Glam Rock and Funk Alter-Egos, Fantasy, and the Performativity of Identities

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The emergence of desire, and hence our biological response, is thus bound up in our ability to fantasize, to inhabit an imagined scenario that, in turn, 'produces what we understand as sexuality' (Whitely 251).

Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy? Caught in a landslide, no escape from reality" (Queen, "Bohemian Rhapsody").

Abstract

The following article explores different conceptions of fantasy and science fiction that characterized many popular music performances in the 1970's predominantly in the genres of glam rock and funk. By focusing on a few artists that were at the peak of their music careers at this time, such as David Bowie, P-Funk, Queen, Labelle and others, it attempts to un-earth some historical conditions for women, queers, and people of color and reveal how these artists have attempted to escape and transform certain realities by transgressing the boundaries of real/fiction, masculinity/ femininity, race, sexuality, and the "alien".

Key words: Glam rock, Funk, music, science fiction, queer, gender, race

Resumen

El siguiente artículo explora las diferentes concepciones de fantasía y ciencia ficción que caracterizan muchas formas de actuación en la música popular de los años setentas, predominantemente en los géneros de *glam rock* y *funk*. Pondré especial atención en algunos artistas que estuvieron en el ápice de su carrera musical en este tiempo como David Bowie,

P-Funk, Queen, Labelle, y otros quienes intentaron traer a la realidad temas sobre condiciones históricas en mujeres, *queers* y personas de color . Asimismo, demostraré la forma en que estos artistas intentaron escapar y transformar ciertas realidades mediante la trasgresión de los límites entre realidad/ficción, masculinidad/feminidad, la raza, la sexualidad y el "alien".

Palabras claves: *Glam rock, Funk*, música, ciencia ficción, *queer*, género, raza

The two quotes by Whitely and Queen at the beginning of this article point to a fairly obvious connection between fantasy, desire, and popular music. Both listening to and performing music is, in part, a projection of our fantasies and desire to create (or exist in) a world we do not quite inhabit, yet these fantasies are also constructed by our social "realities". As Butler explains, construction is "neither a subject nor its act, but a process of reiteration by which both 'subjects' and 'acts' come to appear at all" (*Bodies* 9). In effect, what fantasies we are afforded and what personas we are able to perform and 'absorb' into our identities are set into action (and limited) by the social conditions of a particular time and place, yet these performances also (often quite skillfully) put into affect future social "realities". So considering that certain genders, sexualities, and races have been figured outside of the realm of the 'human' in Western history, this paper questions how various Glam Rock and Funk performers in the 1970's have subverted these claims and created an alternate reality where they can forge a unique existence through fantasy and performance. As Halberstam and Livingston write, "Posthuman bodies are not slaves to masterdiscourses but emerge at nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourses of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context" (2).

In the song "Bohemian Rhapsody" quoted at the beginning of this paper, the line that immediately follows is: *"Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see."* It is this "looking up to the skies," not toward a god or a 'heaven' but towards the stars, the universe, and the "alien" in popular music that interests me. Therefore, this paper explores different conceptions of fantasy and science fiction that characterized many popular music performances in the 1970's predominantly in the genres of glam rock and funk (although many of these performers queer the boundaries of the genres). By specifically focusing on a few artists that were at the peak of their music careers at this time, such as David Bowie, P-Funk, Queen, Labelle and others, this article attempts to un-earth some historical conditions for women, queers, and people of color and reveal how these artists have attempted to escape and transform certain realities by transgressing the boundaries of real/fiction, time and space, masculinity/femininity, race, sexuality, and the "alien" as well as the limitations of their performances. Like Whitely, "I have chosen to focus primarily on the 1970's—a period

when fantasy was arguably preferable to the continuing problems associated with gay identity within the real and unforgiving world of popular music," but I also want to explore how fantasy and science fiction became a more viable 'reality' for multiple subject formations in popular music and put future relations into effect (260).

