Gnostics of the North, or Music To Recolonize Your Anxious Capitalist Dreams By[1]

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In 1975, the Venezuelan terrorist known as Carlos (born Ilich Ramírez Sánchez) and six accomplices, calling themselves the Arm of the Arab Revolution, raided the annual meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in Vienna. Demanding the liberation of Palestine, they took more than sixty hostages, including the Oil and Energy Ministers of most of the OPEC member states. The OPEC kidnapping is the most notorious entry in Carlos's résumé of political violence. And the geopolitical complexities of the event, its motivations, and its ramifications are far-reaching and profound.

In the 1970s a wave of decolonization swept across Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Asia. Rather than beat a hasty retreat, the former colonial powers reconceived the former colonies as emerging markets and as locations of natural resource extraction. Individual territories were no longer the property of one or another imperial nation, rather they were sites of contestation; of market competition. Initially, this put the newly independent nations of the global south at a disadvantage. Without robust national economies,

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durable infrastructures, and stable governments, these countries were at the scant mercy of the industrial economies of the North. In 1973, when U.S. President Richard Nixon finally allowed the U.S. dollar to float against gold, international exchange rates began to fluctuate wildly. Recently decolonized nations, without the tools to hedge against such fluctuations, found themselves at a significant, new disadvantage. But this new economic order was not played out strictly between nation states. Multinational corporations took advantage of these changing dynamics, stepping into gaps vacated by colonial powers. As Giovanni Arrighi writes, the expansion and consolidation of corporate activities 'created an additional powerful vested interest – the interest of the corporations themselves – in preserving maximum present and future flexibility in the use of Third World resources for the benefit of First World states.' (332)

At the same time, as the newly sovereign states began to claim autonomy and agency with regard to their natural resources, 'the pressure on supplies generated by the expansion of the US regime of accumulation would inevitably implode in the form of 'excessive' competition within and among First World states.' (Arrighi 332) In other words, once decolonized states began to control the extraction, output, and prices of their valued resources, the price mechanism of capitalist markets would drive down real returns on capital investment to levels deemed unacceptable by Northern corporate interests. Crucially, it is in this context that oil becomes a critical global commodity. As the North and West become increasingly dependent on oil for the manufacture and distribution of goods, oil producing nations find themselves newly empowered. In 1973, for the first time, OPEC utilizes the tool of embargo, forcing the price of oil to quadruple in a matter of months. As Arrighi points out,

> The price of crude oil had already begun to rise prior to the 'shock' of 1973. But it was the virtual acknowledgment of defeat by the US government in Vietnam, followed immediately by the shattering of the myth of Israeli invincibility during the Yom Kippur War that energized OPEC into effectively protecting its members from the depreciation of the dollar and in imposing on the First World a substantial oil rent. (Arrighi 333)

According to Quinn Slobodian, 'The oil shock of 1973–1974 placed postcolonial actors at center stage. Robust demands for economic redistribution and stabilization were enshrined in the Declaration of a New International Economic Order championed by the world's poorer nations and passed by the UN General Assembly in 1974.' (18) Needless to say, the powers of the global North did not lay down and die. Instead, they imagined into being a new model of capitalism, based on the rhetoric of anti-totalitarianism and freedom: of individuals and markets; and on the material reality of policies and practices constructed to ensure that markets would be insulated from the untoward influence of the 'unwanted' actors of the newly unshackled global South. Slobodian refers to this effort as the 'encasement' of markets. Rather than freeing markets from all the tethers of regulation, oversight, and state interference – as the story has been told through successive mouthpieces: Von Mises, Hayek, Reagan, Thatcher, Friedman, Greenspan, Sarkozy, Merkel, Blankfein, Dimon, Geithner, and Summers – Slobodian suggests that what neoliberals have actually done is to build a political economy whose primary responsibility is to encase the market in a shell, protecting it from outside influences such as governments, electorates, indeed from the corruptions of democracy. The result is not a market that freely responds to evolving realities of lived experience, but a market that obeys only its own, hermetic self-perpetuating logic, continuing to serve the same actors it has always served.

