

Gothic subculture has figured its way into Starling's Planet's artistic parlance, bringing with it questions of genre and protocol. Leather trench coats, restrictive modal turns, eyeliner, The Batcave, and sparse beats introduce themselves in a low register as defining features of the scene. Acting as unmediated mirrors of intention in a thought pattern of 'Goth', such cultural signifiers as these are embedded within a pattern of recognition that we have become so accustomed to, that it would be strange, if not downright wrong, to regard these elusive and dark associations as universal, or divorced from their cultural context.¹ In lending a meta-discourse to signifying objects (both animate / inanimate, cultural / material), we are able to ground them in a function beyond their mere utility.² Starling's Planet, in presenting *Frankenstein Wideboy at Nero's '82*, engages with this meta-discourse on various levels - from the microbial to the performative, bringing along with it the promise of embedded snakebite molecules, and the implied memory of Wayne Hussey.

Stumbling upon the friendly intersection between 'genre' and Bakhtin's 'horizon of expectation', Starling's Planet detach and subvert this relation. The slouch towards gleaning listener satisfaction is implicit within both concepts – this is to say that the listener or collocutor obtains a sense of having 'understood' the experience, to the extent that it can be compartmentalised.³ Adorno notes that this derivative 'decoding' model of music reception is regressive in that auditors 'are no longer able to evaluate and discuss critically', thus 'representing the growing power of the culture industry in capitalist societies'.⁴ But the transient genre of Goth supersedes Adorno's musical protocol in that it expresses an active denial of its own label (and subsequent genre), thus destroying the 'horizon of expectation' in the process, in order to establish its own preferred adjectival codes from which it forges its existence.⁵

The dialogic nature of semiotics – the simultaneous allocation and derivation of cultural meaning to and from a set of signifiers – is referenced by Starling's Planet's aesthetic intuition. The space, which doubles as something of 'The

¹ Adena Rosmarin, *The Power of Genre*. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

² Roland Barthes et al., *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968).

³ Joshua Gunn, 'Gothic Music and the Inevitability of Genre' in *Popular Music & Society* (1999), 23:1, pp. 31-50.

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. (New York: Routledge, 1991). pp.26-52.

⁵ Gunn, *ibid*.

Museum of Welsh Life' for Goths, is furnished from memory, playing upon the catalytic drama of objects, and the tangibility of relics. Entering a vacuum within which strategy and drama become performative is an experience comparable only to walking in on the game of chess that took place on the 5th of March, 1968, in Toronto, between Marcel Duchamp and John Cage.⁶ Grandmaster Bronstein and George Smolyan's seminal guidebook, *Chess in The Eighties* (that is referenced briefly in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*⁷) draws a focus to the theatre of deliberation, and can be found to be paraphrased on the care label inside the baby blue interdisciplinary trousers worn by Starling's Planet frontman, Uri d'Obscuree. It reads as follows –

Firstly, the player must 'take joy in creating artistic riches that are imperishable'. Imperishability, in this case signals towards recorded or otherwise documented works (example of which can be found, immortalised, at www.starlingsplanet.home.blog). Secondly, the player must account for 'the pleasure the audience gets from watching an entertaining game' – here, an awareness of the public nature of the game – a hunch that without an audience, creative intensity is brought into question, and the artist remains a prisoner of countless variations. Within the context of Gothic subculture, the identifying public are intrinsic to the dialogue, and are implicit in the cyclical process of creation, observation, and destruction. The third heading makes space for 'the intention to reward the spectator's aesthetic contemplation' as well as tracing a link to beauty – 'there is no complete beauty in existence which does not contain a certain portion of strangeness'.⁸ As Barthes describes the nature of listening as an active practice – a 'shimmering of signifiers' – with its pleather, and glistening Leichner-ed faces, Goth make the ultimate fit.⁹ The fourth and final point concludes with a discussion of the medium at hand being one through which 'ideas may be tested and refined' - a humble rumination on the

⁶ Elton Braces, *email* 2019.

Also: Lowell Cross, 'Reunion: John Cage, Marcel Duchamp, Electronic Music And Chess'. *Leonardo Music Journal*, vol 9, 1999, pp. 35-42. *MIT Press - Journals*, doi:10.1162/096112199750316785.

⁷ P.N. Humble, 'Marcel Duchamp: Chess Aesthete And Anartist Unreconciled'. *Journal Of Aesthetic Education*, vol 32, no. 2, 1998, p. 41. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/3333557.

⁸ Francis Bacon, *Essays, Civil and Moral*. (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909).

⁹ Roland Barthes, 'Listening' in *The Responsibility of Forms*. Trans. Richard Howard. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). pp. 245-60.

‘deep intellectual pleasure’ of working though such a varied and flexible vessel.¹⁰

And so it seems that *Chess in the Eighties*, much like Starling’s Planet’s *Frankenstein Wideboy at Nero’s ’82* makes a case for the staged and performative elements of existence to be pushed to the forefront of the experience. In providing liberation from expectation, and/or a liquorice-black room for the disenfranchised¹¹, Starling’s Planet observe the subversive act of ducking out from under a semiotically produced set of parameters, in the name of counter-culture; satisfying the appetites of those who oppose the subservience of thought, and conformity to square propositional logics.

¹⁰ Davin Bronstein, George Smolyan, *Chess in the Eighties* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1982).

¹¹ Braces, *ibid.*

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