Considering the racism, sexism, homophobia, the Vietnam War, Watergate, Cold War politics, Nixon, anti-colonial struggles, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, the intensification of capitalism as well as the emergence of Star Trek and the "success" Space Program in general, we can see how certain artists who were marginalized in regards to gender, race and/or sexuality or simply rejected the values of the white heterosexual suburbia might look to space, not as more territory to colonize, but as a place not yet colonized, and a place that can be utilized in the subversion of an oppressive society. As Whitely writes, "Popular music provides a specific insight into the ways in which fantasy…can signal both what is denied and what we would like to experience. Likewise, fantasy, as is a setting for desire, provides a particular space for the performer herself, allowing access to otherwise prohibited thoughts and acts via subversion of performance codes associated with particular music genres" (251). So when we apply this understanding of fantasy and desire to artists such as Freddie Mercury from Queen**,** who gained popularity towards the end of glam rock, we see the emergence of stage personas that are created directly from lived reality, but also function as an attempt to escape and subvert certain realities.

Freddie Mercury was born Farrokh Bulsara on the African Island of Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) of Indian Parsi heritage, and went to boarding school in India, where he started going by Freddie (Davis 1). After he finished school, he returned to Zanzibar, but did not stay long before he and his family moved to England during the Zanzibar revolution. In England, Mercury started the band Queen and legally changed his name to Freddie Mercury (2). According to some of Mercury's friends, changing his name also signaled a moving away from his former identity. As quoted to David Bret, "[Farrokh] Bulsara was a name he had buried. He never wanted to talk about any period in his life before he became Freddie Mercury, and everything about Freddie Mercury was a self-constructed thing" (Bret 20). His family suggested that by not highlighting his Parsi heritage, he was sheltering himself from the racism against British Asians (Taraporevala 172). Yet it wasn't just Mercury's Parsi heritage that he did not embrace publicly in his identity, he also was not open about his sexuality for many years and did not disclose his HIV status until right before he died. Obviously, this is due to homophobia as well as the intense fear by a mainstream public and many rock fans of HIV positive or people with AIDS. Even though the early 70's was characterized by *more* acceptance of gay and lesbian identities (after the Stonewall Riots, England's decriminalization of homosexual acts, the Sexual Revolution, as well as the gender fluidity that characterized glam rock), there was also considerable backlash towards these accomplishments and

many people still voiced their overt hatred of gay and lesbian individuals and communities. Furthermore, when AIDS was first discovered, it was (and is) characterized as a gay disease and god's way punishing the queers. As Whitely points out, "While Queen's popularity can be related to the ascendancy of glam and glitter in the early to mid-1970's, it is apparent that the flirtation with androgyny and sexuality that characterized many of its prominent performers…was not accompanied by an acceptance of gay sexuality by the general public" (253).

With so many barriers threatening to hurt his musical career and personal life, it is not hard to understand why he would create an alter-ego identity that subverts these systems (while maintaining his commercial success and sanity). After all, many queer people and people of color have done/do this all the time: pass as white to avoid discrimination and hate, pass as straight to keep one's job and safety. They often do while making changes from the inside and waiting for the right moment when they have the power to affect a greater change. We are constantly sacrificing parts of ourselves to exist as intelligible subjects in this world. As Halberstam writes, "Liminal subjects—those that are excluded from 'the norms that govern the recognizability of the human'—are sacrificed to maintain the coherence within the category of the human, and for them style is both the sign of their exclusion and the mode by which they survive nonetheless" (*Smell* 4). The style of many of these creative personas or alter-egos in glam and funk are a performative affirmation of a post-human identity: a subversive

rejection of some of the sacrifices that have been (often forcibly and violently) made to keep humanity 'human' for a select few.

So to exist as a 'human' or even 'super-human' performer, oftentimes one must allude and leave the fantasy intact and the mask in place, as Queen reveals in their 1991 hit "Innuendo":

> While we live according to race, colour or creed, While we rule by blind madness and pure greed, Our lives dictated by tradition, superstition, false religion…Through the sorrow all through our splendour, Don't take offence at my innuendo. You can be anything you want to be. Just turn yourself into anything you think that you could ever be.