Olivier Assayas's 2010 film, *Carlos* is an epic, five-and-a-half hour examination of the events of which Carlos was both a cause and effect. The film traces the woven structure of Carlos's activities and of international affairs, the ebbs and flows of global power distribution. Key scenes are soundtracked by music that had not yet been produced during the times represented in the film. Instead, at significant junctures, Assayas uses Postpunk music, recorded five to fifteen years after the facts depicted. About this music, the esteemed music critic, Greil Marcus, has written,

> the songs raise the question of whether the best and most adventurous music of the late 1970s and early 1980s was itself as animated by international terrorism, by the specter of a world where, at times, it could seem that only a few armed gnostics were in control, as by anything else. (Marcus)

What kind of claim is this: aesthetic, legal, ethical, historical? What does it mean to say that music is animated by terrorism? How might such a claim affect our understanding of the music in question, of international terrorism, of the task of the critic? A first step might be to decode the terms invoked: 'the best and most adventurous music of the late 70s and early 80s;' 'international terrorism' – specifically the terrorism of that era, the terrorism that historically-speaking could have served as the music's animating force; we need to decode the notion that 'only a few armed gnostics were in control;' and lastly, we need to understand how music is used in Assayas's film.

The music in *Carlos* that Greil Marcus characterizes as 'best' and 'most adventurous' is part of a big, amorphous moment in popular music known as Postpunk. The soundtrack includes songs by the Feelies, New Order, the Dead Boys, and a number of songs by the band, Wire. Of these, the Feelies and Wire bear the most immediate similarities to each other: arty, nerdy, fast, and nervous. New Order is less of each of these things, but via their emergence from the ashes of the band Joy Division, who all but invented arty, nerdy, fast, and nervous, they bear genetic similarities to the Feelies and Wire. Cleveland, Ohio's Dead Boys would seem to be the true outlier here. Their contribution, the song 'Sonic Reducer,' predates the other Postpunk songs, and the designation of the movement itself, by a few years. The song was released in 1977, but had been written and performed some years earlier, originally by Rocket from the Tombs the protopunk group that spawned not only Dead Boys, but also the Brechtian art-punk ensemble, Pere Ubu. Dead Boys qualify as fast and nervous, but rejected arty and nerdy in favor of more classic rock and roll adjectives like *Young, Loud, and Snotty*, the title of their debut album.

Surely, what Marcus has in mind when he claims that 'only a few

armed gnostics were in control,' is the fast-paced, virile, cinematic vision of sunglassed, bereted, militants on tarmacs beside the airliners of jet travel's golden age; lone wolves and romantic fighter figures piercing the stability of the world order like scimitars through snake-filled baskets. But the facts of the global geopolitics of the 1970s immediately and irredeemably complicate this myth. First, for Marcus, international terrorism and armed gnostics in control are meant to live on the same side of history's ledger. The gnostics *are* the terrorists. But as we've just rehearsed, there is another group of gnostics, with far greater access to the levers of power, knowledge, and value production: oil ministers, CEOs of petrochemical firms, central bankers, the International Monetary Fund. History's ledger might then put these gnostics in one column and the terrorists in another: debits opposed to credits. Or, thinking historically, chronologically, syllogistically: the gnostics of colonialism, the King Leopolds and their progeny, might be conceived as the cause of the effect that was international terrorism. If we register the gnosticism of the Prime Ministers and Presidents of the era of decolonialization and their cousins, the CEOs of British Petroleum and Exxon, Tate & Lyle, General Motors, Halliburton, Unilever, Nestle… along with their caretakers – the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF – we are forced to concede that it was not the terrorists who possessed the esoteric knowledge employed to lubricate and motivate the works of history's machine.

Max Weber famously defined the State as that entity which maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. But under neoliberalism, with so many traditional State functions offloaded to the private sector, this monopoly on violence is extended to the board room. As Judith Butler notes, 'the physical blow cannot be the only model for thinking about what violence is. Anything that jeopardizes the lives of others through explicit policy or through negligence—and that would include all kinds of public policies or state policies—are practices of institutional or systemic violence.' (Butler) The colonial powers ceded authority to multinational corporations. As a result violence no longer takes the form of the whip hand, but of economic oppression, restricted access to healthcare and education, and barriers

to democratic participation, all implicitly sanctioned by the State in its abdication of the mechanisms of security, provision, and control. Under neoliberalism, the loci of legitimate violence include the board room of the multinational corporation, but not the jungle encampment, the barrio, or the equally multinational organizations with divisions focused on markets – black and otherwise – in arms, banking, and drugs. This untenable distinction, however, is precisely the one that tautologically defines the 'international terrorists' as those without a claim to legitimate violence, thereby designating their actions as 'terrorism.'

