats to the reflexes, the nervous and the endocrine systems to explain the socialised transmission of affect and is thus, as Blackman points out, in danger of ‘reinforcing the very neuro-reductionism she seeks to avoid’ (Blackman, 2012: 77). Neither writer, that is, allows for how the personal/psychic is not only inseparable from the social/biological, but can also reconfigure and disrupt it: how a person’s socialised and embodied sense of ‘we’ can be temporarily or permanently altered by a musical affective encounter as it intersects with personal histories and musical biographies. In what follows, I draw upon two ethnographic case studies to show how the relative autonomy of musical materials (sounds, technologies, genres), and the contingency of how these interfere with personal histories and psyches *as well as* socio-cultural and institutional histories, becomes a crucial factor in accounting for the process of affective emergence.

UK Garage: A Retroactive Re-hearing

In Chapter 6, I discussed the initiation of my participant Danny into the Lucky Cloud assemblage as a way of demonstrating the mimetic force of musically embodied habit. Previously unfamiliar with the Loft Classics that circulate at the Lucky Cloud parties, and largely detached from the musical genres under which such Classics appear, Danny nonetheless felt enraptured by the powerful affective energies that manifested around him when a Classic record got played. Spurred into an act of ‘copying’ or following, he began, over time, to adopt and nurture the same musical affective attachments as those who were anchored by the Classics, eventually becoming deeply invested in the same habitual musical structures.

Captivated by Danny’s account, I wondered whether, and if so, how and why, others had experienced similar moments of musical affective susceptibility. I therefore set about tracing the individual histories of those collectivised by the Lucky Cloud parties, including Danny and his group of friends. It transpired that of those that I interviewed, many hailed from divergent and often incongruent personal, socio-cultural, and musical pasts, each one punctuated by ‘turning points’,

‘epiphanies’, or events in which bodily, psychic, and social habits had been broken. The habitual affective attachments that individuals and groups shared towards the Classics at these parties, then, and the collective jubilation that resulted on the dancefloor, did not simply reflect a shared set of socio-cultural histories, ideologies, and enduring tastes—as was often the case with classical music audiences, for example (see Chapter 4). Rather, such attachments were preceded by an array of incidental and often-unforeseen personal routes and paths. Following this, the questions that I began to consider were: how had these encultured and historicised individuals, who had travelled such different musical and social trajectories, come to aggregate around a shared socio-musical sphere as a distinct musical public? What had facilitated their individual-collective openness, and what were the precise moments of change in each of their lives? Why was Simon, discussed in Chapter 3, unable to experience a similar openness?

Zooming in on Danny proved particularly revealing. I first met Danny—a straight, white, lower-middle class man in his early 30s—in 2013, and it soon emerged that he shared a similar social and musical biography to Simon. Growing up in Colchester in Essex, Danny described how he had ‘absolutely abhorred’ house, disco, and UK garage as a teenager, preferring ‘darker’ dance music such as drum ‘n’ bass, techstep, and hardcore. Further, like Simon, his underlying assumptions about house and garage while growing up were distinctly classed and gendered, barely concealed by euphemistic terms such as ‘cheesy’, ‘gay’, and ‘sell-out’. As he noted in interview:

[When I was in Colchester] there were certain up-and-coming genres that were kind of ‘allowed’ in my group of friends, and certain ones that weren’t. So, drum ‘n’ bass was an acceptable dance music, [as was] reggae [and] ska-punk. But then stuff like disco...it was seen as too ‘gay’, you know... It wasn’t really cool to like it. And house music was awful! My friend’s sister and her mates, they were two years older than us, and for them, there was a massive thing with ‘grungers vs. townies’. The grungers were into things like metal and drum ‘n’ bass, and the townies were into house music and garage. So, for us, coming from a kind of angsty metal viewpoint, there was a real prejudice against anything that was too housey or too cheesy or too clean. [As a result] I was kind of anti-ecstasy. I thought ecstasy was this crappy dance drug that people took when they went to disco clubs, like Saturday Night Fever shit... And I thought, ‘nah, I’m not into that. I’m into extreme music like drum ‘n’ bass cos it’s got bass dives and heavy kicks!’ So, I had that attitude. I wasn’t into techno or house or—God forbid—disco. Even garage, I remember *hating* garage for a really long time (Danny, December 2013).

Danny's account of his genre biases as a teenager bears a humorous resemblance to Simon's. Evidently both were firmly installed in the 'grunge' camp with its 'big beatdowns and circle [mosh] pits', as Danny put it, and both were strongly opposed to the so-called 'townies' and the 'cheesy' musical genres that they supposedly stood for. Moreover, both were suspicious of empathogenic drugs like ecstasy, seeing these as frivolous accompaniments to, and enhancers of, the sentimental, loved-up disco and house sensibility that they so wished to distance themselves from. Like Simon, then, Danny's teenaged musical prejudices enacted and reproduced prevailing classed and gendered narratives that position genres such as disco, house, and garage—with their emotive vocal lines, 'soft' grooves, clean production aesthetic, and corporeal emphases—as feminine, 'gay', 'townie' (classed down) and commercial, while genres like metal, grunge rock, and drum 'n' bass are constructed as their 'opposites': masculine, sonically complex, authentic and noisy.

I have already shown, in Chapters 3-5, how musical genres and aesthetic gestures become imbued with social connotations, which may then work in powerful ways to attract or repel certain social identities (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986). Chapter 3 addressed this in relation to the queer, feminised, and multi-racial history of disco and house in the US, which partially extends into the present day, with disco and deep house providing the soundtrack to many London-based gay nights, and the UK House scene drawing mixed audiences in terms of class, race, and gender. The historical alliance between disco/house, LGBTQ+, female, and/or working-class identities has thus in many ways carried forwards, and continues to ring true in the imaginations of those not only wishing to align with, but also those wishing to distance themselves from, such scenes, such as (young) Danny and Simon. Meanwhile, Chapter 5 went into depth regarding the gendering of the UK bass music continuum, focusing on the historical processes by which genres such as reggae, dubstep, and grime have, in their live manifestations, become inscribed with masculine connotations and atmospheres that overwhelmingly deter women. Notable, in this regard, is Danny's reference to reggae as an 'acceptable' genre amongst his grunge/metal-head drum 'n' bass friendship group, affirming the pervasiveness of the gendered musical genealogy traced in Chapter 5. Likewise, UK garage is

deemed, in Danny's account, as an object of repulsion along with disco and house, again supporting the ways in which sonic qualities such as sung vocals, sentimental swing, and mid-range sounds—common to these genres—are perceived as 'girly', 'camp' or even 'gay' and are naturalised as such owing to histories of contact and social association.

Yet, during my interview with Danny, it became apparent that there are other ways that the social 'gets into' music, one of the most significant being journalism and the public discourses that germinate around emerging genres. This was something picked up on by Latham in Chapter 5, who observed the impact of 'the discourse that surrounds [one's] record' on the types of audiences that get drawn. Danny is a case in point in this respect. Several times during our conversation, he mentioned how influential the journalism of Simon Reynolds had been on his thinking and understanding of music. Specifically, he referred to a series of articles that Reynolds published in *The Wire* in the 1990s, the sixth of which was a feature on 2-step Garage entitled 'Adult Hardcore'. Appearing in 1999, the same year that Danny was moving out of Knuckledust and Stampin' Ground gigs to discover big drum 'n' bass raves in Hackney Wick, Reynolds's article defined UK garage as the 'feminised counterpart of a "serious" male genre' (i.e. drum 'n' bass) organised around 'the pressure of feminine desire' and MCs sending 'shout outs to "all the couples cuddling at home"' (Reynolds, 1999: 57). Danny recalled how:

[Reading such articles] sort of cemented what we already thought. 'Cos somewhere in that article, or maybe it's in *Energy Flash*, I can't remember... But somewhere, [Reynolds] talks about the kind of 'diva worship' of garage, you know, the silky diva vocals and the 'Ladies Massive', the R&B swing... But also, the disco influence that was always inherent in garage, even though a lot of people were never aware of it. And for us, who were like sitting there smoking [weed], listening to trip-hop and heavy jungle and drum 'n' bass and just going 'woahh', it was... Well, like I was saying, we absolutely *hated* garage, and [reading articles by Reynolds] just confirmed why (Danny, December 2013).

Danny's account illustrates how the discourses produced and disseminated around the evolution of a genre have the capacity to shape not only the making of that genre, but also the social groups that come to identify with it. As Alex Williams puts it, '[t]he context in which the DJ-Producer-Dancer relationship is forged is one which is, to some extent, created by promoters, by music journalists,

and by theorists' (Williams, 2009). Williams continues: 'The act of naming [or writing about a genre] is... a creative act itself, an invention... It puts the set of musics it collects [into] a particular configuration, and if we buy into the theory, alters our way of perceiving them' (ibid). For Danny and his friends, the journalistic commentary that circulated around UK garage in the late 1990s not only reinforced stereotyped historical narratives of gendered and sexualised sound, but also served to secure their physical distance—as a group of young, testosterone-fuelled men—from the actual UK garage scene, thereby further entrenching the reified gendering of musical sound. It can thus be said that, in addition to historical connotations, music's discursive mediations play an active role in naturalising the relationship between specific musical gestures and specific social identities (vocal music as 'feminine'; bass weight as 'masculine'). In this instance, Danny, like Simon, rejected house, disco, and garage not because the sounds themselves were physically abrasive, but because such genres embodied the feminised 'townie' sensibility that he so wished to detach from, confirmed both historically and in the contemporary music media.

I noted in Chapter 3 that while considerable work has been done on processes of social and musical differentiation (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984; Bennett et al., 2009; Savage, 2015), less attention has been given in this literature to how and why these mechanisms of differentiation 'stick' or shift over time, both individually and collectively. What is compelling in the case of Danny, and in contrast to Simon, is that his viscerally located musical bias against disco and UK garage did not 'stick'. On the contrary, soon into the early 2000s, Danny experienced what he referred to as a 'massive turning point' in his life that he 'couldn't have foreseen': a moment of personal, social, and musical rupture that permanently altered his musical affective register. What brought this about was, according to Danny, the emergence of a single genre: dubstep.

Dubstep was significant for its musical hybridity, evolving out of 2-step, UK garage, and jungle, as well as reinstating a heavy dub reggae aesthetic. Nonetheless, as I argued in Chapter 5, in terms of which particular musical gestures were most prominently retained from this rich mix of generic predecessors, it was the syncopated rhythms, bass weight, spacious dub textures, and Rastafari

vocal samples of dub reggae, rather than the soul, R&B, dancehall chatter, and sung vocals of UK garage and jungle. This move, as we have seen, largely signalled a gendered aesthetic turn, summoning a ‘serious’ male-gendered audience-hood from which women felt collectively disconnected and excluded. Yet, strikingly, this was not the case for Danny. Indeed, rather than connoting a return to the ‘darker’ edges of dance music as it did for so many, dubstep engendered something quite different for Danny: it opened his psyche and body to UK garage for the first time.

As he noted in interview:

I remember finding out about dubstep when it was sort of embryonic... I found the kind of off-beat thing really different, and I remember getting my first force of that kind of production and rhythm and tempo. It was after a drum ‘n’ bass night in Leeds, and we were sitting there with these two dubstep records just going ‘wow, this is amazing, it’s like heavy jungle!’ Or, you know, ‘electronic reggae’. But in my head, I was thinking ‘yeah, but this is also like an extension of UK garage and 2-step and dancehall’. So, strangely, one of the first things I thought about dubstep was that it was kind of like garage. But then, it was something that my mates thought—and other people I knew thought—was more like metal, breaks, and dark dance music. And maybe as it evolved it did kind of lose that garagey swing and become more dark-side, more dub heavy, with this ridiculous bass sound. But at first it was so close to garage that it made me see garage in a completely different light (Danny, December 2013).

Here, Danny pinpoints the so-called ‘wot-do-u-call-it’ moment of a genre: the moment, according to Williams, when ‘producers are still working out the kinds of conventions that will come to define the genre, and dancers are still trying to work out how to move their bodies to the new sounds and rhythms’, even as the new corpus of music is beginning to demand its own label (Williams, 2009). This combination of incongruence and invention, of ‘maximum confusion and creativity’ (ibid), is clearly identifiable in Danny’s musings on the generic ambivalences of dubstep in its early days—a genre that, to his mind, could be heard *both* as hard and dark, like drum ‘n’ bass and jungle, *and* as soft and swung, like 2-step garage and dancehall. But more than this, Danny’s ‘turning point’ after being exposed to such an embryonic sound—his motivation to ‘see garage in a completely different light’—exemplifies just how transformative this unstructured moment of emergence can be. Indeed, hearing in early dubstep tracks such as DJ Zinc’s ‘138 Trek’ the rhythmic prevalence and production values of UK garage, only now mixed with a reggae-jungle sensibility, Danny began to look backwards into the UK garage past, gradually becoming open to soul and R&B, to the vocal

house sound of American ‘garage’, and, eventually, to the disco and rare groove found at Lucky Cloud. Dubstep’s ‘retention’ but also modification and transformation of UK garage, then, afforded Danny an altogether new ‘hearing’ of UK garage: a retroactive ‘re-hearing’, which opened him up to a socio-musical milieu that he had previously disdained and explicitly sought to distance himself from. As he relayed to me:

[Dubstep was] the turning point... the beginning of a new phase. After that, it was all Theo Parrish and dancing to disco at Electric Elephant! [Laughing]. Well, no, it wasn’t quite that sudden. But, bizarrely, dubstep was the big change for me. It was really the moment when I started to get into slower music... and camper music. And it was also when I started to see how good the parties and the atmospheres were at disco nights. You know, people were there for the music *and* the party, not just the music. It was a revelation for me (Danny, December 2013).

Returning to the theoretical concerns of this chapter, the case of Danny illustrates how ‘sticky’ musical affective attachments can, by virtue of the contingent assemblage of mediations, loosen and become flexible, overturning not just personal affiliations and tastes, but, in this case, a classed and gendered prejudice against ‘gay’, ‘cheesy’ musics such as disco and UK garage. Further, as I elaborate below, this process of change emerges not as ‘pre-personal’ or unmediated, but as oriented by the ways in which music’s multiple mediations coalesce and intersect in the present. In this instance, the emergence of a new genre (dubstep), and the hybrid aesthetics and ‘retentions’ of that genre as it emerged (UK garage-dancehall-dub-drum’n’bass), intersected with Danny’s personal history and musical biography in unanticipated ways, creating a crack in his affective index; a fissure in the generic norms and preconceptions by which he abided. By ‘inhabiting’ this moment of affective uncertainty, in which, as Berlant (2010: 105) writes, the subject starts to unfold and enter into ‘a new atmosphere of new objects, a scene between one habituated life and another’, Danny was able to deviate into invention, shifting out of a position he was previously ‘stuck’ in. In so doing, he moved into a musical public sphere that not only transformed his own prejudices around genre and social identity, but also subverted wider discursive narratives that seek to naturalise the relationships between certain genres and social identities—for instance, UK garage as feminine and glitzy; drum ‘n’ bass as masculine and serious (Reynolds, 1999).

Most crucial to the development of a theory of musical and sonic affect, here, is the finding that moments of susceptibility and affective disturbance are not brought about by ‘pre-personal’ haphazard forces that possess a body at random. On the contrary, the affective dislocation that Danny experienced after listening to dubstep records for the first time was contingent upon his personal, social, and musical history as it came into contact with other, mutually interfering histories. Specifically, I would argue that Danny’s erstwhile embeddedness in the dub-jungle-drum’n’bass continuum—the musical sphere through which dubstep started to circulate in the early 2000s—played a significant role in exposing him to dubstep at the precise moment that it began to break out of UK garage. In this way, Danny was afforded a particular encultured and historicised experience of not only the ‘new’ genre (dubstep) but also the ‘old’ one (garage), with the earlier occurring genre transformed and reframed by his hearing and understanding of the ‘new’ one (Haworth, 2019).⁹⁴ By contrast, the same cannot be said for Simon (Chapter 3), who, having become enlisted into a grunge rock/indie musical milieu in his late teens, never encountered the dark, deviant version of UK garage that constituted early dubstep, and—perhaps relatedly—never became ‘unstuck’ from a perception of garage as sickly sweet, commercial, and cheesy, and certainly did not feel affectively enraptured by disco and house in the way that Danny later went on to. The point, then, is that *personal* histories and psyches, as well as socio-cultural histories, technologies, sounds, and spatialities, all partially account for processes of affective emergence, in the same way that they all partially account for processes of affective attachment or ‘stickiness’, with the prevalence of one or other an empirical question. In this respect, the comparison between Danny and Simon is exemplary: two individuals who shared almost everything in terms of age, class background, race, sexuality, gender, musical taste and affective dis/connection; yet, only one of whom unfolded musically and moved into those generic spheres that had previously been so despised, with a key differentiating factor being a divergence in personal history, where Danny’s

⁹⁴ Haworth explains this bidirectional process: ‘the innovative (protending) work opens up a “space” of action that the later work dwells within, albeit without ever being identical to it... [A]t the same time, the later (retaining) work *acts* upon the earlier one in such a way as to frame it, retroactively’ (Haworth, 2019: 13). In my analysis, UK Garage would be the ‘protending’ work, and dubstep the ‘retaining’ work.

embeddedness in dub-jungle-dubstep facilitated a particular ‘re-hearing’ of UK garage that Simon, as part of the rock-indie-folk scene, was never afforded.

A final insight to take from the case of Danny relates to genre theory. Having seen, in Chapter 5, how dubstep innovators of the early 2000s successfully ‘addressed’ and attached an implicitly male-dominated audience to their music, Danny embodies a disruption to this ‘addressivity’ (Bakhtin, 1986); a non-alignment between the audience envisaged and the audience achieved, by virtue of his deviation away from the dub-drum’n’bass-dubstep continuum and towards those ‘feminised’ genres that dubstep consciously sought to occlude. The case of Danny thus acts as an important endorsement of the work of Born (2011) and Brackett (2005) on the asymmetries that can arise between musical gestures and the social groups for whom those gestures are intended—or, in this case, between musical gestures and the kinds of atmospheres and social-affective trajectories that those gestures are expected to produce. This, in turn, brings to the fore the relative autonomy of the musical object, and the spin that it is able to exert upon musical assemblages and genre categories as a consequence of unforeseen combinations of mediations. As such, a single musical genre—in this case, dubstep—is capable of engendering multiple and contradictory social effects, in which certain people/objects/things may shift in surprising directions, while others remain ‘stuck’ within, or become ‘re-stuck’ to, the bounds of social and historical constraint.

Sound Art: Another Genealogy

I now turn to my second case study, which focuses on the movement of one of my participants from a dub reggae milieu to a sound art one. Again, my aim is to show how musical attachments and habits can become flexible, giving rise to a ‘turning point’ in a person’s life that allows them to veer into a new ‘affective alliance’ (Grossberg, 1984). And again, I wish to show how such processes can have surprising social and temporal effects, even as they arise out of an assemblage of mediations. In particular, I develop my analysis of how a revelatory musical moment can not only alter an individual’s social networks and preconceptions around genre but can also draw them into

new publics that subvert the wider hegemonic narratives and reifying discourses that imbue genre. The intersections I am interested in, then, are those that occur between Born's first, second, and fourth planes—between the co-present publics and 'imagined communities' that music generates, on the one hand, and music's institutional and discursive mediations, on the other.

The case study centres on a sound artist called Dale who I met and worked with during fieldwork. Describing his age as '50 odd', Dale was a straight, white, working-class South Londoner, who had been working as a sound artist since the late 1980s. I interviewed him for the first time in 2014, whereupon he relayed to me the details of his sound art career, which included producing site-specific sound works for a steel oil tank; creating standing waves in churches, tunnel shafts, and boats across South East London; and running subsonic frequencies through acoustic reflectors or 'sound mirrors' at a community arts site in Canning Town. The latter of these projects was the one that Dale was working on when I met him, and constituted part of my broader sound art fieldwork. In addition to Ainsworth's 'Bridge Links' discussed in Chapter 3, this fieldwork included sound installations such as Catalina Pollak's 'Phantom Railings', an interactive sound sculpture installed in Malet Street Gardens in Bloomsbury in 2013; 'Convergence' (2013), a collaboration between Ainsworth, light artist Kirsty Dixon, and the Bow bell ringers that took place at Bow Church in East London; Brandon Labelle's 'The Sixth Housing Estate' (2014), a public art event held on site at Elmington Estate in Camberwell, South London; and various sound art exhibitions and workshops hosted by the Curwen Gallery, the IMT Gallery, the South London Gallery, the Southbank Centre, and the Royal Academy of Art.