This song signals a rejection of some of the 'traditions' of rock and society, while also affirming the creativity that rock music makes space for. In the music video, different masks appear and disappear on the screen, both pointing to the identities Mercury and the other musicians in Queen have had to put on to maintain their success as well as the masks that their fans must wear to exist legibly in this world. "In effect, its operatic camp revealed the 'queer' imaginary that underpinned Queen's musical output, the 'innuendo' that was not fully acknowledged until 1991 when Mercury confirmed publicly that he had AIDS" (Whitely 254). In this moment, Mercury truly had the influence to make a difference for people all over this world with AIDS. Through "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Innunendo" and their other songs (some of which are ironically still played in sports stadiums globally), Queen revealed how tenuous a time the 1970's through

the 90's were for queer people, while simultaneously "challenging social, cultural, and musical structures in [their] invocation of gay male desire" (254). Thus, while the camp theatrics of Queen obviously opposed "vigorous heterosexuality of traditional rock" and the (presumed) heterosexuality of male sporting events (highlighting the homoeroticism of both), they were also constructed through these traditions (251). The 'tradition' in rock that I want to focus more directly on now is glam rock and particularly the influence of David Bowie and his alter-ego Ziggy Stardust, a sexually fluid space alien, who took turning himself *"into anything [he] thought [he] could ever be"* to new extremes in popular music. To many Bowie was the personification of human alterity, science fiction, and the rejection of the call for "naturalism" that characterized much the hippie counter-culture of the 1960's. As Auslander wrote, " Bowie borrowed a set of tropes associated with outer space from psychedelic rock only to put them to a very different ideological use" (107).

In the counter-culture of the 60's, space travel often carried overtones of LSD "trips" and other psychedelic drugs, and "aliens" were often figured as "benign" beings that would help bring out a utopian world that already existed on another planet. Yet while many hippies hoped for a utopian world in space, they also had many "reservations about technology and the military-industrial complex," and both are taken on and critiqued by Ziggy Stardust, who was moving away from many of these values (127-8). Thus, "Ziggy Stardust…implies a rejection of values central to the hippie

ethos and therefore falls on the post-countercultural side of the divide" (131). Furthermore, many of Bowie's songs are "about a desire for escape of transcendence that seems unlikely to be fulfilled" and a direct rejection of this utopian ideal (130). While the article mostly focuses on Bowie's album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars,* perhaps Bowie's 1969 hit "Space Oddity" serves as a prequel to this performative identity and reveals some of Bowie's first inclinations for exploring an alien alter-ego. This song traces a manned space mission, led by Major Tom, and was influenced by the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Staneley Kubrick as well as various space missions by the Soviet Union and U.S. In Bowie's song, Major Tom is stranded in space, telling his wife that he loves her, while back home they *"want to know who's shirt [he] wear[s],"* which lends itself to a critique of consumerism and its impact on the (U.S.) space program that perhaps falls more closely to the hippies critique of technology than his later songs. Furthermore, Bowie's 1972 hit "Ashes to Ashes" is a sequel to this earlier song about Major Tom, but rather than following the same space narrative, tells of his addiction and attempt to get clean, presumably from heroin, reinforcing the connection between space travel and drugs and adding a dystopic view to both.

Perhaps my interest in the space program's affect on popular music comes from growing up in Cape Canaveral, Florida, where I remember seeing the (predominantly white and middle-class) tourists flock to see the shuttle launch. Many of the stores and restaurants have space travel

themes, like a sandwich shop that has every picture of the U.S. astronaut crews hanging on the walls. Seeing these images continually growing up, I could not help but notice a similarity between the astronauts: almost all of them were white and male, with an occasional token women or person of color. These images clearly show who was supposed to explore and benefit from the U.S. space program, and women, queers and people of color were not included. After all, NASA public relations worked very hard to keep the image of astronauts as the 'ideal' human, or "clean-living, healthy examples of American manhood" (hence white, married, and middle-class), and the first woman or African-American astronaut did not fly until 1983, and to date there has never been an openly queer astronaut (Trux 33). Yet despite the marginalization of many people by the space program, many of the white middle-class kids of the counter-culture were impressed by the "success" of the first man on the moon in 1969. "Not only was the counter-cultural infatuation with astrology given a strong, television-validated antidote of applied astronomy, but billions of kids who had not signed up for either belief system were totally convinced," and David Bowie and other glam rockers such as Elton John picked up on this enthusiasm, while also offering a critique of it through their music (Eniss in Auslander 130).