Gnostics, it seems are everywhere, bearing different arms, but armed nonetheless. And when we track the details of the OPEC kidnapping, which ended with none of its intended executions, no political concessions, and with supposedly-friendly Arab states denying the Arm of the Arab Revolution permission even to land their DC10, we start to see that the gnostics in control were not and had never been synonymous with the the terrorists. So Marcus isn't simply wrong when he says that it seemed 'that only a few armed gnostics were in control.' He is complicatedly wrong. There is some truth in his assertion, but it is a different truth than the one he had in mind. Via a similarly tautological loop, equating the 'best' and 'most adventurous' music with a glamorous-hipster imaginary of the global terrorist, conjures a vision borrowed from the mythology of rock and roll itself, hearkening back to the very image and ethos that Punk and then Postpunk allegedly disavowed. Carlos is a rock star in all the banal senses of the term.

A more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of 1970s terrorism and of Postpunk's various splinter groups, shifts the meaning of Marcus's claim. But one has to do quite a bit of cultural math in order to work out this formula for the music used in *Carlos*. If the Feelies and Wire were 'arty,' 'nerdy,' 'fast,' and 'nervous,' Carlos, as depicted in the film, is none of these things. Rather he is professional, cool, deliberate, and steady. What we hear is interestingly at odds with what we see. If the music is animated by anything germane to the film, it is not Carlos as 'armed gnostic,' but the anxiety of the age; an anxiety

felt most acutely by the 'gnostics' of the North. This is the anxiety we hear in the skittery, caffeinated rhythms of the Feelies – the guitars strummed as if by pistons, but self-consciously human. There is no pretense to virtuosity or godlikeness. Instead, the Feelies present as the attentive kid in chemistry class. Their music suggests machinicity, but it's faulty, pre-industrial, more art than science, a product, not of the assembly line, but of the suburban garage and all its quotidian insufficiencies. The anxiety that pulses through the Feelies reflects, not the itchy Marxist trigger finger, so much as the clattering stock ticker and the flailing efforts of economists to diagnose and tame unforeseen beasts ('stagflation,' for instance) as we wait in line at the gas pumps in the 'way back' of the family station wagon. What animates this music is instability and perturbation. It is not renegade or revolutionary, or even, so much as directly critical. Rather, it reflects a disturbance that juddered through the commonplaces of 70s European and North American culture: the recognition of shifting centers of power, a new awareness that comforting Keynesian certainties were unexpectedly tenuous, Nixon's televised demonstrations of the paranoiac desperation for power. In short, this music announces, in a neo-Attalian manner, the advent of the precarity endemic to what we now recognize as the era of neoliberalism.

The music chosen by Assayas is taken from the artier, artschoolier, end of the Postpunk spectrum, what critic Simon Reynolds describes as 'the playful process-oriented art school sensibility that informed Wire and Talking Heads, … post-Eno art punk as 'formalism,' decadent and disengaged, arty for artinesses' sake.' (Reynolds 181) This brand of Postpunk is animated by aesthetic Modernism, by experimentation; Poundian exhortations to 'make it new,' and Adornian convictions that formal invention embodies a politics even when the specific nature of that politics remains unspoken. The agitations and antagonisms of the political economy of the 1970s are more directly evident in the music of other bands of the era.

Gang of Four were an agitprop advertising agency for a kind of funky Marxism that could flourish on the dancefloor, even if it was

floundering on Britain's picket lines and at the ballot box. Their airtight angularity and penchant for sloganesque choruses are the inevitable products of a generation that Jean-Luc Godard dubbed 'the children of Marx and Coca Cola.' Gang of Four performed the contradiction of commodified dissent. Whether such a contradiction cancels out political efficacy or forces a reckoning with its own constitutive estrangement is, of course, in the ear (or false consciousness) of the beholder. Crass were a gutterpunk commune; representatives of a romantic, rejectionist anarchism. Their insistent anti-commercialism kept them determinedly out of the mainstream. Unlike, Gang of Four, they received little attention from outlets like the NME, Melody Maker, and the BBC. This has always been the dilemma of leftist aesthetics: participate in the corrupting mechanisms of capitalism in order to communicate to a broad audience, or resist commodification and limit the reach of the work to those already in the artistic- and political-know. Nowhere is this tension played out more dramatically than in the career of Scritti Politti, a squat-dwelling collective who named themselves in tribute to Antonio Gramsci's politics and Little Richard's glossolalian glee. They made skittery, skeletal, deconstructed music with occasional wisps of sweet melody sung by primary songwriter, Green Gartside, who as a teeneager had founded a branch of the Young Communists in his hometown of Cwmbran, Wales. They wrote songs called 'Hegemony,' 'Skank Bloc Bologna' (referencing multi-racial ska music, Gramscian theory, and the seat of the Italian Communists), 'Jacques Derrida,' and indeed 'Opec – Immac' (in which Gartside sings, '14 nations and they're all producing oil'). Scritti Politti travelled a Tiresian path, their early years spent in the underground of British Postpunk, critically lauded but decidedly uncommercial, and then, after a conscious decision to reach the masses, a rise to the top of the British and American charts accompanied by a visual makeover and an embrace of electronic instruments and Black American dance music.