Most of the sound artists involved in these projects formed part of a dispersed but interconnected sound art scene, centred around annual arts festivals, gallery residencies, and public arts funding. Many were art college or Architecture graduates, while a few were affiliated with sound art departments such as CRiSAP at the London College of Communication and SARC in Belfast. Pollak, Ainsworth, and Dixon, in particular, saw their practice as situated within an arts-based lineage; and it was common for the sound events I attended to include a symposium or other

academic component as a central part of the installation. Dale, however, appeared to be part of a slightly separate sound art scene, positioning himself at a distance from academic and artistic institutions as mediators of the sonic arts, and traversing quite different social and sonic/musical networks. As I later learned, this was indicative of the fact that sound art's identity as a genre is distinctly multiple, in part due to its multiple antecedents. Indeed, Dale had not gone to art college, and nor was sound art his initial route into a sonic/musical profession. On the contrary, during the late 1970s and 1980s, he had worked as a technician by day while following reggae sound systems by night.⁹⁵ As he described in interview:

I used to go and see Jah Shaka all the time... In the mid-80s, [Shaka] was playing under that church [*St. Matthew's in Brixton*], he used to play in there. And that was a semi-derelict community centre, that church. It weren't like it is now. And there would be 40 people in there. There'd be Rastamen sitting cross-legged in the middle of the floor, just vibing for hours on end! It was *mental*. So, 'cos I was so deep into that, I used to just follow Shaka everywhere in the '80s... We used to go and buy records from him. We'd go to the dance on Saturday night, then go to [his] shop [in New Cross] on Monday morning and say, 'Shaka, you got that tune you dropped Saturday night?' (Dale, May 2014).

In addition to dub reggae, Dale emphasised how, with no formal musical education, he was also drawn to noise and (post-)punk for their democratic music-making practices and values. Together, punk/post-punk, noise, and dub constituted his route into and love of music—a constellation of tastes that was fairly typical of a white working-class Londoner in the late 1970s, owing to the collaborative, though not entirely unproblematic, musical and social exchanges that occurred between punk and reggae at this time (Hebdige, 1979, 1987; Haddon, 2017). As a producer, however, it was not until the invention of MIDI in 1983, coupled with the increasing availability of drum machines, samplers, and computers throughout the 1980s, that Dale was able to start making music himself. Finally, in 1989, after years of working as a technical engineer in non-musical domains, he began producing dub music and started his own dub label. This move from technician to producer/music-maker was, for Dale, entirely attributable to technological innovation and the standardisation of electronic equipment. As he reiterated:

⁹⁵ Notably, the coining of the term sound art and its emergence as a distinct discipline only occurred in the mid-late 1990s, suggesting that Dale's alternative route into sound art was perhaps not unusual.

Throbbing Gristle always said: ‘technology’s gonna put music into the hands of the non-musicians’. And for me, that’s exactly what’s happened. I’m a technician, I’m not a musician. Okay, I may be an artist *now*, but fundamentally, I’m a technician (Dale, May 2014).

What is captivating about Dale’s biography, particularly from the point of view of his current identity as a sound artist, is how closely it mirrors the trajectories of a number of prominent dub studio engineers. The British Guyanese dub producer Neil Fraser, aka Mad Professor, started out working a variety of electronic engineering jobs in the same way that Dale did, before eventually ‘combin[ing] his fascination with electronics with his passion for music... in Jamaican dub’ (Veal, 2007: 229). Similarly, the Jamaican studio engineer Joe Gibbs, who, like Dale and Fraser, was also without a musical education, began his career as an electronic technician with a repair shop in Kingston that primarily fixed televisions. Dale’s personal route to sound art, then, rooted in the capital driven settings of recording studios, dub labels, and electronic engineering practices, stands in contrast to the academic institutions and state-funded radio stations that facilitated the experiments of early European and American electronic composition—the lineage from which sound art is most frequently deemed to have evolved (Kahn, 1999; Kelly, 2011, 2017; Labelle, 2006; Landy, 2007; Licht, 2007; Ouzounian, 2013). As I go on to discuss, Dale’s story thus illustrates that sound art has roots in many places; places that are Africanist, non-Western, popular and dance music-oriented, as opposed to simply Euro-American and avant-garde.

What, then, was the precise moment at which Dale made the transition from reggae-head and punk-lover to site-specific sound artist? And how and why was he able to make such a transition? While not such a sudden moment of revelation as Danny’s experience of dubstep, Dale’s transition similarly evolved out of particular intersections between genre, aesthetics, technology, personal history, and socio-cultural identity, which resonated together at a certain point in his life to produce an unforeseen moment of change. First and foremost was what Dale saw as the integral sonic similarities between dub reggae and experimental sound. In his words:

Sonically, dub is very experimental. Always has been. It's about getting a sound and... Really fucking with it. With the physics of it. It's about getting these hisses and tones... And just destroying them with filters and echo units... And getting right down into those low frequencies, like 'bvvvvvvv' [imitating low frequency]. Have you had it where your eyeballs go, and everything starts to wobble? [Have] you had it where your nose starts to quiver? (Dale, May 2014).

Dale not only draws attention to the physiological force of dub music, with its low-frequency audio vibrations, but also invokes the highly experimental and spatial nature of the genre, which, as detailed in Chapter 6, is built upon techniques of sonic deconstruction, decay, and fragmentation. In dub, musical elements disappear into, and don't necessarily resurface from, vast sonic spaces of arrhythmic texture and resounding reverb, in many ways bringing the music closer—aesthetically speaking—to genres like noise, ambient, and drone. Indeed, for Veal, dub music even goes hand in hand, sonically, with a host of post-war avant-garde musical movements: from the aesthetic of the 'sound collage' so often associated with Pierre Schaeffer's acousmatic listening and tape splicing; to so-called 'spatial music' and the electronic manipulation of sonic spatiality typically traced to Edgard Varèse and La Monte Young; to the musical minimalisms of Steve Reich and Terry Riley, themselves influenced by African and Eastern musics; to the indeterminacy and chance methods of Cage, Stockhausen, and others, again, traceable to improvised 'Afrological' musics such as jazz (Lewis, 1996). All of these experimental qualities—sound collage, spatial manipulation, minimalism, chance and indeterminacy—permeate dub's compositional procedures and use of sound technology in myriad ways, and have done since its inception (Veal, 2007: 8, 38-9). As such, dub reggae, post-war Euro-American experimental music, and spatially-oriented genres such as sound art can be seen to share a number of sonic ingredients, techniques, and conceptual affordances that bring them much closer together than traditionally conceived. Indeed, in Dale's case, it was precisely through his immersion in dub reggae that he began to take as his departure point the manipulation of soundspace, texture, and amplification in a way that eventually led to his becoming a full-time sound artist.

In spite of experiencing these connections early on in his musical career, however, Dale's shift into sound art didn't occur immediately. Rather, it came about through the collision of dub's

experimental aesthetic with a number of other mediations. One such mediation was the invention of the digital sampler, which first motivated Dale to start bringing field recordings from the everyday environment into his dub music, amplifying the textured spaciousness and soundscape quality already prevalent in the genre. He recalled:

When samplers got invented, there was a few of us who started making artsy stuff. 'Cos I just was like, 'well, you can sample anything, can't you?' So, I started making tracks out of cars going past and buses and... anything I could find, really. Meanwhile everyone else [I knew] was chasing the same James Brown break and... just making house music and 'ardcore and some really boring dance music. And I couldn't see it! I was like, 'this should be going somewhere else'. So that's why I started putting out tunes... I remember I released a track in '91 or something called 'Root Master', which was [a roots reggae track] made from the noises of a Routemaster bus. And I started to get right into it, the ambient sound thing... I would put out an album and it would have half a dozen dub tunes on it, and then a couple of weird artsy things on it as well. So, I was doing the two things concurrently. And I was big on the warehouse scene [in London] too, and we were doing weird sound art things in the chill-out rooms and things like that, so I was messing about at raves too. (Dale, May 2014).

Here, Dale brings out three moments in his personal history that speak to the multiple crossovers between sound art and popular/dance music. The first is his use of field recording and site-specific urban sound to produce roots reggae and dub music. The incorporation of urban and industrial sound into music is typically historicised with recourse to an array of avant-garde precursors, most commonly: Luigi Russolo's (1913) 'Art of Noises', Varèse's 'liberation' of sound/noise, Cage's aestheticisation of everyday 'found' sounds, the Fluxus movement with its 'intermedia ethos' (Friedman, 2012: 374), and the emergence of sound installation art in the late 1960s and 1970s. Yet, it is also possible to trace a different lineage of the musicalisation of everyday sound, beginning with blues, jazz and improvised musics and continuing with punk and grime. In this alternative lineage, one might look to the abstract noisescapes of 1940s bebop and 1950s-60s free jazz; Kraftwerk's (1977) *Trans-Europe Express*; the industrial anarchism and taped field recordings of Throbbing Gristle and Einstürzende Neubauten; the sampled mechanical sounds of Chicago's Wax Trax Records' releases; the wailing 'emergency' siren FX box harnessed by dub mixologists and junglists alike; the sonic nightscapes of ambient dubstep producer Burial; and the sampled street

sounds of Ridley Road market in Scratcha DVA's grime tracks.⁹⁶ Though rarely discussed together, these lineages intersect and anticipate each other at numerous moments, contributing equally to the noise/sound genealogy (Born, 1995; Lewis, 1996).⁹⁷ Thus, while the aestheticisation of urban and 'found' sounds may continue to be given a neat avant-garde history running from the Futurists to Max Neuhaus, Dale's arrival at such an aesthetic through a significantly different route necessitates a broadening of this history to include parallel or even prior inventions in popular and electronic/dance music, stimulated by new technologies. What comes to light is the contested nature of the urban and 'found' sound genealogy, which bears connections to a vast array of prior musical objects and events in ways that differ according to personal history and socio-cultural location.

A second moment of overlap is Dale's account of producing dub reggae 'concurrently' with what he referred to as 'weird artsy things as well' in the late 1980s, with the two aspects of his practice deemed as part of the same creative process and released on the same albums. This can be seen as comparable to a dubwise approach to production, with reggae singles typically released as two 'versions' of the same track, the dub B-side constituting an experimental permutation of the original A-side, often stripping away the vocals and saturating the sounds in reverb to engender a vast, spaced-out sound. Again, this co-existence of the 'arty'/experimental and the popular, with both occupying the same records, problematises any attempted separation between sound art and popular/dance music, pointing instead to a process of co-evolution and mutual mediation. And finally, a third moment of overlap is Dale's allusion to his experience of creating sound installations for the chill-out rooms at raves in South East London—events that were typically dominated by acid house, breakbeat techno, and hardcore, and from which the vanguards of experimental music and sound art have largely sought to disassociate themselves (see McLeod, 2001). These moments of generic, aesthetic, and socio-cultural hybridity that Dale brings out are highly revealing. Not only do they elucidate the kinds of creative directions that dub reggae, new technologies, and rave culture

⁹⁶ See Scratcha DVA 'Lost and Found Episode 1':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPDm85bqVw0&feature=youtu.be>

⁹⁷ As Born (1995) and George Lewis (1996) show, the improvisatory forms of African American bebop provided a clear impetus for Euro-American composers such as Cage, even as these forms were denounced, 'exnominated' and given different names (the 'open work', 'indeterminacy' etc.) in Eurological music.

potentialised for Dale, namely, a gradual shift into sound art; they also challenge academic histories of sound art, which tend to position the genre as entirely separate from the popular/dance music realm. Kahn (1999) and Labelle (2006), for instance, historicise sound art via the Futurists, Schaeffer, Cage, Alvin Lucier, and Neuhaus in their now-canonic texts; while those revisiting sound art's heritage recently have overwhelmingly affirmed this lineage, placing slightly more emphasis on the visual arts foundations of sound art, as well as its origins in electroacoustic music (Landy, 2016; Voegelin & Gardner, 2015). Alan Licht is one of few to acknowledge the 'ambient chill-out rooms' at dance clubs to which Dale refers, yet he reduces these to 'a commercialisation of... sound art's concerns' (Licht, 2009: 6). Nowhere in the literature, then, is the emergence of sound art as an interlude between tracks on a dub album, or the soundtrack for exhausted ravers—in other words, as thoroughly entangled with dub and electronic/dance music—given focus.

With the advent of digital sampling and other technological innovations, Dale recalled how he began to extract, explore, and multiply the experimental qualities of dub to an ever-greater extent. A specific 'protending' influence that he discussed building upon was the aesthetic of sonic mishap pioneered by Lee 'Scratch' Perry and other 1970s Jamaican studio engineers, in which crackle, distortion, ticking, and hissing were deliberately left in the mix as amplified traces of the actual recording and playback media—a technique comparable to the deliberate vinyl pop of a hip-hop sample in 1970s hip-hop. Indeed, it is significant that these very Africanist-Jamaican and African American musical influences, via their explicit incorporation into German dub-techno in the early 1990s,⁹⁸ opened up a space for the emergence of the experimental musical style known as 'glitch'—the so-called 'clicks and cuts' movement that evolved directly out of dub-techno with German artists like Oval and labels like *Mille Plateaux*, but which nonetheless came to see itself as inextricably related to the Western avant-garde, tracing its 'glitchiness' not to dub or hip-hop, but

⁹⁸ Centring around the Berlin-based label Basic Channel established by Moritz von Oswald and Mark Ernestus in 1993, dub-techno is often considered to be a subgenre of second wave Detroit techno or 'minimal' techno. Yet, beyond emphasising the minimalist tendency in techno, von Oswald and Ernestus, along with Pole and others involved in the movement, were equally concerned with 'retaining' and enhancing the ambient soundscape and atmospheric qualities of dub. See Veal, 2007: 236; Finlayson, 2009; Demers, 2010. For further listening: Maurizio's 'M-5' and Basic Channel's 'Quadrant Dub I' are examples of tracks displaying subtle distortion, vinyl crackle, surface noise, and feedback.

to Schaeffer's cutting and splicing, the Fluxus predilection for 'creative destruction', and Cage's use of defective media in works like *Cartridge Music* (Cascone, 2000; Kelly, 2009; Thomson, 2004).⁹⁹ For Dale, however, such black diasporic musical influences, combined with their increasing possibility for enhancement via new technologies and the physical performance-installation space afforded by illegal warehouse raves, coalesced as the moment in which 'the art thing' became a real possibility for him. As he stated:

Suddenly the sound art thing just became more and more... And basically, the [dub] label... Well I haven't put out a record for six years now. All I do is the sound art thing at the moment. But there's not so much difference, in some ways. For me, what makes a piece of sound art work is the same thing that makes a piece of reggae or pop music work. For me, they've grown together (Dale, May 2014).

How, then, can Dale's shift from dub reggae to sound art be interpreted in the context of a renewed theory of musical and sonic affect? I want to suggest that Dale's gradual 'tuning in' to the sphere of sound art provides a fruitful comparison to Danny's revelatory dubstep moment. Both cases, that is, hinge upon the 'retentions' and 'protections' enacted by an evolving or existing genre; specifically, the way that the modification and/or enhancement of particular aspects of a previously occurring genre by a new genre or new technology can trigger an opening in a person's musical affective register that moves them into a new 'affective alliance' (Grossberg, 1984). In Danny's case, dubstep's simultaneous 'retention' and transformation of UK garage reoriented his hearing of the earlier occurring genre in a way that overturned prior musical affective attachments and socio-musical associations. In Dale's case, the advent of digital sampling, breakbeat, and the UK rave scene accelerated a creative direction that he had already begun to explore as a Jah Shaka advocate and punk-anarchist with a penchant for environmental sound, opening up a space for him to move increasingly into a sound art sphere. Moreover, in making this shift, Dale enacted an aesthetic-affective trajectory that connected genres as diverse as dub reggae, hip-hop, dub-techno, glitch,

⁹⁹ Kim Cascone asserts that the two most important precursors of 'glitch' are the Italian Futurists and John Cage's 4'33". He then erases all developments of the 1960s-80s: 'Fast-forwarding from the 1950s to the present, we skip over most of the electronic music of the 20th century, much of which has not... focused on expanding the ideas first explored by the Futurists and Cage' (Cascone, 2000). Similarly, Caleb Kelly discredits the innovations of hip-hop, dating the turntable-as-instrument to the extended techniques of Erik Satie, and vinyl 'scratching' to the phonographic experiments of Paul Hindemith and Ernst Toch (Kelly, 2009: 88, 93). As Nick Prior argues, glitch's 'avant-garde aspirations' extend beyond academic writing, too, with 'liner notes, in particular, a key site of its discursive presence' (Prior, 2005: 309).

sound art, and the classical avant-garde, and thereby contradicted the way in which a number of these genres—notably, glitch and sound art—have been institutionalised.

But what additionally came to light in the case of Dale was his insinuation that it was not just he who experienced such a connection, but a group of sound artists emanating from similar working-class, non-arts-trained backgrounds. In particular, he referred to his friend and fellow sound artist, Farid, who had started out as a self-taught punk musician before joining British Asian political rap group, Fun-Da-Mental.¹⁰⁰ Dale emphasised the similarity between his own and Farid's routes to sound art: via punk, anarchy, the British dub scene, noise, multicultural London, ragga-jungle, politics, and squat parties, as well as—in Farid's case—bhangra, qawwali, and Islamic radicalism. He then confirmed this similarity by alluding to the kinds of projects they'd worked on together, one of which was a collaboration for a squatted ship that is known for holding all night raves. Dale's point in describing this to me was to emphasise the kinds of paths that not just he but other sound artists he knew had taken: paths that could not be confined to the genealogies that sound art literatures tend to invoke in tracing sound art's origins to Cage, Fluxus, post-medium art, and experimental electronic music. In so doing, Dale wished to demonstrate that conceptions of sound art as 'high' art, academically-oriented, or even gallery-oriented were, in his words, a 'hijacking';¹⁰¹ and further, that the routes of exploration opened up by British dub, punk, noise and other popular music genres were not unique to him but were experienced collectively by others of a similar age and class, with similar musical biographies. In contrast to the divergence between Danny and Simon discussed earlier, then, whereby personal history became a differentiating factor in the ability to become open to new musical and social connections, here it is implied that a convergence in personal and socio-cultural histories can lead to a shared capacity to move in a particular sonic

¹⁰⁰ One of the key groups featured in Hesmondhalgh's (2000) essay on anti-racism in 1990s dance music, Fun-Da-Mental were innovative in bringing vinyl techniques such as 'scratching' into British Asian music.

¹⁰¹ Of course, not all sound artists feel this way. Many *do* consider themselves to have followed such academic/artistic paths and actively seek to promote this discursive image. Pollak was quick to trace her practice to Fluxus when I interviewed her in 2014. Similarly, Labelle, whose event 'The Sixth Housing Estate' I conducted fieldwork on, is not only an academic himself, but has also authored a number of foundation texts on sound art, situating its historical points of origin in Cage's 4'33", *musique concrète*, and the Western avant-garde (Labelle, 2006).

affective direction. More than this, Dale's account is indicative of sound art's complex identity as a genre, which evidently has multiple forebears—forebears that aren't always acknowledged in the dominant discourse but that continue to manifest and swell in different directions, contributing to the diversity of the genre today.

From this, a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, the case of Dale confirms how musical affective attachments have the potential to loosen and bend, opening out into new susceptibilities that allow a person to move into a very different sonic social sphere. Further, like Danny, Dale's move from one musical milieu to another was generated by an array of personal, socio-cultural, musical, and technological mediations as they interfered unexpectedly in the present. Of special significance, here, was Dale's age and social class background, which meant that he was proximate to the working-class black-white punk-reggae connection that flourished in London in the late 1970s; his resultant attunement to the sonic experimentalism of noise, punk, and dub alike; the technological innovations of the 1980s, specifically the propagation of samplers, computers, and drum machines; and his involvement in the free party scene of the late '80s, where he began to experiment with installation-based sound for ecstasy-fuelled dancers who'd exhausted themselves raving to pitched-up breakbeats. These hybrid aesthetic and socio-cultural influences indicate how musical genres can, in their multiple 'retentions' and 'protections', catalyse a shift with regard to the way in which particular musical lineages and aesthetics are perceived, instigating a 'turning point' in a person's life that opens them up to new socio-musical connections and publics.

There are two further points to draw from this. First, like Danny, Dale's account emphasises how moments of affective emergence can have wider social and historical implications. Specifically, the 'turning points' experienced by both individuals can be seen to have contradicted the discursive mediations of the musical assemblage. For Danny, the act of becoming-attuned to UK garage, and thereafter house and disco, reflected a transformation of his prior, journalistically influenced, classed and gendered preconceptions around genre. His move thus simultaneously subverted wider socio-historical discourses that seek to reify certain genres as 'feminine', camp, and frivolous, and

certain others as ‘masculine’, intellectual, and serious. In Dale’s case, the ‘protentions’ potentialised, for him, by dub reggae and UK rave, and the openings into sound art that these projections made possible, worked in opposition to the narrow manner in which genres like glitch and sound art have been discursively constructed and historicised—namely, as arts-associated and avant-garde originating, as well as overwhelmingly white in their influences. Both examples, then, illuminate the lability and multiplicity of genre: the way that, in drawing together an array of unstable musical pasts and presents, a single genre can configure multiple possible audience trajectories and creative futures, some of which are surprising and even confounding, with Danny and Dale gravitating towards new sonic spheres that not only transformed their own social identities and genre ideologies, but also contradicted wider discursive genre ideologies and hegemonies. This is an example, then, of music’s performance socialities and ‘imagined communities’ inverting or inflecting music’s discursive constructions and institutionalisations (Born, 2011, 2012).

Following this, a second, epistemological point to emerge from Dale’s shift is that it calls for more heterogeneous approaches to the history of sound art—approaches that not only acknowledge the influence of popular and non-Western musics on the Euro-American experimental avant-garde, and thus, by proxy, on sound art and sound-based practices (Born, 1995; Lewis, 1996), but that also draw out the parallel inventions that took place across domains of post-war music and sound such as Jamaican dub and US hip-hop, which helped ‘protend’ and open up a space for the hybrid and diverse genre that sound art constitutes today. In Dale’s account alone, a wealth of such anticipatory interrelations can be identified: sound art’s embeddedness in the UK rave scene, and thus its proximity to genres like acid techno and hardcore; the aesthetic and conceptual similarities between sound art and dub reggae via their mutual implementation of spatialised sound, field recording, and soundscape manipulation (Veal, 2007); and the ability to hear urban sound art through industrial and electro artists like Throbbing Gristle and Kraftwerk, Eric Martin’s ‘Emergency’, and the field recordings of grime and dubstep artists, as well as through the Italian Futurists and *4’33”*. These insights contribute to an already growing body of work on sound art’s multiple historical and ‘Afrological’ points of origin, a key example of which is Keith Obadike’s (2001) article ‘What’s in

a Name?'. Recalling George Lewis's landmark essay on improvised music after 1950, which illuminates the 'disavowal of Afrological forms by the art world that nurtured Cage' (Lewis, 1996: 99, 92), Obadike's essay demands that sound art discourses acknowledge an Africanist sound arts tradition and take seriously the work of black visual artists, black experimental musicians, and 'the black soundscape' generally (Obadike, 2001: 5). My contribution has been to show that, through an analysis of the 'retentions' and 'protections' enacted by a particular genre, and experienced affectively by different individuals and groups, genealogies might be remade and remediated.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how musical affective attachments can become flexible and unstable, triggering shifts in a person's affective register that move them into new 'musically imagined communities' and co-present publics. Through the unanticipated collision of personal, socio-cultural, aesthetic, technological, and historical mediations, Danny and Dale exhibited a capacity to deviate from their pre-existing social and musical identities in transformative ways. These examples thus support the theoretical overview at the start of this chapter, which argued both against the Deleuzian 'pre-personal' approach to affective emergence (Massumi, 2002), and the feminist-post-colonial propensity to socially overdetermine affect (Brah, 1999; Brennan, 2004). Indeed, the 'epiphanic' moments that Danny and Dale experienced were neither explicable with recourse to a pre-mediated logic of chance, nor 'driven' by a specific social difference, such as class, gender or race. Rather, as 'multiply mediated' occurrences, oriented by personal and other histories, as well as by the agency and temporal porosity of musical materials, their affective dislocations unfolded in ways that exceeded wider social identity configurations, confounding prior musical prejudices rooted in class, gender, and sexuality for Danny, while interrupting a racialised and classed construction of genre in the case of Dale. This, then, is a conceptualisation of affect as potentially disruptive of the personal/social/historical, while also emanating from the personal/social/historical, and thus as requiring empirical and historical analysis to uncover its complex roots and routes. It is an anti-structural understanding of affect that recognises the entanglements between (musical)

affect, the social, and the historical, as well as their irreducibility to each other. This is something that not only Deleuzians, but also Bourdieu's class-based corporeal sociology, Brah's socially driven bodily 'reflexes', and Brennan's socialised account of the transfer of hormones, all struggle to articulate, and hence why none can properly account for how we become open to change.

A second theme to emerge from this chapter relates to theories of music and time. Specifically, I have demonstrated the tendency for musical sounds and genres to 'act' within assemblages in relatively unpredictable ways by virtue of the 'retentions' and 'protentions' that they contract and potentialise. Indeed, in continually modifying the musical past, the musical present simultaneously opens up new futures—not just with regard to how older genres and genealogies are perceived, but with respect to how they are affectively experienced too. In the first case study, I illustrated this by showing how dubstep's 'retention' but also alteration of an earlier genre, UK garage, afforded a retroactive 're-hearing' of that genre for my participant Danny, initiating a turning point in his life that saw him 'tune out' of the musical sphere in which he was embedded, and 'tune in' to one that he had previously derided. In doing so, he disrupted dubstep's 'addressivity' (Bakhtin, 1986), moving away from the 'underground' male-dominated spaces that dubstep innovators wished to 'actualise' and towards the more 'feminised' spaces and sounds that they sought to occlude. In the second case study, I illustrated how the sonic experimentalism 'protended' by dub reggae and exacerbated by rapid technological innovation and the warehouse scene's sonic-spatial occupation catalysed a new creative commitment for Dale, forging connections between diverse global genres that facilitated his move into a new sonic social imaginary. Further, in making such a move, Dale travelled along a genealogical path that had been disavowed by sound art discourses, drawing attention to the heterogeneous pasts of sound art as a genre, as well as its multiple presents and futures. This chapter thus contributes to existing work on music and time (Born, 2015; Haworth, 2019), illuminating how the agency of the musical object, and the deviations it engenders as it intersects with personal, socio-cultural, and other histories, can not only precipitate new genealogies and epistemologies, but new affective alliances and creative trajectories too.

In the final chapter, I develop these arguments by analysing more closely the social positionalities of those who were able to become affectively ‘open’ to new social and musical connections, and those who were not. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, revelatory moments of change and ‘newness’ such as those experienced by Danny and Dale are not always ‘inhabitable’ for particular people, and may even, for some, provoke an overwhelming pull back towards the familiar. In this sense, it may be significant that the two case studies in this chapter centre around straight, white men, rather than on participants hailing from more marginal social positions.

Chapter 8

Escape or Capture? Inhabiting a Threshold of Difference

'[S]ocieties never grant us spaces in which we are freed of identifications. That's the stuff of liberal fantasies'

Terre Thaemlitz (2014)¹⁰²

Introduction

The argument advanced in the previous chapter regarding the mediated nature of affective emergence has a particular theoretical importance, in that it nuances the degrees of change and 'newness' that can be expected of affect. Indeed, arguing that musical affective disturbances and 'turning points' arise out of multiple intersecting mediations that are personal, socio-cultural, historical, and institutional, squarely rejects the Deleuzian view of affect as haphazard or shattering bodily autonomy. What emerges instead is a much more temperate picture in which moments of affective susceptibility may be unforeseen, 'accidental', and even confounding, but are also contingent upon, and sometimes constrained by, a person's social, musical, and subjective history. They represent potentialities, uncertainties, differences, and opportunities, rather than indiscriminate and involuntary jolts into invention (Lefebvre, 2003: 66; Barry & Thrift, 2007). The epistemological and methodological inquiry around musical affect and change thus shifts, moving away from the reductive and homogenising question, 'what can a body do?' and towards the more complex empirical problem of who or what, at any given time, is able to become affectively open to new musical and social connections, why, and to what socio-political ends (Stirling, 2018)?

Taking this question forward, this chapter demonstrates how 'turning points' and 'openings' into new musical and social spheres are not always experienced as inhabitable for particular people. As

¹⁰² See <https://www.factmag.com/2014/05/01/deeper-underground-fact-meets-terre-thaemlitz-part-three/3/>.

such, change may occur only partially, with a particular individual or social group able to become part of a new ‘musically imagined community’ while remaining excluded from that music’s co-present performance spaces. This signals a key departure from Deleuzian affect theories, which do not acknowledge the different degrees and curves of affective openness and porosity that different people may experience, because in their conceptualisation, there is no theory of the subject. But it also brings into focus the irreducibility of Born’s first and second planes—music’s performance socialities, on the one hand, and ‘musically imagined communities’, on the other (Born, 2011, 2012). Musical affective attachments, in other words, take place at different scales of sociality, with an ability to belong to a ‘virtual’ musical community often paralleled by an inability or unwillingness to participate in that music physically. This, in turn, highlights the reductive nature of the concept of ‘taste’ in Bourdieusian sociologies of music, which tends to be defined as a simple like/dislike of a particular musical genre, without taking into account the spaces, technologies, and social atmospheres that constitute music in its live forms, and that often act as barriers to particular people, even if they enjoy listening to that music privately. In this chapter, I show why it is so important to hold the first and second planes apart, and thus why it is crucial to theorise music as an assemblage of mediations (Born, 2011, 2012).

Theoretical and Ethnographic Overview: Back to Bourdieu?

The primary conceptual aim of this chapter is to conclude the theory of musical and sonic affect advocated throughout the thesis. In Chapter 7, I showed how affective experiences of music have the capacity to produce moments of great volatility and uncertainty, with potentially inventive social effects. Yet, rather than manifesting via an autonomous, indeterminate body, I demonstrated how these moments of change emerged from a multiplicity of interesting histories and temporalities as they collided unexpectedly in the present. Building on this, I argue in this chapter that it is precisely because of the mediated nature of affective emergence—the ‘non-autonomy’ of affect (Hemmings, 2005: 565)—that the ability to become open to new social and musical connections is not something that is simply available to everyone. Indeed, for some, moments of potential deviation release ‘an

overwhelmingly negative force', producing a 'crack in the available genres of... survival' (Berlant, 2010: 111, 115). For these 'others', it may be predictability rather than change that provides the basis for a more fruitful subjective, social, and political existence (see also Chapter 6). Affective revelations, then, may well destabilise a prior sense of self and sense of 'we' for particular people, and may even produce subjectivities and socialities that shift wider social formations, as we saw in the cases of Danny and Dale; but they don't always. Indeed, often, it is precisely the movement and affective openness of some that unwittingly subjugates the movement and openness of others, in a process analogous to Doreen Massey's (2005) notion of 'power geometry'.¹⁰³

In what follows, I turn to case studies from my electronic/dance and classical music fieldwork that demonstrate this. In particular, I show how, across certain musical assemblages, and for certain individuals and social groups, the capacity for reinvention appears so strongly delimited by wider social identity categories (class, gender, race...) that processes of affective emergence end up producing transformative shifts for some, while reproducing social stratifications for others. In turn, this raises the question of whether the ability to traverse multiple musical and social spaces is a classed, gendered, raced, aged or other socially mediated resource, and thus brings questions of affect and the body directly into dialogue with Bourdieu's theory of 'distinction' and recent debates around the 'omnivore-univore' thesis (Bourdieu, 1984; Bennett et al., 2009; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Prieur & Savage, 2013). While not endorsing the determinism of Bourdieu's sociology of culture, I argue for the significance of these debates in apprehending the ineradicability of certain differences and cultural antipathies in music, which may prevent people from acting upon a musical revelation or affective affiliation in the way they desire, leading to the reproduction of social boundaries (see Born, 2010a; Prior, 2011).

¹⁰³ Power geometry is the notion that 'relative mobility and power over mobility... entrenches the spatial imprisonment of other groups' (Massey, 2005).

Dark Spaces: Gender, Light, and Density on the Dancefloor

In this first case study, I draw upon the experiences of my participant Jenny in order to demonstrate the workings of gender and sexuality in processes of musical affective openness and flexibility. In so doing, I develop debates in cultural sociology over whether musical consumption practices are more diverse, ‘experimental’, and wide-ranging among those with higher amounts of social and cultural capital (Bennett et al., 2009; Savage & Gayo, 2011; Savage, 2015).

I first met Jenny in December 2013 at a Beauty and the Beat party in Hackney, East London. Established in 2005, Beauty and the Beat (BATB) is a monthly ‘psychedelic soul’ night put on by Lucky Cloud regulars, Cyril Cornet, Cedric Lassonde, and Jeremy Gilbert. I had been advised to attend by various people, especially since becoming involved with Lucky Cloud, and, when I finally made it down, was intrigued to observe both similarities and differences between the two events. According to its founders, BATB arose out of a desire to create a ‘house party’ where people could dance, socialise, and listen to a wide range of music on a decent sound system, but in a space that could accommodate more people than a house could.¹⁰⁴ Although it has a number of influences—among them, Lazy Dog at Notting Hill Arts Club, Pleasure FM, Synergy and Whirly Gig, and Plastic People’s Balance nights¹⁰⁵—Mancuso’s Loft and the Lucky Cloud parties are key antecedents too. Most notably, BATB uses the same Klipschorn speakers and Mark Levinson amp as Lucky Cloud—a hardware combination that stems directly from Mancuso’s audio paradigm—and also shares Lucky Cloud’s commitment to community politics, opposing the egotistical notion of the ‘superstar DJ’ by having selectors play back to back in an obscured corner of the room. At the same time, BATB is not a replica of Lucky Cloud. For one thing, it takes place on a Saturday night from 11pm to 6am, which makes it a very different party to the Sunday 5pm to midnight slot

¹⁰⁴ See the BATB website, whose URL is ‘houseparty’ [dot] org [dot] uk: <https://www.houseparty.org.uk/>

¹⁰⁵ See <https://batblog.wordpress.com/2015/07/12/reflections-on-our-first-decade/>. Lazy Dog was a deep house night that ran between 1998 and 2003; Pleasure FM was a deep house London pirate radio station; Synergy, which ran from 2003 to 2008, was a ‘conscious’ psychedelic club night put on in collaboration with charities and NGOs <https://thesynergyproject.org/>; Whirly Gig is an ongoing world music psychedelic club night, running since the 1980s <https://www.whirl-y-gig.org.uk/>; Balance was a night run by Plastic People’s owner Ade Fakile until the closure of the venue in 2015.

occupied by Lucky Cloud. It's also bigger, drawing crowds of 400, and there's a greater variety of music, including Latin house/percussion, psychedelic jazz, Brazilian dance, Afrobeat, and dub. Finally, the venue is different and tends to alternate. During fieldwork, BATB's most regular 'home' was the New Empowering Church in London Fields—a warehouse space with quirky furniture and a neon orange palm tree.



Figures 25 and 26: Beauty and the Beat, the New Empowering Church, London Fields.

I arrived at this particular BATB early so as to avoid queues and spend time observing the arrival of attendees. There was an acid light show projected on one of the walls, and tables laid out with fruit and crisps for crowd members to take. To one side of the hexagonal-shaped dance floor, a seating area with sofas, lanterns, and lava lamps drew people in chatting and drinking, and the music at this early stage was Latin jazz funk and deep disco. I approached Jenny, a 28-year-old queer-identifying woman, after an hour or so to ask if she would be willing to ‘think-out-loud’ about her social and embodied experiences. She agreed, and after mentioning in her voice memo that BATB was one of her favourite nights in London because she liked ‘the continuity of it’ and the way it ‘felt like home’, we got talking further and she said she would be happy to do a post-event interview.

As it transpired, Jenny grew up in North London and was an active participant in the London disco and deep house scene. In addition to BATB, she described going to nights at the then-just-opened Brilliant Corners—another high-fidelity audio venue in Dalston—and the weekly gay night, Horse Meat Disco, in Vauxhall. Pioneers of US garage and deep house such as François K and DJ Harvey were among her favourite DJs, as was transgender activist and deep house producer, DJ Sprinkles. Further, when I asked about upcoming DJ/producers or events that were of interest to her, she displayed an obvious commitment to following new dance music, mentioning the Swedish house DJ/producer, HNNY, and the German-Korean DJ and ‘musical connoisseur’, Hunee (confusingly, both pronounced ‘honey’). In spite of her evident knowledge and love of disco/house, however, Jenny—like Danny in Chapter 7—had not always been ‘a fan’ of this music, or of going out to music clubs full stop. As she relayed to me in interview:

I was never really into clubbing. You know, I’d go out a bit when I was younger, to the odd drum ‘n’ bass or techno night, but it was all a bit [*screws up face*]. Just drunk men trying to hit on me, basically. It’s just... It’s all a little bit unpleasant, especially as a gay woman. At least, I never felt comfortable. But that’s just my experience (Jenny, April 2014).

Asking what it was that instigated her love of house and disco and sudden desire to go out, Jenny then explained how, having only ever really been into folk rock and blues as a teenager and young adult, being taken to a disco night in her mid-twenties changed everything:

My friend persuaded me to go to a disco night about four or five years ago and it was really my turning point. From then on, I just started going to more and more disco nights. I was hooked! But I think, you know, compared to the club nights I'd been to before, what really struck me about the disco night was the dancefloor. Cos you look around you and... It looked amazing, there were all these coloured lights, and then you go outside and everyone's chatting and smiling, and it just... It felt like a celebration. So, I think it was that aspect of it that I really loved (Jenny, April 2014).

Jenny's account, like Danny's in Chapter 7, captures the notion of a 'turning point' or 'revelation'—an epiphanic moment that initiated her into a new 'affective alliance' (Grossberg, 1984). Yet, rather than this being in some way attributable to the emergence of a new genre, as with Danny and dubstep, it was the 'vibe' and co-presence of the dancefloor that primarily instigated Jenny's sense of openness towards disco. While there are other important mediations to consider here, including Jenny's personal history and social identity, the example thus first and foremost emphasises the significance of music's performance socialities (Born's first plane). As noted in Chapters 3, 5 and 6, the spatial, material, and atmospheric qualities of a live musical/sonic event are crucial to how we experience it, and may even elicit a corporeal suppleness that allows a person to deviate from their pre-existing musical and social habits in ways that become permanent, and that outlive the event itself. This was, indeed, the case for Jenny, who, overcome by the positivity that she felt on the disco dancefloor, entered into a new musical and social-subjective phase that had a transformative impact on multiple dimensions of her life.

But was Jenny's shift really as simple as feeling an instant affinity with disco and the empathetic and joyful atmosphere of the disco dancefloor? Why did the music and its surrounding atmosphere make so much sense to her, but not, for example, to Simon in Chapter 3? After all, both had arrived at similar events from a folk/rock/blues sensibility, harbouring a lack of interest in disco and house music. Delving into Jenny's personal history shed light on this. First, Jenny talked in interview about always having seen music as a sociable medium through which to communicate with others. Her musical biography was one in which music repeatedly figured as an explicitly social and participatory practice—for example, singing in choirs or playing in a band as a teenager. Jenny then went on to explain that, partly for this reason, she found the 'anti-social' vibes of drum 'n' bass and

techno to be very alienating when she reached her late teens and early twenties. Indeed, it was the spaces and social atmospheres of these genres, more than their musical sounds, that deterred her:

You know, [at those nights] it was either just geeks shuffling about... Or else men shamelessly trying to hit on you. And I mean, yeah... How I approach music is just so *totally* the opposite of that. Like, I remember going to a drum 'n' bass night once, and it was just so regimental. You know, the way everyone was in lines, all facing the DJ. They looked like, almost religious devotees! (Jenny, April 2014).

In light of these biographical experiences, it makes sense that Jenny was able to feel more at home in the sociable environment of disco, with its chattering atmosphere and low sound levels conducive to socialising, than she was in the introverted sub-bass conditions of drum 'n' bass. But, as became obvious during our interview, Jenny's ability to 'tune in' to disco and house was oriented by more than just intersections between personal history, genre, and spatiality. Her gender and sexual identity played a prominent role too, as did institutional conditions (third and fourth planes). As Jenny and I discussed, nights like BATB are non-profit, community-run events that explicitly oppose the corporatisation of electronic/dance music. As such, they operate outside of the heavily policed night-time economy in London, where venue managers are under increasing pressure to 'oversell' their events in order to cover the costs of soaring rents, sky-rocketing artists' fees, and extortionate security measures (ID scans, metal detectors, CCTV).¹⁰⁶ While events of this latter kind tend to be rammed out to maximum capacity, characterised by a crushing crowd proximity that inherently breeds sexual harassment and covert groping, nights like BATB, which place the crowd and their wellbeing at the centre of importance, and which have considerably lower overheads given that they are run by volunteers and DJs who do not demand high fees, are able to police the capacity of their events rigorously without losing money. The result is that BATB and other similar-minded parties—e.g. Lucky Cloud—are physically spacious, providing room for each crowd member to move and dance freely without being squashed, pushed up against another, and/or un-permissively

¹⁰⁶ Venues that reported to be under such pressure included Village Underground, Oval Space, and Fire LDN. One of the measures taken by promoters to ensure sufficient tickets are sold is participation in an Early Bird ticketing economy, where affordable tickets at £5 or less are 'oversold' online in advance of an event. This enables audience members to buy tickets to, and participate in, several 'nights' on one night, creating extremely dense crowd conditions as people move in and out of events to see their favourite DJs.

touched. For Jenny, this was a crucial component of her ability to feel safe as a queer woman in a nightclub.