There are many other overtly political Punk and Postpunk bands to choose from, which is what draws curious attention to Assayas's chosen music. The Clash's Joe Strummer made a habit of wearing an RAF star, leading West German Punk bands to adopt the symbol

as a standard element of their aesthetic iconography. (Shahan 372) Film critic, Manohla Dargis, suggests that, rather than an analogy of terrorist violence or as a representation of the tenor of the times, the songs constitute an imaginary, self-curated soundtrack compiled, not by Assayas, but by the self-absorbed Carlos,

> as the guitars [of New Order's 'Dreams Never End'] carry over into the next scene — a seemingly unremarkable yet crucial pause in the action in which Carlos listens to a report about the bombing and then clutches his genitals while gazing in a mirror — the music feels a lot less like an empty device, one used simply to pump the story, and more like the soundtrack you might expect to be playing inside the head of a world-class self-mythologizer like this one. (Dargis)

If, as Dargis suggests, Assayas chose the music he did, not to soundtrack the desperate rationale and violent results of the film's terrorist acts, as much as to establish Carlos's rock star pretensions, then this would still seem the wrong batch of songs. The Feelies, New Order, and Wire were self-consciously counter-cultural. Their music and self-presentation were constructed as overt rejoinders to rock star mythologization. If, in fact, Carlos played a self-serving sound track in his head in the mid-70s, in all likelihood it would have relied on the tough, hedonistic, libertine, imaginary of classic rock and heavy metal: AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones.

Assayas's use of Postpunk makes more sense if we think of these songs as animating, not the activities or self-regard of the gnostic terrorists bursting into meeting rooms with machine guns and berets, but the effects disseminated by those seated at the meeting room table just before the doors fly open: the gnostic capitalists of the Global North and those recently liberated from the North's oppression by dint of their sudden access to global markets. The Postpunk on the *Carlos* soundtrack is understood most productively as animated by the dis-ease and the disease of late-Capitalism as it suffers the contortions of its metamorphosis from the stabilized system of the Washington Consensus to the jittery, destabilized realities of 70s malaise at the moment of friction between Thatcher and Reagan's ascendance and

the declaration of a New International Economic Order.

To align Punk and Postpunk with the moment of international terrorism is to position this music as expressive of the neuroses of life under global capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and the authoritarian tendencies of Western liberal democracies as they transitioned from World War to Cold War to the U.S. War on Terror, waged to quell the uprisings of the so-called Third World. But such an alignment overlooks the salient fact that Punk and Postpunk also positioned themselves very consciously against the previous generation's modes and methods of resistance to the same social, economic, and political forces. Punk was just as much anti-hippie as it was anti-authoritarian. Looking back at what animated the music of the late-1960s offers meaningful counterpoints from which to assess Marcus's claims about Postpunk and the terrorism of the 1970s.

These counterpoints come immediately to the surface in Jean-Luc Godard's 1968 film *One Plus One.* The film is a bricolage of footage, characters, settings, and signifiers. It juxtaposes footage of the Rolling Stones recording the follow-up to *Their Satanic Majesties Request,* their dalliance with psychedelia. Due perhaps to tepid critical response to that album, the Stones subsequent albums herald a return to their roots in Black American music. Nevertheless, the Stones appear in the film in *haute* hippie splendor: flouncy shirts, pink flares, and red leather boots. The footage of the Stones working on preliminary arrangements of the song, 'Sympathy for the Devil,' alternates with staged *tableaux vivants* related to the socio-political events of the late-60s. A group of Black men loiter in an automobile junkyard in London's Battersea neighborhood, reciting revolutionary texts by African American activists including LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka) and Eldridge Cleaver, distributing rifles, assaulting and murdering a trio of white flower-child women dressed in flowing white gowns. In a paperback bookstore, the proprietor reads aloud from *Mein Kampf*, while patrons pay for their purchases with Nazi salutes and by slapping the faces of two teenage hippie-boy hostages who spout Maoist and Marxist slogans. A three man film crew – with camera and microphone – traipse

through the forest at the heels of an interviewer lobbing political and philosophical questions at a young woman named Eve Democracy (played by Godard's then-wife Anne Wiazemsky).