Jenny's capacity to move into the DIY disco and house scene in London, but not into more mainstream techno or house nights at bigger nightclubs, was thus, in her view, powerfully mediated by spatial and material conditions (light, crowd density, space) as they intersected with gender and sexuality; in turn, these spatial and material conditions were crossed by institutional forces such as gentrification, rent, ticketing, and venue management. In short, what nights like BATB harnessed for Jenny that big events at superclubs did not was a carefully controlled ticketing policy, a subsequent lack of overcrowding, and a physically light space, making for an open dancefloor that enabled her to feel affectively attuned as a gay woman. Further, upon asking if this sense of ease and safety was perhaps also to do with the history of the disco/house scene—with roots in civil rights activism and rainbow politics—and the kinds of social groups it attracts, Jenny declined, stating that sexual harassment is prone to happen anywhere that's too crowded or dark, even at nights that purport to operate a zero tolerance policy.¹⁰⁷ She then reflected on an experience of seeing the black Chicagoan soul funk and disco DJ, Sadar Bahar, at Plastic People. Now permanently closed, Plastic People was, at this time, a much-revered basement nightclub in Shoreditch, famous for its immensely powerful sound system and near pitch-black dancefloor.¹⁰⁸ Jenny described how, at this particular soul/funk night, the darkness of the club hadn't initially bothered her. She wished it had been 'a little bit lighter in order to see people', adding 'I like to be able to see who I'm dancing with', but concluded that generally, the first half of the night was 'really positive', with lots of women in the crowd—often not the case at Plastic People—and lots of black and other ethnic minority people, too, creating a diverse space. As the night wore on,

¹⁰⁷ This is in line with my own findings: namely, that the presence of sexist behaviour in clubs is not necessarily patterned or reducible to particular styles or genres. It is 'everywhere or anywhere'.

¹⁰⁸ With the gentrification of East London during the 2000s, Plastic People went from an 'underground' establishment to a popular weekend clubbing destination, attracting young 'hipsters' and an international fanbase, as well as increasing numbers of women. As a venue, it also became less associated with dubstep and grime, which it helped incubate in the early 2000s, and more amenable to mainstream crowds after it tweaked its sound system to something less aggressive. Nonetheless, with noise complaints, licencing issues, and rapidly rising real estate, Plastic People decided to close its doors for good in 2015.

however, increasing numbers of people were admitted into the venue who Jenny felt were ‘passing trade’, and not necessarily ‘into the music’. From this point on, she reported, the vibe started to fracture. Aside from the increasingly rising temperature, Jenny commented on the sudden ‘sleaziness’ of the crowd:

Because it was very dark inside, and massively crowded, guys suddenly felt they could get away with pinching my arse. You know... And actually, the thing is, they *can* get away with it, cos it’s much harder to identify someone and call them out in those kinds of conditions (Jenny, April 2014).

As a consequence, Jenny and her friends felt compelled to leave the club prematurely, unable to bear the densely crowded atmosphere and the levels of physical disrespect that ensued.

In retrospect, I came to realise that Jenny’s story was reflected in my own field notes and experiences on multiple occasions. That is, it often did not matter who the DJ was, what values they stood for, and how politicised they envisaged their music to be; if the venue in which they were performing was a prominent nightclub with a decent footfall in a central London location, it was likely to suffer from overcrowding, incongruous differences in agenda and ethos, and therefore, often, sexual harassment. An important example of this was a night I attended at Corsica Studios in May 2014, where deep house DJ/producer Terre Thaemlitz aka DJ Sprinkles was playing an all-night set. Born in the US, Thaemlitz identifies as transgendered (MTFTMTF) and spent a large part of the 1980s and ‘90s DJing at the transsexual club Sally’s II in New York. Moving to Japan in 1997, his work as a DJ/producer and activist continues to critically engage with issues of gender, sexuality, and identity.¹⁰⁹ Specifically, she criticises the so-called deep house revival, drawing attention to the ‘forgotten’ socio-political contexts that underpinned the original 1980s deep house sound, exemplified in the vocals to the track ‘Midtown 120 Intro’ (2009):

House [music] is not universal. House is hyper-specific... The contexts from which the deep house sound emerged are forgotten: gender and sexual crises, transgendered sex work, black market hormones, drug and alcohol addiction, loneliness, racism, HIV, ACT-UP, Tomkins Square Park, police brutality, queer-

¹⁰⁹ Thaemlitz alternates between using the pronouns ‘him’ and ‘her’ to refer him/herself, which is why I do the same here.

bashing, underpayment, unemployment and censorship—all at 120 beats per minute.

Expanding on his politics in a 2014 FACT interview, Thaemlitz further emphasised that when making a new house track, she always thinks about the relationship to queer and transgendered lives in 1980s New York: ‘the whole language of the club as house, of transgendered houses... [given that] many house children were runaways, disowned, and otherwise homeless’ (Thaemlitz, 2014). For him, the most interesting facet of a music scene and the social space that grows around it is thus the refuge and ‘personal safety’ it offers for disaffected communities; the way it can, potentially, protect those communities from ‘the material realities of domination, discrimination and violence’ (ibid).

The eloquence with which Thaemlitz articulates her views, and the intensely politicised position that electronic/dance music occupies for him, made the conditions and microsocial behaviours during her set at Corsica Studios all the more contradictory. The night was, like so many during fieldwork, wildly oversold, with the queue upon arrival snaking all the way to the top of Walworth Road, even for ticketholders. When I finally got inside, it was wall-to-wall bodies and hardly possible to move, let alone dance. Attempting to squeeze through and talk to different crowd members about what had brought them to the night and how they were experiencing it, as I routinely did, I half-expected—given the public discourse surrounding DJ Sprinkles—to encounter passionate music followers who shared Sprinkles’s politics. On the contrary, however, the first man I spoke to told me (without irony) that, ‘people go clubbing to get laid. If they don’t, what else do they come here for?’ while another, mid-unravelling a wrap of cocaine, admitted he had no idea who DJ Sprinkles was and had just come to look for a partner. Later on, I observed a woman on the dancefloor bend over to pick something up, and as she did so, a man pushing his way through the crowd behind her stopped and thrust his pelvis in a fucking motion towards her. Soon after, a young woman in the smoking area told me that when her boyfriend had left the dancefloor to go the toilets, she had immediately felt a hand on her arse, and hadn’t even been able to identify whose hand it was because there were so many bodies jammed around her. ‘It’s horrible’, she reiterated, ‘it made

me feel like I was being watched ‘cos it happened as soon as I was left alone on the dancefloor’. While there were a handful of die-hard Terre Thaemlitz fans present too, with one even mimicking Thaemlitz’s distinctive long hair and glasses, this was in no way proportionate to the majority who were simply there by chance, on a night out, to get laid, high, or drunk.

What comes to the fore from both this, and Jenny’s account of seeing Sadar Bahar at Plastic People, are the incongruencies that tend to arise between, on the one hand, an artist/DJ, the music they play, their associated genres, histories, and politics, and, on the other hand, the kinds of social groups and microsocial dynamics that manifest on the dancefloor, primarily mediated by promotion, ticketing, the status and location of the venue, and spatial and material conditions. In short, there are simply no guarantees that a dancefloor at a one-off weekend DJ event will be safe and welcoming to people of different genders and sexual orientations; and this was confirmed by the recurrence of sexist and aggressively heterosexist behaviours at multiple big line-up nights during fieldwork, including an event hosted by 1-800 Dinosaur at Plastic People, where darkness and crowds were, once again, felt to assist unpermitted groping, and a Detroit house night at Autumn Street Studios, which was grossly overcapacity and rife with ‘wandering hands’, in spite of the fact that security guards surveilled the dancefloor at all times. Precisely for these reasons, Jenny only really felt able to participate in a very specific offshoot of the London electronic/dance music scene—semi-autonomous, community-based nights like BATB and Horse Meat disco—even though she admitted to liking a lot of the music and DJs who got booked to play big techno and house nights at London’s superclubs. In other words, her constricted musical affective radius seemingly had little to do with *musical* likes or dislikes, and was, instead, attributable to the unreliability of large-scale venues and promoters, whose expensive, overcrowded DJ nights could not assure any kind of ‘safe space’, but, conversely, often exacerbated gender-based vulnerability and intimidation.

Relating this to the central themes of this chapter, the case of Jenny brings to the fore how wider social differences—here, gender and sexuality—can intersect with music’s microsocial and institutional conditions to restrain or limit a person’s affective susceptibility and capacity to inhabit

particular kinds of socio-musical space (see also Overell, 2012). For Jenny, who felt this gendered affective constraint profoundly, men such as Simon (Chapter 3) complaining about the ‘twee’ conditions of Lucky Cloud with its decorations and natural light signalled a gendered privilege and a lack of awareness of the discomfort that dark, crowded spaces can induce for gendered and sexualised subjects. Indeed, judging from interviews that I conducted with men during fieldwork, in which I frequently inquired about preferred dancefloor conditions, the notion of an unconscious gendered privilege seems apt. Jack Latham and two other male interviewees—Zoran, a 36-year-old Serbian man who I met at a techno night, and Chris, a 26-year-old DJ/producer—immediately cited dark, intimate spaces as the most attractive type of dancefloor; and while this was for perfectly legitimate reasons, such as feeling self-conscious if it’s too light, wanting anonymity and a sense of privacy-in-public when dancing (‘when no one can see you, you can be yourself’), or simply wishing to withdraw from the visual stimuli that bombard one in daily life, it had not occurred to them that women and other marginal genders might find this kind of invisible dancefloor intimidating. As Latham reflected after I relayed to him the frequent gendering of ‘light’ and ‘dark’:

My requirements for a dancefloor... My ideal club space is *always* that it’s dark... It’s really dark. Just because, you know, I feel that I’m somewhere else. But I guess, yeah, obviously if it’s dark and no one can see, people can, like you say, ‘get away’ with things. And that’s just horrible... Everybody should... be able to enjoy the darkness (Jack Latham, April 2015).

A key point to emerge from this analysis, then, and one that I initially raised in Chapter 5 with respect to female ‘awayness’ in the dub-dubstep-bass continuum, is that the absence of a particular person or social group from a particular musical space may have less to do with the musical sounds and styles, and more to do with the social and spatial atmospheres in which those sounds are embedded. Jenny’s unwillingness to participate in big techno and drum ‘n’ bass nights was not a result of her disliking the genres of music; rather, it was due to the fact that such genres, in combination with London’s night-time economy and infrastructure, tended to produce aggressively ‘straight’ spaces that did not feel comfortable to her as a queer-identifying woman. Seen in this way, Jenny’s ability to move into specific nights within the disco and house scene—and thus, her participation in specific musical genres—is to a considerable extent arbitrated by those scenes and

publics into which she cannot move, and which feel closed to her because of her identity. As I go on to elaborate in the next and final case study, this brings into focus the inadequacy of a concept like ‘taste’, which implies a blanket appreciation of particular musical forms without acknowledging the different social topologies within which musical affective attachment takes place. Indeed, while certain sociological studies do distinguish between ‘live’ and ‘media’ forms of musical consumption (for instance, Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007), no focus is given in these studies to the fact that musical affinities may be fractured or split across co-present and virtual scales in highly specific ways due to social relations of hierarchy and exclusion. It is clear, then, why theorising music as an ‘assemblage’ is preferable (Born, 2005; DeLanda, 2006).

White Spaces, White Stasis: Race and Class from the Club to the Concert Hall

Afrobeats, Techno, or Disco?

I now turn to the second case study of this chapter, which moves from gender and sexuality to race and class as prominent mediators of musical affective susceptibility. As mentioned in Chapters 3-4 and 6, the disco, deep house, and techno scenes in London—including Lucky Cloud and BATB—are overwhelmingly white. At Lucky Cloud and BATB specifically, it is rare to see more than a handful of British African/Caribbean and other non-white attendees, with the only prominent ethnic minority being Japanese, owing to Mancuso’s legacy in Japan. One possible reason for this is the relative lack of historical tie between black American-originating musics, such as jazz, disco, house, and techno, and black British experience, which, owing to the specific flows of migration to the UK from countries like Nigeria and Ghana, as well as from the Caribbean, is arguably more readily understood through a hybrid British Jamaican and African musical sensibility (see Bradley, 2000; Zuberi, 2014). Historically, this is implied in the ‘whiteness’ of the UK acid house and hardcore techno movement (c.1988-92), whose US-imported aesthetics seemingly had less historical bearing on black British communities at the time than, say, dancehall, dub, or Afrobeat; and whose politics of abandon—rooted in illegal parties and drug-fuelled hedonism—was felt to be too risky for black

youth who were already criminalised as ‘illegal’ by the State (Bradley, 2010; Collin, 2010; Gilroy, 1982a). Indeed, this was one of the very conditions of jungle’s emergence in the early 1990s—a genre that flourished when London’s sound systems began to appropriate hardcore from the rave scene and put their ‘black influence’ on it, spicing it up with dancehall reggae and breakbeats (Williams, in Bradley, 2010: 342-3; Collin, 2010). Similarly, a distinction remains prevalent today between the predominantly white crowds aggregated by African American-derived genres such as disco, deep house, and techno, and the predominantly black crowds hailed by Jamaican and British African-derived musics like dub, dancehall, grime, and UK funky.¹¹⁰ Indeed, grime—a signature black British genre—is, as Collin remarks, about as ‘far removed from the beatific neo-hippie utopianism of acid house’ as one could get, its belligerent lyrics the ‘antithesis of Ecstasy music’ (Collin, 2010, np). What comes to the fore from historical accounts as well as from my own observations, then, is a process of differentiation in which black Britons have partly sought to define their identity *against* disco, house, and techno, which have come to be seen as ‘white people’s music’ in the UK, coalescing instead around black diasporic musics like dub, jungle, grime, and UK garage (ibid; cf. Straw, 1991).

During fieldwork, I talked to a number of black participants of different heritages and musical affiliations about their experiences of these diverse genres, seeking to make sense of the complexity of such apparently diverging genealogies. One in particular was Tyler, a 25-year-old black man of Nigerian origin, who I met at Players Ball, a regular rap and R&B night held in East London. The crowd at this event was almost entirely black, young, and mixed gender, and a gleeful energy permeated the dancefloor, particularly when a popular tune came on, at which point people would mosh, sing along, and jump up and down frenetically. Rae Sremmurd’s ‘No Type’ and O.T. Genesis’s ‘CoCo’ were probably the tunes greeted with the biggest hype that night. By contrast, when the DJ played a lesser known tune, this seemed to signal a moment for the crowd to take a

¹¹⁰Notably, however, genres like UK funky and grime are hybrid in their influences and draw elements of hip-hop and house into them. UK funky, which emerged in 2008-9, could even be described as a British African incarnation of house music, melding soca, tribal house, bassline, Afrobeat, grime and UK garage.

break, Snapchat a friend, or step outside for some air. It was during one such moment that I got talking to Tyler. Tyler was born in London but spent much of his childhood in Nigeria before returning to the UK permanently when he was 14. We talked about the kinds of music that he listened to and participated in:

I like my R&B, I like my hip-hop and rap... But what I'm really into at the moment is this music called Afrobeats. A lot of it's Nigerian... And there are all these new waves of it that are happening at the moment that I'm really into (Tyler, December 2014).

Probing further, I learned that 'Afrobeats' was not the same as 'Afrobeat', popularised by Fela Kuti in the 1970s, but an umbrella term for a wave of new global genres that blend Ghanaian hiplife, Nigerian jùjú and naija, R&B, hip-hop, and UK funky. 'So, you know like, D'Banj 'Oliver Twist'?' Tyler asked, to which I had to admit I didn't. 'Oh my days!' he exclaimed, before going on to list numerous other of his favourite Afrobeats artists: Wizkid, Ice Prince, P-Square—names that I now know to be precursors to the popular strain of UK Afrobeats that has emerged since 2016 with the likes of J Hus, Belly Squad, and Abra Cadabra. 'Are there any nights that happen?' I asked. 'Oh, there are *loads* of nights!' Tyler replied. And sure enough, scouring the Internet when I got home, I found dozens of nights all over East and South London advertising Afrobeats, bashment, R&B, and hip-hop at venues such as Afrikiko on the Old Kent Road and Bar a Bar in Stoke Newington.

After establishing the kinds of music that Tyler and his friends liked to go out to, I asked what he thought about certain other genres of music in an attempt to gauge the diversity of his musical affective attachments and the range of musical spaces that he traversed. When I asked if he liked dub and reggae, his response was, 'yeah, yeah, of course!' as if this was a given. Yet, moving onto things like techno and house, he was much more nuanced:

Hmm. I can see the attraction of techno... Like, I would even say that I myself listen to that kind of thing sometimes, like when I'm driving, for example. 'Cos I find the beat very calming. But I'd never, like, go out to a techno night specifically (Tyler, December 2014).

‘Why not?’ I asked, and Tyler thought for a moment, before saying that he wouldn’t have any friends there, and wouldn’t know how to dance to it. He then added: ‘It’s just not what people are into at the moment, I don’t think... Like, young people’. Given that the techno nights I attended during fieldwork were overwhelmingly young, this was revealing. Indeed, it seemed to indicate a certain separation between young people that *he* knew, the majority of whom—at this particular night, at least—were black and lower middle class, and young people who participate in techno nights, the majority of whom are white and mixed but mostly middle or upper middle class (see Chapter 4). Further, in a comparable way to Jenny, Tyler’s comments illustrated a certain disparity between the music that he listens to and likes, and the musical publics that he physically belongs to and participates in. He did not, that is, entirely reject techno, even reporting to listen to it himself when driving. Yet when it came to being part of a co-present musical public, he clearly felt no sense of connection to techno, either musically-corporeally (it’s hard to dance to), socially (none of his friends go), or culturally (it’s not what people are into). In turn, this discrepancy recalls the experiences of my black British participant Curtis, cited in Chapters 3 and 6, who I met at a dub reggae dance. As Curtis told me, he listened to ‘all sorts’ of music privately, including house, techno and ‘even Classic FM’. Yet, when it came to spending money on a night out, it had to be ‘conscious’ music; it had to be ‘relevant to [his] history’ (Chapter 3). As such, Curtis’s participation in live music revolved almost entirely around the North London dub reggae scene, even though his musical tastes were very wide-ranging.

The experiences of Tyler and Curtis, in triangulation with observational and historical analysis of electronic/dance music publics, seem to indicate an ongoing social and affective disconnection between black Londoners and musical events that revolve around disco, deep house, and techno in the UK. As both participants imply, such genres and the social spaces in which they are embedded simply do not manifest as especially historically, socially, or culturally relevant, or indeed welcoming, as spaces of belonging for black British people. Thus, while these individuals may listen to techno and house privately, it is the black diasporic subgenres pooled by Afrobeats music, as well as the persistence of Jamaican dub and its multiple offshoots (dancehall, jungle, grime), that

continue to hold most socio-cultural significance for them as participatory musics. Seen in this way, ‘whiteness’ then becomes a potentially significant factor in Jenny’s—and indeed Danny’s (Chapter 7)—ability to become enlisted in the socio-musical spaces of BATB, Lucky Cloud, and other disco and ‘psychedelic house’ nights. Indeed, while I wasn’t able to persuade any of my black interlocutors to accompany me to a Lucky Cloud event—itself potentially revealing—this was further implied in speaking to the few black people who *were* present at Lucky Cloud, most of whom, tellingly, were working as part of the security team at the event. One in particular, a young black man named Kobe, who lived in New Cross and worked as a bouncer at various nightclubs, expressed interest in both the Lucky Cloud music and party, but nonetheless felt bemused by the event as a whole. After seeing him nod to the beat and poke his head into the main room, I asked him for his thoughts:

It’s really good in there! And it looks good with the balloons and everything [...] But it’s different isn’t it. The nights I usually work at are more... More mainstream, I guess. This stuff is soulful. It’s got a good feel to it, but it sounds a bit like, ‘old man’! You know what I mean?! I don’t come across music like this at the nights I work at... Like, some of the tunes that the woman was playing earlier... They’re like originals that have been covered like two or three times! I recognised loads of them as having been remixed. Puff Daddy and Faith Evans have definitely done a cover of one the tunes I heard. It’s cool to hear the original though... ‘Cos this music, there’s still something to it, I think (Kobe, June 2014).

Resonating with Tyler’s comment that ‘it’s just not what [young] people are into at the moment’, Kobe’s description of the music as ‘old man’, and his awareness that a number of the tunes played had been remixed or sampled multiple times, supports the notion of a relative disassociation between the genres of music played at Lucky Cloud, and young, black Londoners. Indeed, while Kobe enjoyed hearing the originals of certain records and felt that there was ‘still something to [the music]’, he confirmed that he would primarily consume things like R&B, trap, and hip-hop over disco and deep house. Comparable to my account in Chapter 5 of female ‘awayness’ in dub reggae, then, there appears to remain a significant black demographic absence from disco, house, and techno nights in London that is traceable to the late 1980s when house music first took off in the

UK with nights like Shoom and Spectrum (Collin, 2010; Reynolds, 2013).¹¹¹ Moreover, this absence prevails in spite of attempts by the organisers of Lucky Cloud to draw racially mixed crowds and their general feeling of discomfort regarding the ‘whiteness’ of the parties.

With respect to the themes of the chapter, a key point to emerge from this case study is how social relations of race and ethnicity, as they intersect with music’s co-present socialities and histories, can enable and restrain a person’s affective susceptibility and capacity to inhabit particular kinds of musical assemblage. Comparing the experiences of Danny in Chapter 7 to those of Tyler, Curtis, and Kobe in this chapter, for instance, it seems likely that Danny’s openness towards the live spaces of disco and deep house was partly contingent upon his ‘whiteness’, even if the ‘turning point’ he experienced also overturned a prior classed and gendered musical prejudice. It is in this sense, then, that processes of musical affective emergence, while confounding and even transforming certain social relations, can simultaneously reproduce others. Indeed, the Lucky Cloud parties as a whole are illustrative of this, drawing together and ‘affectively anchoring’ unique social formations with regard to sexuality, class, age, nationality, and gender, yet excluding or deterring black and minority ethnic audience members, in spite of organisational efforts to the contrary—an indication, in this assemblage at least, that racialised social boundaries are less labile than other social boundaries. Taken together, these examples thus illustrate the importance of engaging in comparative ethnographic and historical work, without which the absences and antipathies that define the edges of a musical public cannot be grasped. Indeed, only in undertaking such work—talking to those who were absent from a musical space as well as those who were present—was it possible to see that moments of musical affective susceptibility such as Danny’s, which initially appeared to reflect radical change and invention, also signalled a certain closure, by dint of those for whom such shifts were impossible or unavailable.

¹¹¹ The exception are UK House nights taking place at venues like Egg LDN and Warehouse LDN (now closed). UK House has become popular since c. 2010 and is seen as a more ‘commercial’ strain of house, revolving around DJs such as David Zowie and the ‘donk’ house sound. ‘Shuffling’ (a form of dancing) is a hallmark of UK House crowds, and the demographic tends to be young, mixed race, mixed gender, and working class. This is in contrast to the supposedly more ‘underground’ deep house scene, which revolves around different venues and draws largely white, middle-class crowds.

A secondary point to emphasise from this case study is the irreducibility of Born's first and second planes—music's co-present publics, on the one hand, and 'musically imagined communities', on the other. For both Tyler and Curtis—as, indeed, for Jenny earlier—it was not so much the musical genre or its aesthetics that prevented them from participating in certain kinds of musical event, but other mediating factors: corporeal detachment and non-danceability; alienation from the social and cultural codes of the live music; and/or an overriding sense of attachment and historical and political commitment to other kinds of black-originating music. This last point, in particular, seemed important for my black interlocutors, with Curtis emphasising the necessity of taking part in music that was 'relevant to [his] history' and Tyler expressing a deep sense of connection to Nigerian-influenced afrobeats. In turn, this speaks to the arguments presented in Chapter 6 regarding Gilroy's concept of 'anti-anti-essentialism': the historical and political processes of black British 'home-making' associated with dub reggae and its offshoots, the routing and re-routing of these spaces through time, and the profound affective identifications that black Britons continue to feel towards such spaces as safe havens—spaces of belonging, community, and social strength (Gilroy, 1993). Once again, then, these listening-participation discrepancies point to the insufficiency of 'taste' as a concept. In particular, the case studies challenge Bourdieusian taste literatures that do not differentiate between different social and spatial forms of musical consumption, and moreover, do not acknowledge that it is often the atmospheres, spaces, online-offline networks, and modes of publicity—rather than the music itself—that act as primary deterrents of particular kinds of audience (Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Prieur & Savage, 2013; Savage & Gayo, 2011). Below, I explore this latter point in more detail.

Uneven Crossovers: Stability and Lability Across Racial Divides

I initially touched upon the importance of music's spatialities and atmospheres in attracting or deterring particular audiences in my discussion of the global explosion of dubstep in the mid-2000s (Chapter 5). As the dubstep scene crossed over to mainstream and migrated to new, less

‘underground’ venues, dubstep nights became more accessible to women and white middle-class groups, who flooded into the genre. In this way, women were revealed to like, and have a desire to participate in, dubstep, dispelling the presumption that the absence of a particular social group from a particular musical scene is attributable to a lack of interest in or dislike for the music. Similar processes have also taken place in dub reggae, whereby changes to the spaces, sites, and promotional strategies of the assemblage have altered musical identity formations in significant ways. Jah Shaka is a key example here. As Dale recalled in Chapter 7, and as other interlocutors confirmed, Shaka dances in the 1970s and ‘80s were very different from what they are now. Crowds were almost uniformly black and male—much like the sound system events that take place at Caribbean cultural centres today—and events were not particularly accessible to white people. Yet, during the 1990s, this changed in a fundamental way. As one of the founders of Dubwise Records relayed to me, around 1992, the Black Arts administration service Culture Promotions took over Shaka’s management and started promoting to a wider audience. Booking Shaka gigs at venues such as the Rocket on Holloway Road, which was popular with students, as well as the Dome in Tufnell Park—both of which were designated music venues rather than African Caribbean cultural centres—had the effect of significantly diversifying Shaka’s crowds, bringing in a considerable white middle-class following, as well as many more women. Gradually becoming a staple of Shaka dances, this social heterogeneity demonstrates the power of promotion, venue, and location to transform audience demographics in certain musical assemblages.

Yet, as I wish to show in the next and final sub-section, there appears to be a racial dimension to these processes. White, middle-class audiences are drawn into black-originating or multi-racial genres such as dub and dubstep with the changes in venue, promotion, and publicity, while the reverse scenario—the drawing of black audiences into historically white musical spaces—appears much harder to achieve, regardless of the changes made to space, programming, and promotion. This is clear from the conscious attempts by the Lucky Cloud collective to draw racially diverse audiences, holding their events in a local community centre and asking regulars to promote the party to their ‘black friends’—strategies that don’t appear to have much effect, as the ‘whiteness’

of the crowd and disaffiliating experiences of my black interlocutors demonstrate. But perhaps the most profound example of these dynamics is seen in the unsuccessful attempts by classical music initiatives to transform the social demographics of audiences through changes in venue, repertoire, and programming (Chapter 4). Indeed, of all of my white-dominated field sites, it is classical music that appears the most resistant to change in the sense that deliberate alterations to the assemblage have very little impact in terms of drawing black, ethnic minority, and working-class audience members. In the final section that follows, I develop the insights put forward in Chapter 4 by citing the experiences of some of my black British participants, who reported to enjoy and feel affectively connected to classical music, but who found the idea of moving into classical music's co-present performance spaces bizarre and even humorous. In turn, these insights suggest that, across musical assemblages that are historically white, promotional efforts to draw racially diverse audiences are relatively ineffectual, overridden by social and cultural identifications and/or alienations and black audience members' commitments to black Atlantic musics (cf. Gilroy, 1993).

Out of the Concert Hall and into the White Cube

Numerous times during fieldwork, participants from diverse field sites described how relaxing and enjoyable they found classical music to listen to, particularly at home or on the radio while working or falling asleep. Curtis, mentioned earlier, was one such participant, explaining mid-spliff at a dub night in Tottenham how he listened to Classic FM and 'Sarah Brightman singing *Phantom of the Opera*' when he went to sleep at night. 'I'm serious!' he reiterated, smiling, as if he expected me not to believe him. Another was a British Jamaican man in his late 40s called Mikey who I met at a sound system event at Bar a Bar in Stoke Newington. Mikey similarly told me that on his way home after a long shift working as a minicab driver, he tunes his radio to 'one of the classical stations' as a way to 'wind down'. In particular, he liked 'orchestral music' with lots of strings and lamented the fact that he'd never had an opportunity to learn the violin. Upon asking these participants if they ever attended classical concerts, however, my suggestion seemed almost laughable. Curtis, as mentioned previously, emphasised that the music he pays money to hear has

to be ‘conscious’ music—meaning music imbued with political, historical, and often spiritual awareness. Meanwhile, Mikey burst out laughing and told me jokingly I should be a comedian, before saying, ‘no but really, can you imagine it... Me there with all those posh people in that posh setting?’ Once again, it appeared that in spite of liking classical music and listening to it privately, it did not feel possible or desirable for these participants to move into the social and cultural spaces in which classical music is embedded due to the alien nature of those spaces.

It is important to recognise that these participants’ attraction to classical music via Classic FM and classical radio, and particularly their use of classical music as a resource for relaxation, supports recent sociological accounts of the changing nature of classical music and the emergence of a ‘light’ or ‘crossover’ classical genre (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Savage & Gayo, 2011). Mike Savage and Modesto Gayo found in their study of musical taste in the UK that there existed a clear distinction between, on the one hand, those who liked classical music as a form of ‘easy listening’, and who included mainstream popular artists such as Frank Sinatra and Michael Ball under the ‘classical music’ rubric, and, on the other hand, those who defined classical music in terms of its difficulty and ‘energy’, who favoured contemporary classical composers, and who were critical of the ‘chocolate box’ music of Classic FM (Savage & Gayo, 2011: 342, 350-1). The former, defined as ‘classical music enthusiasts’, were found to be the most common type of classical music consumer, accessing the music through compilation CDs and easy-listening radio, and positioned within a lower social class category; while the latter, defined as discerning middle-class musical ‘experts’, were in the minority, consuming classical music at concerts and on Radio 3, and relishing its ‘purist’ qualities (ibid: 352; Bennett et al., 2009). The important finding of these authors, then, was that ‘a liking for classical music can be associated with different positions in the [musical] field’, and that ‘[r]ather than people changing their musical taste and ranging across more musical genres’, which is what the omnivore thesis argues, ‘we are seeing the reworking of the boundaries of musical genres themselves’ (ibid: 353; see also Born, 2010c: 85).

This research is supported by Freya Jarman (2013), who argues that the emergence of Classic FM in 1992 was part of a wider project to popularise elite culture. In addition to adopting marketing strategies from popular music and broadcasting film music and crossover repertoire, Jarman points out that Classic FM has also always been committed to distributing classical music according to a ‘logic of affect’ (Jarman, 2013: 184, 198). This is evident, she argues, in the multiple slots dedicated to ‘relaxation’, as well as the compilation CDs released on the Classic FM label, which have titles such as ‘Smooth Classics for Rough Days’ and ‘Relax and Escape’ (ibid: 198). The move to popularise classical music through the reification and commodification of its affective capacities, then, stands in contrast to the suppression and internalisation of affect in the concert hall, and the enforced bourgeois code of silence and propriety that appears so resistant to change among classical music audiences (Chapter 4). It is therefore unsurprising that a considerable divide persists between those who attend concerts and favour the intellectualism of Radio 3, with its focus on ‘attentive listening’, and those who are part of the so-called ‘Classic FM effect’ who experience classical music as ‘powerfully somatic’ (Born, 2010c: 85). Aligning with Savage and Gayo, Jarman’s suggestion is thus that the function and value of classical music is undergoing fundamental transformation, and that this is ‘forcing us to reconsider the very status of classical music in contemporary culture’ (Jarman, 2013: 190, 202).

The affective affiliation that Curtis and Mikey reported to feel towards classical music—as a device for relaxation consumed via the radio—epitomises the shifting boundaries of classical music described in these accounts. Curtis’s inclusion of Sarah Brightman in his discussion of classical music parallels Savage and Gayo’s (2011) participant who cited Michael Ball as an example of a classical music artist, while Mikey and Curtis’s identification with classical music’s relaxing qualities and amenability to ‘winding down’ affirms Jarman’s (2013) diagnosis of classical music’s distribution via a logic of affect. But beyond exemplifying the propagation of classical music across the social field, along with different ways of relating to it, the experiences of Curtis and Mikey also point towards a very clear demarcation between classical music as a listening experience, and classical music as a concert-going activity or musical culture. Indeed, while their discovery and

enjoyment of (particular kinds of) classical music via the emergence of the ‘light classical’ genre could in some ways be seen to indicate a potential shift or ‘opening’ into a new ‘affective alliance’—possibly even in a manner similar to the ‘turning points’ experienced by Danny and Dale in Chapter 7—the strong sense of detachment and exclusion that they continue to feel towards live classical concerts, seeing such events as historically and culturally extraneous as well as uncomfortably ‘posh’, immediately inhibits this shift. What emerges instead is a fracture or split, in which the pleasures derived from classical music remain firmly confined to the second plane—the ‘musically imagined community’—while musical events participated in ‘live’ consist of British Jamaican and African-derived genres.

Such a sharp discrepancy between virtual and co-present modes of classical music consumption suggests that the absence of black and/or working-class audience members from classical concerts may have more to do with classical music’s performance spaces and microsocialities (Born’s first plane), than with an explicit distaste for the music itself (second plane). The scenario is similar, in other words, to the women cited in Chapter 5 who expressed an attraction towards dubstep and dub reggae but admitted that they wouldn’t participate in the live events due to the discomfort surrounding those musical spaces. Yet, unlike the examples of dubstep and dub reggae, where shifts in venue, infrastructure, and publicity have proven to be effective ways of altering the social demographic of audiences, changes to the spaces, architectures, and promotional strategies of classical music seemingly do little to transform the social make-up of concert publics. As detailed in Chapter 4, new classical music initiatives such as Nonclassical and the London Contemporary Music Festival (LCMF) encounter considerable resistance to change in their attempts to rework the boundaries of classical music for a 21st century audience. Indeed, rather than relaxing the formal atmospheres of the concert hall and engaging with broader, more socially diverse audiences, such initiatives continue to draw publics that are white, middle class, and educated, while engendering microsocial atmospheres that more or less reproduce the policed environment of the auditorium. Together with the sense of disconnection that my black working-class participants reported to feel towards classical concerts, these findings confirm the intractability of the classical music

assemblage, which, after occupying a position of cultural hegemony for two and a half centuries, has seemingly attained a certain closure over the long term—what Born refers to as a ‘mobile stasis’ (Born, 2005: 15).



Figure 27: The London Contemporary Music Festival at Second Home, Shoreditch.

I would argue, however, that these findings are complicated by the fact that the changes implemented to classical music by new music initiatives are very narrowly conceived—in some cases, barely changes at all. It is questionable, for instance, why, in transporting classical music out of the concert hall and into ‘alternative’ urban spaces in an attempt to engage new audiences, new music projects still choose to occupy arts-associated venues that are saturated with middle-class signifiers. Venues such as Limewharf in Hackney, where the London Contemporary Orchestra (LCO) held a residency during my fieldwork, as well as Café Oto in Dalston, home to the classical concert series Kammer Klang (est. 2008), are both effectively ‘white cube’ spaces: clean and stark, with minimal decoration and furniture, like an art gallery, or with the odd bare brick wall to give an urban warehouse feel. Moreover, at both venues, an expensive bar selling truffle oil flavoured

crisps, pumpkin seed and cranberry Florentines, and organic craft beer gives a striking indication of the targeted clientele—namely, the implicitly white upper-middle-classes. In spite of the transformative intentions of new classical music curators, then, the venues in which they choose to host their events work in an opposing direction, with a politics of exclusion inscribed in the very materials, products, and designs of the spaces themselves (cf. Winner, 1980; Wajcman, 1991). Indeed, venues like Limewharf, along with other ‘pop-up’ cultural ‘labs’ in Hackney, Peckham, and Bow, are widely seen to have contributed to the rapid gentrification of formerly deprived areas of East and South London, generating a surge in property prices that forces the displacement of local businesses and residents. In choosing to patronise such venues, new classical music initiatives actually implicate themselves in a larger-scale process of neoliberal regeneration and cultural exclusion. As my interviewee Chris put it, with reference to the now infamous Peckham car park: ‘that’s not engaging with the community... That’s *replacing* the community’.



Figure 28: Antoine Francoise performing at Limewharf, Hackney.



Figure 29: Project Instrumental finishing a performance at Limewharf, Hackney.

A further contention revealed by my classical music fieldwork was the lack of promotion that new initiatives engaged in with regard to making their events visible to diverse audiences. Interviewing one of the founders of a leading new orchestra, I asked how events were advertised and which groups in particular they sought to promote to. The co-founder, a conservatoire graduate, who had told me earlier in the interview that the orchestra began as an attempt to ‘pull in a new audience and really programme new music in a different way’, responded that PR didn’t require much attention:

I just think if you put on really bold programmes in a bold setting, the PR takes care of itself. So, if you do something in an underground [train] station, it will bring young people out of the woodwork who wouldn’t usually come, just out of interest for the space. And then our programming also helps... So, if we’re working with somebody like Jonny Greenwood... People are like ‘oh, Jonny Greenwood, Radiohead, Radiohead!’ And then everybody comes to the concert and then they hear pieces by Messiaen and Xenakis too. And then they go away raving about Messiaen and come to one of our shows in the future. So, PR isn’t something that we really have to think about too much (Luke, August 2014).

What struck me about this exchange was the evident divergence between my interlocutor and me over what a ‘new audience’ for classical music could or should constitute. While I imagined ‘new’

to mean different from the white, middle-class, educated publics drawn by classical music for the last two centuries, for my interviewee, the word ‘new’ appeared simply to denote younger, and perhaps more into indie or film music. As he reiterated later in the interview, collaborations with Goldfrapp and Actress had also brought ‘a number of new audience members’ to concerts, by which he meant young people who were from a range of creative and (non-musical) artistic backgrounds, but who were still largely white and middle class. It appeared, in short, that this orchestral initiative was primarily interested in changing classical music in a way that counteracted the long-standing problem of the ageing of classical music audiences, rather than addressing deeper histories of inequality, cultural exclusion, and monocultural elitism relating to race and class.

A similarly narrow approach to public engagement was evident among the re:sound collective, a smaller curatorial project founded by a group of Royal College of Music and Guildhall graduates, which also seeks to promote classical music to ‘broader audiences’.¹¹² Asking one of the co-founders about promotion, I learned that very little local advertising had been done for the event I attended—an evening of ‘immersive sounds, performative listening, and delicious negronis’ in a WWII air-raid shelter in Dalston. Probed further as to why this was so, my interlocutor responded:

Well, I wouldn’t really know where to flyer apart from, I guess, the Royal College [of Music] and then maybe round here [Dalston]... Café Oto and places. I think mainly we’re just interested in [drawing] a younger crowd... You know, luring them in with spooky spaces, a bar, and cocktails (Stephen, August 2014).

Again, what comes to the fore from this is the limited nature of new music initiatives’ attempts to shift the socio-cultural platforms through which classical music is consumed, with a clear emphasis on younger age as the primary mode of address, as opposed to race or class. Given the apparent obliviousness of my interviewees as to the problematics of this, however, these findings do not, in my view, reflect a deliberate attempt to exclude and marginalise racialised and classed ‘others’. Rather, their strategies appear to speak more to the so-called ‘crisis of classical music’ (Freeman, 2014): the decline in classical music’s audiences, the subsequent threat to orchestral funding, and

¹¹² See <https://www.facebook.com/resoundcollective>.

the resultant lack of employment opportunities for classical musicians. As one orchestral player emphasised to me during fieldwork, the move to new performance spaces is important mainly because it gives the impression to funding bodies that alternatives are being sought, as well as achieving the key goal of boosting audience numbers.¹¹³ Among new orchestras and collectives like re:sound, then, the race and class diversity of classical music publics is seemingly a secondary priority to the simple need to secure classical music's future by keeping it alive and well among its normative white middle-class audiences.

The key point, here, is not to suggest that different kinds of venue, performance space, and publicity engagement would necessarily transform classical music. On the contrary, my sense was that even if word about LCMF or the LCO were to reach beyond a white, middle-class, musically competent audience-hood, the historical and social associations between classical music and 'posh white people', and the historical-political commitment and sense of belonging that my black participants felt towards black-originating musics, would remain so powerful that these socio-cultural identifications would override any publicity effort. Nonetheless, it is also true that we do not really know the extent of the changes that could or might take place if the venues and spaces of classical music actually opened up and shifted away from gentrifying artistic 'hubs', or if advertising for such events actually reached beyond the institutions of classical and experimental music. The situation currently, in other words, is not open, and genuine attempts to engage with audiences beyond classical music's normative publics are not ongoing in the manner that new classical music initiatives imply. This could therefore be a contributing factor to the continuing absence of black, working-class groups from classical music's performance socialities, and the extreme resistance to change of the classical music assemblage generally, compared with other genres.

¹¹³ This is supported by press reviews, which laud collectives like LCO for their 'sell-out crowds' and for 'nurturing new audiences'. See <https://www.lcorchestra.co.uk/about/>.