The film abruptly confronts its own representations. The Stones' pastiche bluesiness crashes into Jones' *Blues People*, and, shortly thereafter, his essay 'The Changing Same' in which Jones declares that 'not only the Beatles, but any group of Myddle-class white boys who need a haircut and male hormones can be a pop group.' He accuses such Myddle-class white boys of 'stealing Music . . . stealing energy (lives): with their own concerns and lives finally, making it White Music.' (Jones 1966, 205) The viewer is enticed with the sumptuousness of a rock group in an expensive London studio – multi-colored baffles, Vox amplifiers, Gibson guitars – recording what we now know to be a classic rock anthem, while a 35 millimeter film crew trains its cinematographic eye on the creative labor that attests to the band's genius. But the basis of that enticement is cut off at the knees by Jones' indictment. What are we to make of the Stones' bourgeois luxury, evidenced by the ample studio time which allows them to figure out their new song and experiment with different instrumentation and arrangements while the record label foots the bill for the studio's ticking clock? We are aware, of course, that this luxury is bought with the spoils of the very theft of which Jones (Baraka) has accused them. The Stones, named after a Muddy Waters song, learned their craft and made their name in obsequious devotion to African America bluesmen like Waters, Robert Johnson, and Howlin' Wolf and to the nascent rock and roll birthed at Chicago's Chess Records by Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry. And what of the song they are constructing before our eyes and ears? These Myddle-class white boys play at being the devil himself, pulling the strings of a cast of historical puppets ranging from Pontius Pilate to the Bolsheviks storming the Winter Palace to a Nazi General and the Kennedys' assassins, Lee Harvey Oswald and Sirhan Sirhan. The song doesn't so much tap into the late-60s zeitgeist as proto-tweet about it. The Stones don the revolutionary garb of the times. But as Godard seems intent on demonstrating, their investment is wholly in the vestments.

But it would be a mistake to see *One Plus One* as a simple bad-versus-good-portrait of the Stones and Black militants. The later scenes inevitably complicate such a view by placing side by side (one plus one) Maoist hippie boys and a neo-Nazi book seller (played by the film's producer, Iain Quarrier), and then the idyllic Eve Democracy (portrayed as a pre-Raphaelite-hippie version of a Socialist Realist peasant) in contrast to the crass film crew with their media apparatus and their banal yes/no questions that deny access to the thoughts of Democracy herself. When we add up all these ones plus one, we don't arrive at clean twos. Nor are we supplied with the tools to forge an Hegelian synthesis. Rather, we must filter each element through the mesh of the other. In every case, the mesh is media – books and broadsides, cameras and tape recorders, the baring of Godard's own filmic apparatus – all assuming the role of the facilitators of messages, of action, of the construction of subjects. The Black militants are produced by the Jones and Cleaver texts that they recite and record with handheld tape machines. The Rolling Stones are produced (in the vernacular of their field) by the rolling of tape. Eve Democracy is produced by the film crew (filmed, of course, by Godard's film crew). As Patrick Burke notes,

> In *One Plus One* Godard takes a wary view of rock's revolutionary and racial rhetoric. Rather than assume a direct, uncomplicated correspondence between the energy and style of rock and political and cultural revolution, Godard's film pushes viewers to acknowledge the then unfashionable possibility that both rock music and revolutionary politics are social and textual constructions created through the circulation of borrowed texts rather than rooted in any essential reality. (Burke 277)

Godard asks us to see all the revolutionary posturing of *One Plus One* as commensurate. The Stones are no less – but no more – radical then the junkyard militants, the bookstore Maoists, or verdant Democracy strolling through the forest. Nor are the Black radicals the real deal and the Stones the posers. Mediated by technology, by character typology, by language, by a locus of tropes, every identity and identity position is constructed: reclaimed readymades with readymade intentions and destinations. This can't be seen as a condemnation or a dismissal of any

of the film's characters. None is more or less real than any other. None is more authentic or more artificial. None is true nor false. Rather, in the final analysis, each must be judged by how it passes through the mesh of its context, by what it allows to pass through its own mesh, and, thus, by its effects in the world. Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party, and Mick Jagger, singer in a British rock and roll band: each knows how to play his part, each knows how to literally walk the walk and talk the talk. And each passes through the other.