Figure 30: Re:sound at ‘The Bunker’, WWII air-raid shelter, Dalston.

Bourdieu, Omnivorousness, and the Musical Assemblage

To summarise, the experiences of Tyler, Curtis, Kobe, and Mikey illustrate how a potential ‘openness’ to new socio-musical spheres cannot always be fully ‘inhabited’ due to the alienating and/or historically and culturally irrelevant nature of the raced and classed spaces in which the live music is embedded. In many ways, then, this chapter develops the concept of ‘awayness’ traced in Chapter 5, demonstrating how musical affective antipathies and incongruencies—here, rooted in the ‘routing’ of middle-class ‘whiteness’—can endure through time, leading to the reproduction of racial and class boundaries in the musical field. Further, by focusing on the experiences of those who are absent from musical events, as well as those present, it becomes possible to see why, for historically oppressed and/or racially subjugated groups, it may be important to resist incorporation into historically white musical milieus, and to coalesce instead around politically and culturally significant, black-originating genres like dub, afrobeats, and grime (Gilroy, 1993; Straw, 1991; see

also Chapter 6). Indeed, it is partially because of such relational (dis)affiliating processes that the intense insularity and stasis of classical music persists; although, as I have noted, mediations such as promotion and curation, and the occupation of gentrifying arts-associated venues, could also be contributing factors.

In turn, these insights develop the sociological literature on musical taste in three ways. First, the disparity delineated by my participants between musical attachments and likes, and musical belonging and co-presence, points to the need to theorise music as an ‘assemblage’ (Born, 2005). While Tak Wing Chan and John Goldthorpe’s (2007) distinction between ‘live’ and ‘media’ forms of musical consumption is useful, their analysis does not go far enough in accounting for why this distinction matters, and how an inability to cross the ‘live’ music threshold is often the consequence of social relations of hierarchy and alienation relating to the music’s cultural spaces, venues, and atmospheres, rather than to the music itself. This relates, in turn, to the second way in which my case studies develop this literature, which is by dispelling the notion that the ‘omnivore-listener’ (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007), or indeed, the discerning musical ‘expert’ or ‘eclectic’ musical consumer (Prieur & Savage, 2013; Savage & Gayo, 2011), necessarily belongs to a high status, middle-class, or culturally elite social location. On the contrary, as the cases of Jenny, Tyler, Curtis, and Mikey illustrate, wide-ranging musical tastes, a discerning adoption of ‘other’ musical cultures—for instance, using classical music for work or sleep purposes—and a penchant for ‘eclecticism’ are qualities that are prevalent among those with lower amounts of social, cultural, and economic capital too. The difference is that rather than participating in a diverse range of live music events alongside these heterogeneous tastes, as studies of the middle-class ‘omnivore’ indicate, for my queer-identifying, female, black and/or working-class participants, certain spheres of live music were perceived to be ‘no-go’ zones as a partial consequence of their wider social identities in combination with music’s multiple other mediations.

Linked to this, the third and final way that these case studies develop the Bourdieusian literature is in their raising of the question of whether an ability to traverse diverse co-present musical spaces is

a classed, gendered, raced, or other socially mediated resource. Here, three comparisons across the thesis as a whole point towards possible answers. First, Jenny's affective disconnection from large-scale DJ events, due to the discomfort that dark, crowded spaces induced for her as a queer-identifying woman, and thus her participation in very specific DIY disco and house nights, not only reflects a gendered affective constraint on her part, but also casts a particular privileged light upon Simon's contemptuous attitude towards Lucky Cloud in Chapter 3. Indeed, for Jenny, straight, white men who seek dark, anti-social dancefloors, and who complain about the 'twee' conditions of fancifully decorated disco nights, only reveal their male privilege, in the sense that—unlike marginal genders and sexualised subjects—they are positioned in a way that allows them to be discerning about their preferred dancefloor qualities. In this respect, gender and sexuality become important mediators of the capacity to appropriate and attune to a range of musical cultures in a flexible and discriminating manner (Bennett et al., 2009; Overell, 2012). Second, when held up next to the experiences of my black participants, Jenny's—as well as Danny's (Chapter 7)—unproblematic ability to act upon a musical 'revelation' and move into the co-present spaces of disco and deep house seems at least partially contingent upon her/their 'whiteness'. Indeed, Jenny and Danny's epiphanic experiences of disco and 'psychedelic house' and the immediate socio-musical shifts that they were able to enact, compared to Tyler, Curtis, and Kobe's detached and bemused relationship to the same musical-cultural spaces, in spite of finding the music pleasurable, indicate that racial boundaries within this musical assemblage are, for the time being, fairly immutable. Together with the classical music case studies, this suggests that racial difference, and the collective cultural and political histories that lie behind it, can mediate the directions and degrees in and to which people are able to become musically and affectively open, such that musical affective susceptibility can at times appear racially marked. This is further supported by the fact that, of all those interviewed during fieldwork, it was the stories of two white men—Danny and Dale—that best captured the experience of a 'turning point' or radical moment of change.

Lastly, the findings in this chapter in conjunction with Chapters 4-6 suggest that racial and class boundaries generally are less labile than other social boundaries where music's live performance

socialities are concerned. For instance, while changes have started to occur in electronic/dance music and dub reggae with regard to gender and sexuality (Chapter 5), and while class, nationality, and age diversity was prevalent across numerous of my field sites, notably Lucky Cloud and dub reggae (Chapter 6), racial segregation remained a striking feature of both these, and the classical music and techno publics discussed in Chapter 4. More specifically, I would argue that it is across historically white or white-articulated musical assemblages that racial boundaries appear to be most intractable. This is evident from the way in which white middle-class audiences have coalesced around black-originating and multi-racial genres like dub, dubstep, and more recently, grime, at moments when these genres have crossed over to mainstream or changed their promotional strategies and venues; while, conversely, black audiences have not been able or do not wish to move into historically white genres, as seen from the static ‘whiteness’ of classical music and the difficulty Lucky Cloud have in drawing racially diverse crowds, regardless of changes made to the assemblage. Certain musical public spheres thus appear much more resistant to change than others, and these dynamics are seemingly racialised.

Developing sociological literature around the ‘omnivore’ thesis, which argues that high amounts of social, economic, and cultural capital are positively correlated with an ‘openness’ to heterogeneous cultural experiences, these findings indicate that ‘omnivorosity’ does appear to apply at the level of musical practice and performance (Born’s first plane), with differences manifesting among my subjects along lines of class, race, gender, and sexuality in terms of their capacities for musical diversity and affective susceptibility. However, given that these differences are not replicated at the level of the ‘musically imagined community’ (second plane), with wide-ranging and eclectic musical tastes prevalent among those with low as well as high composite capitals, I would argue that part of the reason for this apparent ‘omnivorosity’ has to do with the ways in which social boundaries—particularly those of (higher) class and race (whiteness)—are being subconsciously recreated by assemblages like Lucky Cloud and classical music, even as claims are made for trying to transform them. This, in turn, brings focus to the ongoing production of boundaries and the multiple ‘extra-musical’ mediations that constitute music in its live forms (spaces, atmospheres,

technologies)—mediations that, in acting as the primary deterrents to certain individuals and social groups, might also become sites for experimenting with social transformation and change.

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter point overwhelmingly towards the continuing importance of Bourdieu's (1984) insight: namely, that music and sound can embody social differences over time; that musical tastes and attachments may subsequently be split by antagonisms and divisions that reproduce wider social identity formations (gender, sexuality, race, class, age); and that these antipathies and disconnections can be intensely abiding (Born, 1995; Bennett et al., 2009). Specifically, my fieldwork suggests that while moments of affectively-fuelled change and invention are possible via music and sound—even in ways that confound and transform pre-existing social, historical, and institutional relations (Chapter 7)—they are seemingly more possible for some than others; and they also appear to occur in relation to particular social boundaries (gender, sexuality, age) more than others (race, class). This points to a key divergence from Deleuzian and non-representational affect theories, which want to see the body as radically open—as potentially unbounded by subjectivity and social identity via the force of 'pre-personal' affect—and which therefore do not acknowledge the different degrees and curves of affective susceptibility and impressionability that different people may experience precisely as a result of their subjectivity and social identity, as well as their positioning in culture and history.

In the broader terms of this thesis, this suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's 'plane of immanence'—the plane of the 'virtual', the haptic, the pre-personal, and affective, where social identifications are renounced and singularities prevail over individualities—cannot be brought into actuality in our current historical conjuncture in the way that Deleuzian affect theorists like Massumi believe it can. To successfully actualise this plane would require a radically different empirical world to the one in which we are currently living—one that is not currently within our grasp. The point, then, as Grossberg puts it, is 'not to make reality into a rhizome' (Grossberg, 2014: 18). Simply imposing

the concept of ‘pre-personal’ affect into the world through laboratory experiments and speculative politics does not achieve anything: we come no closer to understanding how long-standing forms of social reproduction, stasis, and segregation operate, why they endure, and how they might be transformed. Rather, to the extent that the speculative imagining of alternative ‘virtual’ worlds remains important for any political project that hopes for change, it remains crucial to put these worlds to the test empirically: to analyse the current configurations of the actual and understand the processes by which the actual is actualised (ibid: 17). ‘A better understanding of the present is the condition of possibility for better [political] imagination... Imagination involves empirical labour’ (Grossberg, 2010: 322). This is why, throughout the thesis, I have taken on the task of illustrating the workings of musical and sonic affect across a range of complex empirical contexts. My findings suggest that while affect may not potentialise the kind of deterritorialising politics that Deleuzians hope for, it still potentialises a politics. This I delineate in the final chapter, the Conclusion to this thesis.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: ‘To Bring into Existence and Not to Judge’

One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself.

Deleuze & Guattari (2003: 311)

I noted in Chapter 1 that this thesis has (at least) two layers. In pursuing a post-positivist empiricism (Born, 2010a; Deleuze, 1995a), I have put theory and ethnography into dialogue with each other, tracing the concept of affect across a range of empirical musical contexts and becoming open to the deviations that the meeting of concept and world produce. In so doing, I have both elicited new affect-oriented ways of understanding music’s social formations and publics; and made numerous conceptual interventions into existing theories of affect. The most important contribution of the thesis is that it provides a rich ethnographic analysis of the workings of musical and sonic affect—its social and temporal mediations, its individuating and collectivising capacities, its centrality to the creation of musical and sonic publics, and its ability to mediate social stratifications and forms of power. On this basis, the thesis builds a new conceptual framework to address the complexities of musical and sonic affect. Further, I have developed this framework across a range of field sites and genres, bringing together insights from classical music, sound art, dub reggae and electronic/dance music, and drawing out both differences and comparisons between them. Indeed, without comparative ethnography, it is hard to see how insights into the ‘awayness’ of women from the dub-dubstep continuum or of my black participants from classical concerts and techno clubs, or the intractability of certain musical assemblages and social boundaries compared to the lability of others, could have been made. I have demonstrated the importance of theorising musical and sonic experience as arising out of an ‘assemblage’ of mediations (Born, 2010c); and I have advanced several secondary themes, including genre theory and related questions of creativity and ‘addressivity’ (Chapters 4-7), music and community (Chapter 6), theories of temporality and the aesthetic (Chapter 7), and musical taste and social class (Chapter 8). To conclude the thesis, I will

summarise the key conceptual and thematic contributions of each chapter, while also suggesting possible new directions with regard to thinking about the politics of music and sound. I suggest that music and sound's affective power potentialises three kinds of politics oriented around the following logics: antagonism-agonism; community-collaboration; and emergence-divergence.

Towards a Politics of Affect

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 were bound together by their shared attention to what I call, after Ahmed (2004), musical affective 'stickiness'. They all dealt, that is, with how musical affect can be a fixing mechanism, working to 'stick' people to particular musical assemblages in ways that are resistant to change and that entrench wider social divisions and differences.

Chapter 3 focused on such processes in relation to three individuals, describing their encounters with musical and sonic situations with which they were unfamiliar: dub reggae for Jan, disco and house for Simon, and sound art for Sally Anne. The chapter demonstrated how, when invited into these assemblages, these participants experienced a bodily obstinacy and sense of resistance that prevented them from attuning to the particular sonic social situation in the way that they desired. Further, I showed how the affective experiences of these individuals were oriented by multiple mediations—for Jan, a personal and cultural detachment from the aesthetic techniques and social atmospheres of dub reggae; for Simon, a classed and gendered affective bias against house and disco as cheesy, 'townie', and tacky; and for Sally Anne, an unfamiliarity with sound art as a genre that was escalated by the spatialities of the assemblage. In each case, the particular constellation of mediations converged to *affirm* or *entrench* a prior social identity or difference in a manner analogous to Ahmed's (2004) concept of 'stickiness' or Hirschkind's (2006) notion of 'somatically learned' ideologies, but notably, different to Massumi's (2002, 2015) homogenising concept of embodied habit (which returned more fully in Chapter 6). On this basis, I suggested the need for a theory of musical affect that could incorporate the multiple intersecting planes of music's social mediation (Born, 2011, 2012).

Chapters 4 and 5 developed these ideas by demonstrating how musical affective ‘stickiness’ can manifest collectively, historically, and across generations, as well as individually, working to reproduce and refract socio-musical formations over time. Focusing on the creative practices of DJs, artists, and curators who, at the time of fieldwork, were experimenting with introducing elements of novelty into their musical spheres, the case studies in Chapter 4—a techno club night featuring Juan Atkins and a Nonclassical event—demonstrated the collective corporeal resistance with which such attempts to stimulate change were met, while also tracing the historical resonances of such situations. Chapter 4 thus focused primarily on theorising ‘public feelings’ and collective forms of ‘stickiness’ as they manifested at particular musical events. Meanwhile, Chapter 5 turned in depth to questions of affect and temporality, examining how particular kinds of affect can prevail and endure across certain genre lineages over time. In particular, Chapter 5 drew upon Ahmed’s (2010) concept of ‘awayness’ to articulate the enduring absence and affective disaffiliation of women from the dub-dubstep-bass music continuum, and coalescence instead around genres with feminised political and cultural histories. In this way, the chapter addressed musical affective ‘stickiness’ as a collective (dis)connection or generational embodied attachment to the past (Bell, 2007; Blackman, 2012). In turn, this brought Gilroy’s (1993) ‘anti-anti-essentialism’ into focus, a concept that alludes to how felt attachments and conventions pertaining to race and diaspora—or, as I argue, gender as it intersects with race—can be ‘routed’ through music to create spaces of sanctuary, autonomy, and political solidarity, and a concept that again returned in Chapter 6.

Regarding the thesis as a whole, these three chapters (3-5) perform a double conceptual function. First, they contribute to a conceptualisation of musical affect that takes the social, cultural, and historical as central, drawing primarily on Born’s (2011, 2012) theory of music’s social mediation as well as Ahmed’s (2004, 2010) Bourdieu-influenced concepts of ‘stickiness’ and ‘awayness’, which capture music’s ability to embody social differences over time, leading to affective orientations of distance and proximity. Second, the chapters advocate a theory of musical and sonic affect imbued with a deeper understanding of time and the temporal, via both Gilroy’s (1993) ‘anti-

anti-essentialism’ and feminist and post-colonial theorists who have attended to the intergenerational transmission of affect via notions of ‘haunting’ and embodied ‘inheritance’ (Ahmed, 2004; Blackman, 2012; Gordon, 1997). Chapters 3-5 thus act as a rejoinder to Deleuzian and non-representational theories of affect, which, in their will to see affect as autonomous and ‘pre-personal’, do not attend well to the social or temporal.

A further contribution of Chapters 4 and 5 is their bringing of both affect theory and the thesis as a whole into dialogue with genre theory via an analysis of the relations between aesthetic change and social change. Chapter 4 drew upon the aesthetic experiments of new classical music initiatives—specifically, Nonclassical—noting the difficulty that such initiatives seem to have in transforming the atmospheres and publics of classical music in the ways they envisage, and arguing that this should be understood in terms of the affective obstinacy of classical music audiences. Chapter 4 thus demonstrated how historically ingrained musical affective attachments, when experienced collectively, can *frustrate* the achievement of an envisioned, novel musical public. In turn, this brought Bakhtin’s (1986) notion of ‘addressivity’ to the fore—his idea that, in speech or public address, there is an ‘addressor’ and an ‘addressee’, and that the relationship between the two is historically contingent. Specifically, Chapter 4 developed the uptake of Bakhtin’s work by Brackett (2005, 2016) and Born (2011), who show that, in music, there may be a significant difference or asymmetry between the audience that is ‘addressed’ and the audience that is ‘achieved’.

By contrast, Chapter 5 showed how an ‘addressed’ musical public can also be *achieved* in reality, again on the basis of pre-existing musical affective attachments. This was illustrated via an account of dubstep in the early 2000s, whose cultural producers mobilised particular socially and historically imbued aesthetic gestures as a means of consciously ‘addressing’ an ‘underground’ male-gendered social formation to their music, and were successful in assembling this formation. Complexifying these issues, the chapter also showed how such modes of ‘addressivity’ can be *incidental* rather than attempted, exemplified by post-dubstep producers who found themselves reproducing the male-centred audience-hood of dubstep due to their subconscious inheritance of particular gendered

musical aesthetics. The alignment between ‘addressed’ audience and achieved audience returned again in Chapter 6 in my discussion of how dub reggae artist Jah Shaka incorporated Vaisakhi and Diwali chants into his 1970s sets as a means of attracting South Asian audiences—a mode of address that was not only successful, but that remains effective today. Meanwhile, Chapter 7 returned, through the example of Danny, to the disparity that can arise between musical gestures and the atmospheres and social alliances that those gestures are expected to produce, demonstrating how a single genre (dubstep) can have multiple and contradictory effects that were not envisaged by its creators. The thesis thus makes a significant contribution to existing work on genre and creativity. Specifically, it posits affect, the body, and the social as central to an understanding of the relations between musical producers and their publics, and particularly to an analysis of the potential (a)symmetry that arises between an ‘addressed’ audience and an ‘actual’ audience. The thesis thereby builds upon the work of Born (2011) and Brackett (2005, 2016), who do not pay close attention to the role of affect in these aesthetic-social relations. Further, Chapter 5 in particular shows that it is not just the musical sounds that contribute to the unassured relationship between ‘addressed’ and ‘achieved’ public; it is all mediations of the sound, including its spatial, technological, material, and social qualities. This feeds back into the importance of theorising music as an assemblage (Born, 2005).

One interesting facet to come out of Chapters 4 and 5, which could fuel further research development, is the way that both demonstrate the potential for productive modes of reflexivity, ambivalence, and uncertainty to emerge out of seemingly rigid situations of musical affective ‘stickiness’. In Chapter 4, this was evident from the contradictory positions generated among classical music audience members as a result of the aesthetic, architectural, and programmatic changes introduced into their genre paradigm, and consequently, the desire among some of these audience members to become curators themselves as a way of responding to the shortcomings of the attempted innovations they had experienced. In Chapter 5, this was shown by the affective interruptions and dislocations that DJ/producer Jack Latham, aka Jam City, produced in relation to his male-gendered post-dubstep/bass audiences through creative aesthetic experiments. In light of

this, I want to suggest that the ability for cultural producers (DJs, sound artists, curators) to probe the ingrained affective (dis)positions of their publics, and thus, potentially, to generate productive tensions and modes of reflexivity among these publics, is one way in which musical affect can provide a basis for politics. Particularly in a realm like classical music, which today remains a monocultural space of power and elitism whose architectures and atmospheres act as barriers to large swathes of the population, such aesthetic provocations seem important—above all, in their ability to prompt taken-for-granted identities, certainties, and superiorities to waver, revealing the historical contingency of any objective ‘truth’ or stabilised state of affairs (Stengers, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). A similar argument, as I have shown elsewhere, can be made in the case of public and installation sound art (Stirling, 2016a).

Conceptualising a politics of (musical) affect in this way differs markedly from the way in which contemporary affect theorists view affect’s relationship to politics. For Deleuzian theorists such as Massumi, as well as cultural geographers Amin and Thrift, affect’s politics is grounded in the idea that subjectivities and social identities can be suspended, disrupted, and radically reshaped by the flows of ‘pre-personal’ affect that pass between ‘bodies’. There is a politics rooted in the conception that affect can exceed the territorialising dimensions of history, identity, and ideology, and can thereby dissolve or avert power. Yet, as I have shown throughout the thesis, this is not a definition of affect that my ethnographic material supports, and moreover, is one that seemingly leads to a consensus-oriented politics, seeking to transcend difference in favour of ‘pre-personal’ affective ‘togetherness’ and affective connections between ‘bodies’ (Amin, 2012; Massumi, 2002, 2015; cf. Leys, 1993).¹¹⁴ By contrast, the empirically-grounded theory of affect that I have developed in this thesis, in which affect is shown to be multiply mediated, is one that aligns with the view that social and political differences, and their correlative antagonisms and power relations,

¹¹⁴ As Leys notes, one of the fascinations with Tarde’s imitation-suggestion paradigm in the late 19th century was that it could explain ‘how social assimilation and political consensus could be brought about in a rapidly changing American society marked by heterogeneity and difference’ (Leys, 1993: 279-80). Indeed, it was precisely the threat that concepts such as imitation and suggestibility posed to an ideal of individual autonomy and social hierarchy that led to the suppression of Tarde’s work in the early 20th century. There is, then, an historic tie between Tarde’s concept of imitation-suggestion and a ‘dangerous’ type of ‘togetherness’ rooted in mimetic consensus, instant communication, and emotional identification.

cannot be eradicated (Mouffe, 2000; Deutsche, 1998). Thus, if we cannot escape our individuated identities and social positionalities in the way that new affect theorists propose, and if (musical) affect is mediated by a constellation of ineradicable personal, socio-cultural, historical and institutional factors, how can or might affect contribute to a politics—to challenging or channelling power in ways that are more compatible with values of equality and justice? One way, I am suggesting, is via the potential for musical producers and curators to engender collective atmospheres of instability and reflexivity by challenging the resilient affective attachments of their publics—atmospheres that not only have the propensity to make visible existing social and institutional orders, but also to generate agonistic relations that put such orders into question. Musically incited affect, then, in its conflictual dimension, can contribute to maintaining the democratic function of public space as an arena in which different positions come into contact, intersect, clash, and mutate (Mouffe, 2000, 2007). In the next section, drawing on Chapter 6, I illustrate another way in which musical and sonic affect can become a basis for politics.

The Politics of Community and Collaboration

Chapter 6 turned more centrally towards musical affect's relationship to change. In particular, it demonstrated how habitual musical affects can themselves take on a transformative function. Two contrasting case studies illustrated this. The first, focusing on the Lucky Cloud scene, showed how shared musical affective attachments can work to 'stick' an emergent social coalition together. Through the repetition and circulation of particular records in conjunction with repeating spatialities and histories, the diverse social groups assembled by these parties are 'affectively anchored' to the dancefloor and to each other by moments of shared elation and habitual affective response. This case study thus demonstrated how musical bodily habit can become the key mechanism by which an emergent sociality is brought into existence. The second case study, focusing on dub reggae, illustrated how collective corporeal habits can empower and unify an already existing marginal or historically oppressed community. In this assemblage, shared affective attachment primarily orbits around the repetitious smells, tastes, and textures of the dances, which generate intense

‘atmospheres of familiarity’ and feelings of solace among those who participate. In turn, this galvanising ‘bath’ of affect, I suggested, enables participants to achieve great degrees of freedom and ecstatic departure in and through the music. Although those brought into alliance by the dub reggae scene are diverse in terms of age and ethnicity, they are also socially homogeneous in their male-dominance and heterosexuality, particularly by comparison with Lucky Cloud. Yet, I argued that due to the intersecting histories of oppression that mark this assemblage, the habitual forms of affect that bind it hold an emancipatory as well as reproductive potential, providing spaces of refuge, sociability, and community for those whose lives are precarious and unstable.

The first conceptual function of Chapter 6 is that it deconstructs the binary that prevails between ‘affect’ and ‘habit’ in contemporary affect theories, where the former is equated with innovation and newness, and the latter with fixity and ideology (Massumi, 1992, 2002). Rejecting this dualism, Chapter 6 demonstrated, on the contrary, how habitual musical affects can be profoundly creative, first, in their ability to stimulate imitation or ‘copying’, and thus alteration, as seen in the case of Danny becoming initiated into the Lucky Cloud parties through a desire to become part of the habitual affective pull of the Classics, or in the diachronic transmission of sensory affective attachments in dub reggae, working to expand and regenerate the assemblage (Tarde, 1890; Barry & Thrift, 2007); and second, in their capacity to act as the binding or ‘sticking’ agent for emergent socio-musical formations and/or ‘intimate publics’ (Berlant, 2011). On this basis, I argued for more complex framings of habit when theorising (musical) affect, advocating a need to account for habit’s relational, plastic dimension and ‘paradoxical’ character as conceived by Tarde, Bergson, James, and other early 20th century thinkers (Blackman, 2013; Grosz, 2013). Further, I noted that a key factor in distinguishing habit’s alignment with change and transformation—or, indeed, with fixity and limitation—is the question of who exactly is experiencing such habitual affects and in what historical and institutional context (the intersections between Born’s first, third, and fourth planes). The point, then, is that it matters how, precisely, the micro- and macrosocial are assembled; for without such an analysis, it is impossible to tell whether the affective continuities and habits at stake are functioning in ways that are amenable to social change, hampering of such change, or

working in both directions at the same time. The relationship between habit and invention is thus an empirical and historical question that cannot be determined theoretically in advance.

These conceptual findings refer back to Chapter 3 in that they elucidate why, throughout the thesis, I choose to use historically contingent, socio-culturally derived concepts such as ‘stickiness’ (Ahmed, 2004) and ‘somatic learning’ (Hirschkind, 2006) to describe musical affective stabilities, rather than bio-physical concepts such as ‘tired habit’ (Massumi, 2015). For whereas Massumi’s rigid, subject-less formulation of bodily habit denies it any personal, socio-cultural, or historical mediation, as well as any mimetic or transformative function, Ahmed’s and Hirschkind’s flexible, socially mediated concepts of ‘stickiness’ and ‘somatic learning’ enable a ‘paradoxical’ understanding of habitual affect as potentially associated with change and alterity, as well as fixity. Like my ethnography, then, these concepts allow habit and invention, imitation and innovation, to be seen as rescindable and co-existent, rather than oppositional, contingent upon the musical assemblage’s shifting constellation of mediations—something theorised by pluralistic sociologies and philosophies of becoming too (Deleuze, 2003; Lefebvre, 1970). Further, though not explicitly named, the ‘paradox’ of habit finds parallels in other ethnographic work, including that of Guilbault (2010: 19-21) on the ‘visceral sense of belonging’ that live soca events in Trinidad precipitate among different genders, races, ages and classes through habitual musical practices; and Page (2005: 4) on ‘performative sameness’ in dancehall and calypso in the Afro-Trinidadian context, where repetitive actions and dance moves, and the ‘affective bonds’ that these generate, create alternative forms of nation-building and resistance. In all cases, musical affective continuities become capable of reconfiguring the social, thus supporting my own ethnography and interpretation.

Together, this work calls into focus the second conceptual theme of Chapter 6, that being the notion of the musical public or ‘musically imagined community’ (Born, 2005; Anderson, 1983). In particular, the chapter raised the question of how a habituated musical community might be defined in relation to wider critical discourses on community, which have tended to view the terms

‘community’ and ‘inclusivity’ as consensus-oriented and eradicator of otherness and difference (e.g. Back, 2009; Bishop, 2012; Gilroy, 2004; Straw, 1991). Here, I want to make two observations. First, both my own case studies and those of Guilbault (2010) demonstrate that in music, ‘community’ and ‘difference’ can co-exist affectively and mutually affirm each other. By drawing together socially heterogeneous identities, musical practices that are community-oriented can generate affective bonds between people whose social positions are different and even antagonistic, sometimes in ways that extend beyond the musical events themselves (cf. Born, 2005, 2011). Second, as the work of Page (2005) attests, musical communities that are socially homogeneous do not necessarily or only indicate an anti-democratic logic of exclusion and hyper-similarity. Rather, if comprised of an historically aggrieved social group, as in the case of dub reggae, then the musical community can, through the very unity of the bodies that it brings together, work to disrupt majority forms of power, and thereby (re-)affirm difference and minority.

Two conclusions arise from this. First, in the case of music, critiques that equate ‘community’ with prescriptive, anti-democratic ideals of social cohesion and unity—and thus exclusion and regression—do not necessarily apply. Rather, musical publics that are community-focused can cultivate difference in myriad ways, even though, as with any model of social inclusion, there will always be elements of exclusion too. And second, that the role of affect in binding musically imagined communities that *do* sustain and nourish difference provides a second basis upon which to develop a politics of musical affect. Indeed, as the Lucky Cloud case study in particular illustrated, the ability for affectively charged musical publics to enable a folding between different lifeworlds that may not otherwise touch each other—to facilitate connections between disparate individuals and groups where their differences can be affirmed and respected, rather than negated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; Stengers, 2008)—suggests that it is not just through agonistic struggle that a politics of musical affect can be conceived. Rather, affective relations that are convivial, sociable, and participatory can, in certain constellations, challenge and reorganise dominant power relations too, culminating in musical ‘affective alliances’ that are in contradiction with wider social hierarchies and divisions (Born, 2011; Grossberg, 1984).

There is a wider point to be made here regarding the politics of community. That is that there are many orders of music's social mediation that can become a basis for politics (Born, 2013b); and these need not necessarily involve a relation of conflict or dissent, nor inhabit a domain of struggle between opposing hegemonic projects, as Leftist political theorists tend to advocate (Deutsche, 1998; Mouffe, 2000, 2007). As I have again shown elsewhere, the convivial community politics discussed above can be articulated in non-affective (or less affect-driven) ways through sound art practices that are socially engaged and collaborative (Stirling, 2016a). Two public sound installations that I conducted fieldwork on illustrated this: 'Convergence' (2013) by Esther Ainsworth and Kirsty Dixon, and 'The Sixth Housing Estate' (2014) by Brandon Labelle. In the first example, held at Bow Church in East London, Ainsworth and Dixon collaborated on a bell ringing performance with a non-arts-associated group, the Bow bell ringers, while also inviting both the bell ringers and members of the public to participate in a sonic improvisation or 'traffic jam'. Two unrelated and potentially antagonistic social groups were thus drawn into a shared space and given an opportunity to connect: on the one hand, artists and other relatively predictable attendees such as subscribers to the Bow Arts mailing list, and on the other hand, the bell ringers and Bow Church congregation, who were older, local, and a non-arts crowd, and who had experienced immense changes to their local area as a direct result of regenerative projects like Bow Arts. What made this event particularly effective, though, was its non-prescriptive, open-ended brief and participatory structure, which enabled disparate groups to encounter, listen, and talk to each other in ways that were pedagogical and improvisatory, and that didn't involve one group attempting to impose their ideology on the other. Similar to the musical publics described in Chapter 6, then, this sound piece illustrated how collaborative sonic artistic practices can bring heterogeneous social groups into an affirmative, pluralistic relation with each other, where difference and otherness are explored and sustained, rather than negated (Stirling, 2016a).

Comparably, in Labelle's 'Sixth Housing Estate', artists, researchers, musicians, and local residents of Elmington Estate in Camberwell, South London, were invited to work together on the

construction of a ‘fragment’: two free-standing walls and a domestic space ‘yet to come’. Like ‘Convergence’, the event assembled diverse social groups into the same communal space, including children of different black and minority ethnic backgrounds, white middle-class affiliates of the South London Gallery, PhD researchers and academics. And again, it was the open-ended, semi-structured nature of the event that produced the most interesting effects, with children and teenagers capable of using drills and other power tools seen to be teaching the academics how to wield such tools; and an older resident of the estate bringing his hi-fi outside to play reggae, disco, and funk classics over the top of the drummer who was performing in relation to the project, who in turn responded through ‘rhythmic shadowing’. While lines of segregation still permeated this event, it nonetheless pointed to how intimate, funny, and surprising exchanges can emerge between estranged social groups through sonic artistic practices that are participatory; and though such exchanges may be short-lived, they still have the ability to overturn preconceptions or facilitate experiences of ‘otherness’ in rewarding ways.

Together with ‘Convergence’, the ‘Sixth Housing Estate’ suggested that participatory and collaborative sound art need not necessarily be about ‘conversion’, overcoming conflict, or flattening difference; nor necessarily must it constitute a patronising, artificial form of social engagement (Bishop, 2012). Rather, as with the capacity for musical collectivities like Lucky Cloud to cultivate ‘difference’ and ‘community’ simultaneously, the political potentials of collaborative sound art lie in the ability for those brought together to invent or create a *connection* in spite of their differences; to be ‘situated’ and obligated by a situation, without guarantees (Stengers, 2009: 13). This reading of collaboration as a political practice draws upon Stengers, who notes, after Deleuze and Guattari (1994), that to resist ‘does not mean to denounce or to criticize but [rather] to construct’ (Stengers, 2005: 122). To condemn, to judge, to ‘know better’, even to ‘tolerate’, is to participate in the destruction of another’s milieu; whereas to construct, to build a connection where one did not exist previously—in short, to *depend* on other positions—is to give a situation the power to have one thinking and feeling: it is to become part of a milieu that has a need or use for what others propose (Stengers, 2008: 51). ‘To bring into existence, and not to judge’: herein lies the secret,

wrote Deleuze (1997:135). Accordingly, the following questions arise for potential future research development: (how) is it possible, in music and sound art, to collaborate pluralistically? How might one affirm rather than subdue contrasts, allow another's ideas to compel one's thinking in new and surprising directions? How can one refrain from making that judgement, that decision, that excludes other possibilities, and what might be the outcomes of this non-prescriptive open-endedness? What would it mean to participate in a non-consensual or agonistic cooperation, an actively diverging collaboration?

Anti-Capitalist Politics

Taking these thoughts to a macro level, the development of a politics of community and collaboration in music and sound art seems to be more vital than ever given the current state of public life in London. As touched upon in Chapters 6 and 8, collective forms of musical expression are under threat from a heavily surveilled, privatised, and sanitised night-time economy, and a precarious urban infrastructure. The wider electronic/dance music scene, for example, may be a very 'mobile' and healthy assemblage in terms of its popularity and ability to occupy a variety of urban spaces (clubs, concert halls, galleries), but, as Jenny in Chapter 8 illustrated, the microsocial environments it generates are often suffocatingly 'immobile' and intensely individualising in their crowdedness and hyper-securitisation. During fieldwork, crowd control at large-scale techno and house events often went beyond ID scans, metal detectors, and CCTV operations, to the actual positioning of bouncers on raised 'surveillance platforms' above the dancefloor, or the herding of audience members out of the venue with metal defence barriers to ensure that two events could be held consecutively on one night. Security methods such as these are tied to the major police clampdown on nightlife in the last fifteen years.¹¹⁵ As one informant explained, implementing tighter security is a way of insuring the venue against undercover police, while the 'overselling' of

¹¹⁵ There are numerous reasons for this. One is the police Operation Condor, which uncovered a mass drug dealing operation involving the East London nightclub 93 Feet East in 2012 and led to more venues becoming suspect. Another is the global war on terror and the recent attacks on concert arenas (Manchester) and nightclubs (Istanbul, Orlando), which have prompted a legitimate surge in security.

events or the hosting of two events on one night becomes the most feasible way to cover the costs. Yet, the de-collectivising impact of these combined factors is extreme: dancefloors become sites of rigorous control, dominated by a crushing crowd density, which impinges upon the freedom of the body to the extent that one is physically immobilised as well as antagonised and rendered vulnerable to sexual harassment. Add to this the effects of the Early Bird ticketing economy, which, in enabling people to attend multiple ‘nights’ on one night, creates a culture of hyper-mobile individuals who flit between, and thus enervate, musical publics, and it appears that a full-on assault against musical/sonic publicness is in session. It is for this reason that collectives like Lucky Cloud (Chapter 6) and BATB (Chapter 8) are so important, building continuity and social heterogeneity amidst intense fragmentation and individualisation—even if, as elaborated in Chapter 8, such collectives can be exclusionary in their own ways too.

A similar argument holds true in the case of dub reggae, which is threatened by the individualising forces of the state to an even greater extent than electronic/dance music, due to its subordination within a black musical public sphere. Indeed, the policing of black music has a long history, from the violent police raids launched upon black establishments by Operation Shutdown in the early 1960s, to the exclusion of blackness from urban public space via the ‘colour bar’ and other divisive spatial practices in the post-war period (Waters, 2017b; Hall et al., 1978; Solomos et al., 1982). What is striking is that the stigmatisation of black music and its eviction from public space by white institutions and citizens continues to plague both dub reggae and its musical descendants in 2019. During and after fieldwork, many of the reggae events I’d conducted research on were forced to close on the basis of noise complaints, ‘public security’, or unspecified ‘licensing’ issues, including Jah Shaka’s regular session at the Dome in Tufnell Park, and the infamous Caribbean night club, the Tudor Rose, in Southall. This was compounded by the controversy that arose during the summer of 2014 over Channel One Sound System’s Notting Hill Carnival license, which Westminster Council came close to revoking due to complaints from a small number of white, affluent Notting Hill residents. Such attacks are merely a footnote to the racist ‘live music risk assessment form’, Form 696, administered by the police, which, until its abolition in 2017, compelled all venues

seeking to apply for a temporary late license (TEN) to state ‘the music style to be performed, e.g. bashment, R&B, garage’ and the ‘ethnic groups’ likely to attend—a not-so-subtle means of preemptively shutting down black music events. Notorious for suppressing grime in the early 2000s, Form 696 affected the reggae community too, with venues increasingly reluctant to host sound system-based events for fear that a temporary license would not be granted.¹¹⁶ Again, the effects of this are potentially severe: black musical expression gets pushed back into private/domestic space, its collectivities dispersed, and its modes of production and consumption individualised. This was, indeed, the fate of first wave grime (see Stirling, 2017).

The harshness of these urban institutional conditions bestows an even greater political importance upon the convivial collectivism and historical endurance of Lucky Cloud and dub reggae discussed in Chapter 6. Indeed, the survival of both assemblages over time can itself be seen as insurgent, reflecting a defiant refusal either to disappear under the weight of a global capitalist economy of ‘ongoing obsolescence and short-term fads’ (Straw, 2001), or to succumb to the forces of gentrification, commercialisation, and corporate patronage that permeate so much of London’s music culture today—forces that new classical music initiatives (inadvertently?) support in their occupation of gentrifying artistic ‘hubs’ in East and South London. One way that dub reggae and Lucky Cloud resist these logics, as argued in Chapter 6, is by cultivating shared habits, tastes, and familiarities that are community-building in ways that one-off DJ events, in their impermanence, are not. But there are other ways, besides habituated affective practices, that these assemblages support a democratic urban politics. Both, for instance, exist by virtue of a network of dedicated volunteers, DJs, selectors, and engineers, who engage in collective free labour for the sake of the wider community. Neither, therefore, is under pressure to ‘oversell’ their events in order to pay extortionate DJ and security fees; and both can control the capacity of events for the protection and pleasure of the crowd. Both refuse to rely on brand sponsorship, choosing the difficult path of economic independence instead, but in so doing, avoiding co-option by venture capitalists such as

¹¹⁶ As the manager of Club 414 in Brixton, a black-owned club, told me: ‘reggae, jungle, garage... We can’t play those genres here. Cos we have to fill out 696, and they don’t allow that music to be played’.

Red Bull Music Academy and Boiler Room, which only contribute to the commercialisation and homogenisation of culture described above. And finally, through this economic self-sufficiency, the dub reggae assemblage is able to resist permanent closure by police and councils. By continually (re-)inhabiting non-commercial venues—African Caribbean cultural centres and other semi-formal community spaces—sound system events are able to regenerate on a repeated basis, often in neighbourhoods where police lack the time or resources to target events, or don't wish to ignite historic racial tensions. Indeed, this is the primary reason why the sound system events that closed during my fieldwork have been able to resurface elsewhere in the city, even if only temporarily. The scene's embeddedness in black residential 'public homes', although residual of a history of exclusion, thus works today as a safeguarding mechanism.

In sum, these two musical assemblages offer a degree of protection against the obscene forms of individualism, planned obsolescence, and corporate control that currently threaten musical public life in London. As such, both illustrate the potential for music to contribute to an anti-capitalist politics: to struggle against, exist partially outside of, and/or subvert the global-neoliberal capitalist matrix, often by upturning its logics. This reveals an important conceptual insight—namely, that even as relentless institutional forces and architectures of power mediate, and at times suffocate, lived forms of musical experience, so such forces also inadvertently open up new opportunities and creative energies. We have seen how in the post-war period, for instance, state power, police malpractice, and (in)formal zoning via the 'colour bar' worked to exclude and marginalise black bodies from the public sphere in asphyxiating ways. At the same time, the rise of the 'shebeen' and the African Caribbean cultural centre demonstrated that attempts to control precisely where and how people of colour could appear/act were not wholly successful. Rather, in line with Lefebvre's (1970, 1992) understanding of the 'production of space', the multiple forms of political and institutional power that suppressed black musical and social spaces at this time appeared to do so in ways that conjured new contingencies and possibilities, rather than synthesising or resolving. Further, the spaces of public assembly that evolved from this time—Caribbean cultural centres, church halls, banqueting suites—remain crucial to dub reggae's ongoing survival today.