Just a month before the start of filming of *One Plus One* in London, Conservative British MP, Enoch Powell, delivered what has come to be known as the 'Rivers of Blood' speech in Birmingham. Powell's belligerent paranoia about immigration to Britain, especially from colonies of the Commonwealth made headlines across the country. Quoting Virgil, he speculated about a future in which 'Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood." And citing a conversation with a constituent, he predicted that 'in this country in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man.' (Yeginsu) It is unclear if Godard was aware of Powell's speech. But the film's scenes of Black men molesting and killing White women while reciting incendiary texts in a junkyard that resembles a cinematic dystopia play like a Swiftian satire of Powell's racist delusions. While Burke interprets the Black revolutionaries in the junkyard as 'obviously archetypes,' (290) it is also important to recognize them as grotesqueries born of White Britain's declining-Empire paranoia.

The deliberate staging of the scene constructs a kind of reciprocal relationship between media and message. 'They speak not in their own words, but only through quotations from such writers as Baraka and Cleaver, often read directly from their sources. These quotations are filtered through layers of alienating technology, dictated into microphones and tape recorders that create an artificial distance between the speakers and their speech.' (Burke 290) Information is formed by the allowances and limitations of given media and the ways in which these media-formations effect the messages they convey. The

mass market paperback commodifies Cleaver's dissent, transforming the rhetoric of revolution into the kind of dime store pulp we encounter later in the bookshop scene. Burke draws our attention to Raymond Durgnat's review of *One Plus One*, in which he argues that 'all the impedimenta of communication (from books through tape-recorders to a-camera-before-the-cameras)' signaled that 'an iron (or safety) curtain of theory has dropped across the world's stage. Life is reduced to footnotes about the theory of life's possibility.' (Durgnat, cited in Burke 290) Burke goes on to compare Godard's use of recording technology to Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) and Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974), 'in which photography or audio recording lead their users into paranoia and confusion rather than an enhanced understanding of the world around them.' (Burke 291)

Godard's emphasis on recording and inscription media devices (audio, film, text) saturates *One Plus One*. Cameras and microphones frame Eve Democracy during her sylvan interview. And in the film's final scene, introduced by a title card bearing a punily modified Situationist slogan, 'Under The Stones The Beach,' Eve Democracy reappears, rifle in hand, scampering frantically across a beach. She is shot by a White man in a leather jacket, who is shot in return by a Black man in a dashiki. The Black man helps Democracy to her feet. They run across a set of camera dolly tracks. Democracy falls again, and is assisted again by the Black man. Godard himself enters the scene, urging the two actors forward. She falls a third time, at the wheels of a camera crane. Godard takes a jar of red paint from an assistant and pours it across Democracy's prone body. The Black man helps her onto the camera-end of the crane's arm where two flags, one black (anarchist) and one red (communist) flap noisily in the seaside wind. Democracy is hoisted up on the crane's arm and the film ends with us gazing up at her lifeless body prone at the feet of the camera and the billowing flags, all set against the blue sky.

Of course, such baring of the device is typical of Godard. It is, in many ways, his signature gesture. But here the emphasis on technological inscription and recording are just as much content as

form. The Stones, and recorded popular music more generally, are the most technologically-embedded of cultural forms. Pop music is a form that lives only in and for recording with no life outside of that context. A recorded pop song has no existence prior to its recording. There may be live performances. But the song as an artifact only comes into being with and by the recording process. Cinema, on the other hand (or at least cinema prior to computer-generated imagery), always starts from pre-existent reality. Even if Godard can correct a misguided viewer, saying, 'your difficulties stem from the false idea you have that people on the screen are made of flesh and blood. Whereas what you see are shadows and you reproach these shadows for not being alive,' (quoted in Elshaw), it is still true that cinema builds on a foundation of real people and objects in real space. As Samuel Thomas adds it up, 'faces and names deliver momentary associations and impressions; associations and impressions become networks and structures; networks and structures become nation states; nation states become entities in a much larger game of geo-political chess and so on.' (Thomas 472) Pop music, conversely, builds from no preceding reality and is inextricably bound to its status as recording. While the Black radicals in the junkyard may be *partially* constructed by the texts they recite and the machines they use to record themselves, and while Eve Democracy's life and death may be *partially* products of cameras and microphones (she was, as we've noted, played by Anne Wiazemsky, who was married to Godard and presumably accompanied him home when shooting wrapped), the Rolling Stones are *entirely* made by the form of the information they record, and are also the makers of the recorded form that is popular music at the advent of its power as neoliberal commodity. In both cases – cinema and pop music – the medium is inexorably engaged in a feedback loop with the world, with history, politics, economics, and so on. But the role played by mediation and the specific influence it exerts is qualitatively different. Godard orbits his film around the Stones in the studio because they represent the strongest form of recorded media's sway over the meaning and manifestation of information.

If we ask what animates 'Sympathy for the Devil' or the Rolling Stones' music more generally, *One Plus One* replies with a more

complicated diagnosis than the one that Marcus offers about Postpunk. Global interconnectedness cuts in more than one direction. Or, more accurately, like a Molotov cocktail, shards discharge in unpredictable trajectories and velocities, igniting intended and unintended targets. At the same time that Eldridge Cleaver is recognizing that the conditions driving the struggles of African Americans are part of a planetary movement of colonized peoples against their capitalist, imperialist oppressors, the Rolling Stones are transporting the sounds and styles of African Americans to the capital of the British Empire, converting, not the labor, but the culture of slavery's descendants into unimaginable wealth. Russian tanks trundle into Prague. Bullets end the lives of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Harrowing battles immolate the streets of Chicago. The filming of *One Plus One* is interrupted as Godard returns to Paris to participate in the events of May, France erupting in a fury of unprecedented scale and speed. It is at once too easy and woefully inadequate to claim that such complicated currents have either a single origin or a unified destination. Liberation and domination often progress in tandem along parallel tracks. King's assassination prompts Lyndon Johnson to sign the 1968 Civil Rights Act. But a few months later Richard Nixon is elected President on a platform of institutional racism that he calls, using a code that is still transparent to all, 'law and order.'

As much as Punk and Postpunk rejected the naivete of the Summer of Love, they had no choice but to accept the inheritances of 1968. It was Nixon, after all, who removed the U.S. dollar from the gold standard, allowing alternate markets to compete for economic dominance via monetary policy. When Marcus says that Postpunk is 'as animated by international terrorism, …as by anything else,' he is, perhaps unknowingly, connecting the music of the *Carlos* soundtrack to the complicated contexts of *One Plus One*; to the Black Power movement, to the Rolling Stones, to the Blues, to the unprocessed fumes of fascism in Europe, and to a radical Leftism to which Godard was becoming increasingly dedicated. It is not difficult to connect the dots of global anti-colonialism (including anti-Vietnam War protests and the Civil Rights movement), the Cold War's new varieties of imperialism, the

burgeoning generation gap, and growing awareness of institutionalized wealth inequality, to the emergence of violence as a political tool in the Middle East (the PLO), Italy (the Red Brigades), Japan (the Red Army), the U.S. (the Black Panthers and the Weather Underground), and elsewhere. Many of Carlos's comrades in the 70s emerged from the same radical German left that spawned the Baader Meinhof Gang (also known as the Red Army Faction, or RAF). Their cause was both internationalist and, given Germany's recent past, anti-nationalist.

> German terrorism of the 1970s shared many of the revolutionary fantasies of German students that linked their struggles against capitalist oppression of 'third world' countries and against former National Socialists in positions of political or economic power (such as Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger and industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer), for example, with those of the Vietcong against American capitalist imperialism. (Shahan 369-70)

It is only amidst the tumult of such concatenations that a figure like Carlos could emerge. Named Ilich Ramírez Sánchez by his Marxist father, the Venezuelan studied at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow and graduated to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, training in Jordan and Syria. He adopted the *nom de guerre*, Carlos, in tribute to President Carlos Andrés Pérez Rodríguez, who nationalized the Venezuelan oil industry. So in 1975, when he carried out his most famous mission, storming the OPEC meeting in Vienna, and kidnapping some sixty hostages including ministers of more than ten Arab nations, we have a Venezuelan, named after Lenin, re-named after a Venezuelan progressive, schooled in Moscow at a University named after the first Prime Minister of the independent Democratic Republic of the Congo, kidnapping Arab leaders – newly powerful due to their oil reserves – on behalf of the Palestinian cause. As Samuel Thomas notes, Carlos is a 'name that is deeply connected to both the traversal and reassertion of the boundaries between fact and fiction, the interchange between overground and underground, and indeed the boundaries of the law, the nation state and so on.' (Thomas 460-61)

Assayas's use of Postpunk in *Carlos* similarly traverses and reasserts.