As touched upon in Chapter 3, Lefebvre's tripartite dialectic is conceptually comparable to Born's (2005) theory of social mediation, Tarde's (1890) imitation-suggestion paradigm, and, in some ways, Deleuze's (2003) flat ontology. While these parallels will be elaborated more fully in the final section, I want to point out that in drawing upon Lefebvre to articulate music's anti-capitalist potential, I wish to make perceptible an understanding of space and the city that is coherent with the theory of musical affect that I have outlined in this thesis. It is an understanding that, on the one hand, refutes the radical openness of Deleuzian cultural geographers, who, like Massumi, tend to project ontological concepts ('rhizome', 'affect', 'immanence') onto the empirical city, leading to a fictitiously optimistic account of urban life (Amin & Thrift, 2002, 2013; Anderson & Harrison, 2010; Latham & McCormack, 2004). On the other hand, paralleling my critique of feminist and critical race affect theorists in Chapter 7, who sometimes veer towards social and other determinisms, it is an approach that equally rejects the socio-spatial synthesis invoked by thinkers such as David Harvey (2005) and Marc Augé (1995), who emphasise the social, material, geographical and technological organisation of capitalism to the extent that culture becomes socially and politically impotent. By contrast, my approach advocates, in a similar way to Lefebvre (1970) and Born (2005), the pluralistic, non-negating relations that exist between different scales of social and spatial formation—between the perceived, conceived and lived; between the global, spatial, and individual: between 'levels' or 'planes' of mediation that interfere with and inflect each other, though never haphazardly, with potentially emergent social and political effects.

This brings me to the penultimate section of this Conclusion where, drawing upon Chapters 7 and 8, I turn to theories of emergence—specifically, to how musical affect can produce moments of radical openness, which may work to overturn existing social orders and hegemonic discourses. In addition to the affective politics of antagonism-agonism and community-collaboration outlined so far, this provides the third basis upon which a politics of musical affect can be conceived.

Affective Emergence and a Politics of Difference

Chapter 7 turned to the ways in which ingrained musical affective attachments can become flexible and volatile, creating ‘openings’ or ‘turning points’ in people’s lives that enable them to move into new ‘affective alliances’ (Grossberg, 1984). Specifically, the chapter showed how such processes can have surprising and transformative effects, working to overturn deeply held preconceptions around genre and identity, as in the example of my participant Danny, while also eliciting shifts into new sonic social spheres that contradict music’s discursive mediations, as seen in the case of Dale. Crucially, however, I demonstrated that such moments of emergence are not autonomous or ‘pre-personal’ but are generated by multiple mediations as they collide and resonate in unanticipated ways in the present (Born, 2011; Barry & Thrift, 2007). In Danny and Dale’s case, interferences between musical genre, aesthetics, technological innovation, and personal and socio-cultural history all played a powerful role in facilitating their ‘turning points’. The conceptual position advanced in this chapter, then, is one that sees musical affect as potentially disruptive of the personal, social, and historical, while also deriving or stemming from them, and thus as harbouring certain constraints and limits (Chapter 8). Such a conceptualisation not only moves beyond the reification of movement in Deleuzian affect theories (Massumi, 1992, 2002); it also differs significantly from theories of affect developed within feminist and critical race studies, which tend to see affect as socially driven, and which therefore struggle to account for how affect can, via unexpected constellations of mediations, become the impetus for social change (Brah, 1999; Brennan, 2004).

A further contribution of Chapter 7 was that it brought theories of temporality and the aesthetic into dialogue with affect, notably via the work of Born (2015) and Haworth (2019). In analysing the multiple mediations that motivated moments of change and openness for my participants, a key mediating factor that came to the fore were the ‘retentions’ and ‘protections’ enacted by existing or evolving genres. In the first case study, I showed how dubstep’s ‘retention’ but also transformation of an earlier occurring genre, UK garage, afforded a retroactive ‘re-hearing’ of that earlier genre for

Danny, creating an aperture in his musical affective register that initiated his move into a previously disdained socio-musical milieu. In the second case study, the ‘protections’ enacted by dub reggae at a specific historical moment not only illuminated aesthetic connections between a group of disparate global genres for Dale, but also accelerated his shift into a sound art assemblage—a move that simultaneously contradicted the genealogical discourses constructed around sound art and related ‘arts’ genres. In addition to its contributions to a revised theory of affect, this chapter thus developed existing work on music and time, demonstrating how aesthetic objects can, in their labile ‘retentions’ and ‘protections’, catalyse a mutation with regard to how particular sounds and musical lineages are perceived, not only leading to new genealogies and epistemologies, as Born (2015) and Haworth (2019) show, but to new affective connections and creative trajectories too.

Following this, I want to suggest that the third and final way in which musical affect becomes associated with the political is in its capacity to engender moments of suspension and dislocation that lead to the unfurling of ingrained social identities and affective biases. In facilitating such ‘turning points’, music and sound can divert a person’s socio-musical trajectory in transformative ways, triggering shifts into new kinds of public where new alliances can be forged that are irreducible to prior social relations. This notion of building alliances relates to my earlier articulation of a politics of collaboration in participatory sound art—a politics in which, following Deleuze and Guattari, creation and construction take on a political function (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Such a politics requires recognising that resistance does not come from critique, judgment, or derision. To denounce or to criticise another is to assume the role of a ‘little judge’; it is to project consensual authority onto a situation, an idea, or a dream, and thereby to negate or destroy what that situation could offer—namely, the capacity to resist, which is also the capacity to construct (Stengers, 2005, 2008, 2009). By contrast, to bring heterogeneous worlds into a relation such that they are forced to function together, and to ‘inhabit’ that relation—to allow the affective displacement it generates to ‘situate’ or transform one’s thinking and feeling—is to begin to fabricate a connection where one did not exist previously; it is to create an entanglement between

genres, people, and things that might otherwise remain independent or opposed: a relation between multiplicities.

Music and sound's capacity to elicit cracks in a person's musical affective index that disaffiliate them from one habituated life and facilitate their entry into another is what thus, to my mind, imbues musical and sonic affect with a potential politics of change and emergence. For it is through such processes that heterogeneous subjectivities and social identities can be brought together, not in a consensual way, but in a way that generates 'non-pre-existent' social relations, some of which may even be in contradiction with 'wider forms of hierarchical and stratified social relations' (Born, 2011: 381). We can see these processes at work in the Lucky Cloud assemblage, where a significant proportion of those collectivised, including Danny (Chapter 7), have, at some point in their lives, experienced an epiphanic or 'revelatory' moment: an affective interruption that suspended prior musical attachments and senses of self/other, opening up connections that were not previously perceptible. Partly for this reason, the sociality summoned into being by the parties is one that refracts and inverts numerous social identity formations, notably gender, sexuality, class, age and nationality. This was reiterated by my participants in Chapter 6, who asserted not only the improbability of forming such heterogeneous relationships via other channels of social life, but also the importance of these relationships beyond the musical event itself. Recognising, however, that the bringing into existence of a new coalition of identities constitutes only part of the socio-political equation, and that these coalitions mean little if the microsocial encounters between bodies continue to legitimise relations of domination, we can connect this back to the second type of affective politics—music's ability to fasten or 'anchor' a co-present collectivity together through moments of shared embodied attachment. At Lucky Cloud events, these two kinds of affective politics mutually reinforce one another: socially heterogeneous individuals are brought into association in ways that are emergent and that put existing social stratifications into question, while the Loft Classics open up powerful channels of affective and social communion between these individuals, generating new encounters with difference.

Precisely because such moments of affectively fuelled change are *not* autonomous, however, so they may also be less available to some than others. This was the central argument of Chapter 8, which demonstrated how ‘turning points’ and ‘openings’ into new social and musical spheres are not always inhabitable for particular people. The first case study demonstrated this through the experiences of Jenny, whose embeddedness in a very specific niche of the disco and house scene was partially determined by her inability to inhabit large-scale densely crowded electronic/dance music nights due to the gender-based vulnerabilities and sexual intimidations that she experienced in those spaces. Meanwhile, turning to issues of race and class, the second set of case studies illustrated how, for a number of my black working-class interlocutors, an affective ‘openness’ towards deep house, techno, and classical music, and an appropriation of these musics in everyday listening contexts, was paralleled by a powerful sense of detachment and historical-cultural alienation from the live spaces in which these musics were embedded, and a coalescence instead around ‘conscious’ historically significant black British genres such as dub reggae, afrobeats, and grime (cf. Gilroy, 1993). Both case studies, then, highlighted how musical affiliations may be fractured across co-present and virtual scales in specific ways due to social relations of exclusion, antipathy, and alienation arising from the live spaces. This, in turn, emphasised the inadequacy of a concept like ‘taste’ and the importance of theorising musical experience as an assemblage (Born, 2005, 2011).

In conjunction with case studies from other chapters, Chapter 8 also pointed towards differences among my participants in terms of their capacities for musical affective susceptibility—differences that were marked by, and seemingly reproductive of, social relations of gender, sexuality, class, and race. This was most apparent in the gendered affective constraint that Jenny experienced in relation to particular live spaces of electronic/dance music, and the male privilege that she felt accompanied an ability to be selective about preferred dancefloor conditions, as in the example of Simon (Chapter 3); the ease with which Jenny and other white participants like Danny were able to act upon a musical ‘revelation’ by moving into the live spaces of disco and deep house, compared with my black participants’ inability or unwillingness to do the same, in spite of liking and enjoying the

music; and the fact that the best examples of musical affective emergence in my fieldwork came from two straight white men, Danny and Dale. On a broader scale, the chapter further showed how racial and class boundaries generally appear less labile than other social boundaries across music's co-present publics, and that such boundaries are particularly intractable across historically white and/or higher-class musical assemblages like classical music, house, and techno. These findings not only illustrated a very different, and differentiated, conceptualisation of affective emergence to that advocated by Deleuzian theorists, who, in attempting to actualise a radically open and indeterminate body, do not account for the varying degrees of openness and suggestibility that different people may experience precisely because of their subjective, socio-cultural and historical positioning. The findings also contributed to Bourdieu-inspired work in cultural sociology on musical taste and social stratification. In particular, the chapter suggested that, although those with higher composite capitals often did appear to possess more flexibility and openness towards heterogeneous musical performance spaces, the fact that this 'omnivorousness' did not translate to the second plane—to the 'musically imagined community'—with participants of various social positionalities harbouring wide-ranging musical tastes and likes, implied that the figure of the 'omnivore' needs to be understood in conjunction with the production and reproduction of social boundaries by musical assemblages themselves.

A New Theoretical Paradigm

Through comparative ethnographic work, as well as historical and theoretical analysis, this thesis has developed new ways of understanding the workings and potentials of musical and sonic affect. It has demonstrated that, across complex and diverse empirical contexts, musically incited affect is neither explicable with recourse to an immanent 'pre-personal' or 'chance-ridden' force (Massumi, 1992, 2002), nor fully determined or 'driven' by a specific set of social relations (Brah, 1999; Brennan, 2004). Rather, when taken to the field and put to work, affect emerges as inextricably entangled with the personal, social, cultural, and historical, while also crucially *irreducible* to them (Born, 2005). It is thus an ambivalent 'threshold condition' that encompasses contradictory effects

and potentials, both emancipatory and repressive (Blackman, 2012). Across the thesis, I have shown how musical affect can work to cement and reproduce pre-existing social differences by virtue of its 'stickiness' and abiding qualities (Chapters 3-5); but also how it can 'stick' in ways that are conducive to social transformation, either producing productive ambivalences that challenge the hegemony of cultural institutions (Chapter 4), or binding and 'anchoring' an emergent or historically marginalised social group together (Chapter 6). I have shown how ingrained musical affective attachments can lapse and mutate in surprising ways, producing moments of 'revelation' and unpredictable openness (Chapter 7); but also how these affective dislocations may prove to be uninhabitable, prompting a pull back towards the familiar in ways that reproduce social boundaries and hierarchies (Chapter 8). The question of affect's social and political power, then, exceeds the homogenising and reductive question, 'what can a body do?' and demands attention to the complex historical, cultural, personal and social mediations that underlie people's differential affective experiences, the new musical and social connections that may arise, and the socio-political effects that are made possible. Though the outcomes may not reflect the radical politics of new affect theorists, they still engender a politics.

In this conclusion, I have indicated three ways in which musical and sonic affect can become the basis for political invention, according to three logics: antagonism-agonism; community-collaboration; and emergence-divergence. In the first, I suggested, with reference to new classical music initiatives and electronic/dance music producers, that the challenging or provocation of 'sticky' musical affects can lead to public atmospheres of antagonism, negotiation, and conflict, which may not only serve to make visible the contingent, constructed nature of existing social and institutional orders, but may also engender agonistic and reflexive relations that put such social orders into question (Mouffe, 2000, 2007). Since it is precisely this kind of tension and precariousness that the 'publicness' of public space depends upon, it can thus be said that musical and sonic affect, in their conflictual dimension, can contribute to maintaining the democratic function of public space. Second, noting that it is not just through dissent that a politics of music can be conceived, I argued in relation to Chapter 6 that habitual musical affective attachments can

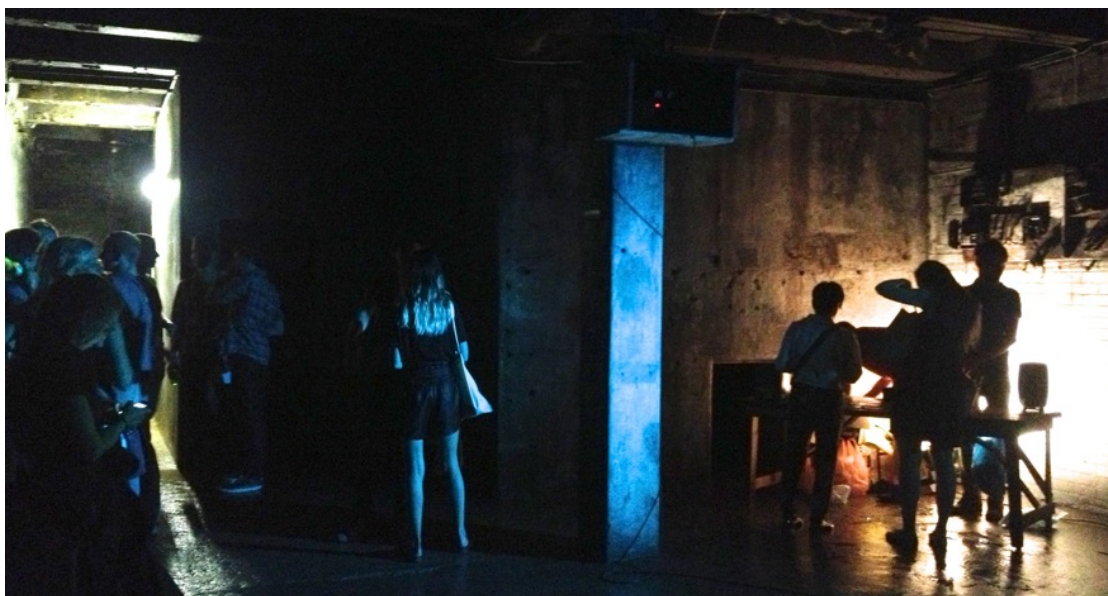
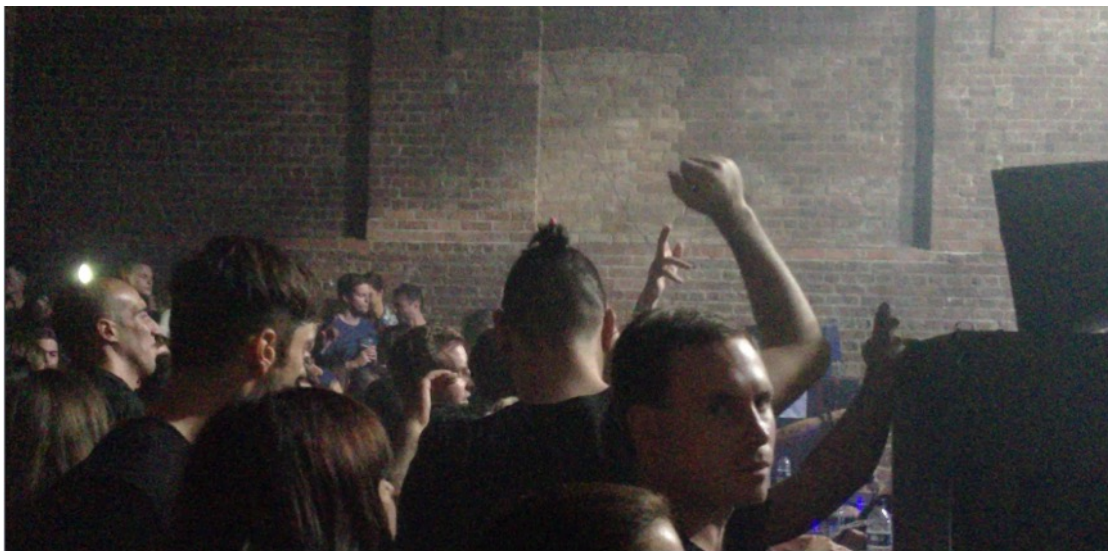
also take on a political function when they act as the ‘sticking’ or binding agent for musically imagined communities that are emergent or that draw historically oppressed communities into them. Referencing the Lucky Cloud parties and dub reggae in particular, I suggested that shared attachments to particular musical materials and structures can generate intensely visceral modes of belonging and conviviality that, because of the particular coalitions of identities brought into alliance, can work to challenge or contradict dominant power relations (Born, 2011; Grossberg, 1984). And third, through the radical (but not haphazard) affective ‘openness’ that music and sound can elicit, generating uncertainties, suspensions, and ‘epiphanies’ in people’s lives that divert them towards new kinds of social and musical connection, a politics of emergence and ‘newness’ can be achieved. As I argued with reference to Lucky Cloud and Danny’s ‘turning point’ in particular (Chapter 7), it is in the making of such ‘non-pre-existent’ social connections that unprecedented kinds of pluralistic sociality can be brought into being, producing what I call a divergence through convergence—a new relation between differences, a new combination, new affinities and effects.

These ethnographic findings demand, finally, new theoretical paradigms that advocate a generative relationship between empirical research and conceptual development. In Born’s (2011, 2012) theory of music’s social mediation, which stems from precisely such a relationship, different planes of the social enter into mutually catalysing but non-negating relations with each other. Though they may, in combination, take on shapes that are historically enduring, the planes retain a certain ‘autonomy’, remaining continually open to change and reformation. Within such a paradigm, then, music’s affective capacities can emerge as both oriented by higher social and institutional orders, and potentially in contradiction with, or transformative of, such orders. As I noted in Chapter 3, a similar anti-structural framework prevails in Lefebvre’s (1970) ‘tripartite’ spatial dialectic. Here, a ‘triad’ of mediations, each representing a different ‘level’ of social and spatial organisation—the universal-global, the spatial-particular, and the ‘lived’—remain perpetually in movement. Like a constellation of stars, Lefebvre wrote, ‘[t]heir brilliance sometimes coincides, sometimes eclipses one another. They produce interference’ (Lefebvre, 1975). But while always in tension with each

other, Lefebvre saw no pre-determined resolution between his levels.¹¹⁷ Rather, from the midst of these mediating processes, ‘moments’ could arise in which ‘things have the potential to be overturned or radically altered’ (Elden, in Lefebvre, 2004: x). In their shared commitment to the concept of mutual mediation, Born and Lefebvre are thus able to account for long-term historical and cultural stasis, as well as creative unpredictability and radical change, with Born emphasising the empirical basis of these outcomes. It is these frameworks—together with aspects of Tarde’s (1890) anti-dialectical imitation-invention paradigm—that I believe come closer than any contemporary affect theory to accommodating (musical) affect’s contradictory and unexpected, but not haphazard, social and political effects.

Acting as a rejoinder to theories of listening and musical experience in musicology, sound studies and sociology, this thesis has argued for the centrality of affect to an understanding of musical and sonic public-making. It would be my hope that, having articulated a workable concept of affect through ethnographies of music and sound, this concept may be deployed and amended again in new contexts and historical conjunctures, and used to experiment with the potential ways in which music and sound art might be articulated, organised or curated to engender more radical sonic social spaces.

¹¹⁷ Like Deleuze, Lefebvre inherited this pluralism from Nietzsche, seeing in the latter’s Janus-faced method the ‘affirmation’ required to resist the monism of negation; the multiple, pluralist quality that connects or affirms two or more lines, planes or ‘levels’ at once, such that one never suppresses the other completely. See Deleuze, 1995b; Lefebvre, 1975. In this sense, Deleuze’s flat ontology and commitment to multiplicity also has relevance for the relations I am describing.



Figures 31-3: Strict surveillance, Autumn St. Studios, Hackney (top); bare brick walls, Village Underground, Shoreditch (middle) and the Dalston bunker.

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