On the one hand, the music allows the film to traverse time and history, to fast forward, as it were, from the mid-70s of oil embargoes, terrorism, and the destabilization of First World dominance to the early-80s of Reagan and Thatcher's ensconcing of neoliberal priorities and policies, the encasement of First World market dominance over the mechanics of global geopolitics. On the other hand, the music reasserts a use of rock and roll that owes allegiance to 1970s filmmakers like Scorsese and Coppola. By the same token, this reassertion recasts the traversal of time as yet another reassertion of the claim staked by neoliberalism over everything within its market purview. This neoliberal 'everything' is often imagined, by champions and detractors alike, as totalizing; literally everything. Nothing is left behind. 'There is no alternative' to this everything, as Thatcher infamously put it. But Postpunk was meant to separate itself from that music and the self-assured bravura that led the directors to use it. Postpunk claimed to represent an alternative. Bands like the Feelies and Wire were supposed to be different from the Doors and the Stones, rejecting self-mythologizing and push-button musical affect in favor of less off-the-shelf sounds and senses. Postpunk, so the story went, was not so easily susceptible to recuperation by the machinery of mass media commodity.

This is what I meant when I wrote above that Greil Marcus gets it complicatedly wrong when he asserts 'the best and most adventurous music of the late 1970s and early 1980s was itself as animated by international terrorism, by the specter of a world where, at times, it could seem that only a few armed gnostics were in control, as by anything else.' The use of the music in *Carlos* does damage to the music's adventurousness. And Marcus's claim, based as it is on the way the music is used, does further damage, tying the music to the use of the Stones in a film like Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (but *not* to their use in Godard's *One Plus One*). The resulting contradiction may be the most productive aspect of the film's soundtrack. It is the same contradiction that confronts political violence: whatever radical effect such violence might have at first, is quickly subsumed into political praxis. To smash the State's monopoly on violence requires a usurpation of a violence, that starts as renegade and unjustifiable, but, if successful becomes

sanctioned and official. The thing itself remains the same, but its meaning shifts as it moves to the center. Via the coup, the terrorists become the State. Of course, this problem, in both its aesthetic and political formulations, is the problem that has obsessed Godard for all of his six decades of filmmaking.

In his insightful reading of media representations of Carlos, 'Yours in Revolution: Retrofitting Carlos the Jackal.,' Samuel Thomas has this to say about Assayas's use of Wire's song 'Drill,'

> the yelped, incantatory lyrics function as a sort of choric device: 'How's it with you? / What's your form? / Your outline, shape or form / How's your price? / What do you cost? / Your value, profit or loss / How's your skull? Does it fit? / Is your mind free, empty or split?'26 As it should now be clear, the effect is not intrusively 'experimental' and this unlikely 'chorus' does not disturb the film's ground-level sense of space and time. Rather, we must recognise such questions as embedded in the raw materials of the film's composition and in the theoretical/experiential processes of the editing suite. (Thomas 474)

This observation passes with the alacrity of a jump cut. But it's worth slowing it down and comparing it with Marcus's claim. Thomas notices that the experimentalism that is usually explicit in Wire's music is neutralized by the way it is integrated into the scene. Even the cut-and-spliced lyrics, desperate and accusatory, settle down at ground level. What animates the music here is not international terrorism, or at least not only or simply that. It is animated at least as much by the allowances and limitations of the editing suite; of sitting in a darkened room for days on end, beholden to the exigencies of the medium of film and of the noun 'film,' the particular object being constructed with images and sound. The music in the film is animated by a certain conception of what cinema is, what a film is, what a soundtrack is; by the demands of the market, by producers' investments, by a directorial career in progress. In other words, it is animated by the vast complex of capital as it feeds and is fed by the conversion of use into exchange, of labor into commodity, of life into lifestyle.

So perhaps in the end Marcus is not so much complicatedly wrong

as complicatedly and inadvertently right. There are indeed gnostics in control. But they are not the armed gnostics that Marcus has in mind: Carlos and his band. They are the gnostics of the board room, the stockholders' meeting, the cinema chains, and the financers who greenlight Assayas's five-and-a-half hour film. Punk and Postpunk may begin as renegade and unjustifiable, but, before long they are sanctioned and official. The thing itself remains the same, but its meaning shifts as it moves to the center. Arty, nerdy, fast, and nervous, vacate the periphery as they turn up in car ads, as radio bumper music, over supermarket sound systems, on television and film soundtracks. Via the coup, the terrorists become the State.

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