In 1972, Elton John released the popular hit "Rocket Man" that fit with the idealization of white male astronauts by a mainstream public. Perhaps the one line of the song that lends itself to a critique of the heteronormativiy of the Space Program and rock music in general is: *"I'm not the man they think I am at home, Oh no no no I'm a rocket man."* "Rocket Man" can easily be read as representing Elton John himself since rock stars were idealized in similar ways as astronauts and were also held to super-human standards. If this is so, Elton John is certainly not the only 'star' looking to the stars; on *The Rise and Fall* album Bowie released the song "Star," which included lyrics like: *"I could make a transformation as a rock & roll star. So inviting - so enticing to play the part…I'm so wiped out with things as they are."* Yet while Bowie's character of Ziggy Stardust looks at stardom as a libratory place, Elton John's "Rocket Man" seems to be longing for a more "traditional" life, as he writes: *"I miss the earth so much, I miss my wife."* So while Rocket Man and Major Tom seem to reinforce an idealization of astronauts as "family men" making tough sacrifices for the country, in "Ashes to Ashes", Bowie's Major Tom can be figured as a rejection of a certain types of normalization. Bowie sings, *"Do you remember a guy that's been in such an early song…Ashes to ashes, funk to funky, we know Major Tom's a junky."* However, despite the possible subversive reading's of Elton John's and Bowie's songs, it's clear that "Rocket Man" and Major Tom, like the actual astronauts, did not represent the majority of the public, so it is it is easy to understand why, in the same year, Gil Scott-Heron expressed his anger at "Whitey on the Moon" and the billions of tax dollars spent on space travel that doesn't include people of color, while so many are suffering on this earth. He writes:

The man just upped my rent last night cuz Whitey's on the moon. No hot water, no toilets, no lights but Whitey's on the moon…Y' know, I jus' 'bout had my fill of Whitey on the moon, I think I'll send these doctor bills, Airmail special, to Whitey on the moon.

So when George Clinton and P-Funk take off for their "Earth Tour," calling for the "the Mothership" to "swing down," interesting subversions of the white space program happen through a phantasmal inclusion of people of color in a funky alterity of space and science fiction.

While Bowie does reference actual astronauts, he mostly focuses on a phantasmal alterity of space travel as well (queers and drug users aren't allowed in space either, at least not by NASA). Perhaps this is what Bowie refers to when he calls himself "the space invader" in "Moonage Daydream": *I'm the space invader, I'll be a rock 'n' rollin' bitch for you… Put your ray gun to my head... Freak out in a moonage daydream. Oh yeah!"* This song obviously refers to the counterculture's use of space travel as drug use, even though Bowie is also moving away from their call for "naturalness". Far from being utopic, Bowie's reference to alien creatures is meant to threaten mainstream culture's fear of difference and deviance, through songs like "Starman": *Here's a starman waiting in the sky. He'd like to come and meet us But he thinks he'd blow our minds… He's told us not to blow it, Cause he knows it's all worthwhile…Don't tell your poppa or he'll get us locked up in fright.* So it seems Ziggy Stardust, like the Starman, came down to stir (fantastic) trouble for the youth in the

70's, and put less emphasis on peace and love (not that he opposed these things) and more on (gender, sexual, and stylistic) rebellion.

One way that Bowie came to cause trouble is through the open bisexuality and gender fluidity that Ziggy Stardust represented and performed, which became an integral part of Bowie's alter-ego. As Auslander quotes, "Bowie's alien persona was emblematic of his bi-sexual alienation from heterosexual male-dominated world of rock music" (McLeod in Auslander 132). So when Bowie said in an interview, "I'm Gay… and always have been," he transformed and destabilized the masculine rock star identity by bringing attention to the performative aspects of masculine rock performances, which he probably could not have gotten away with had he not been "intentionally" performing an "alien" character himself (Watts in Auslander 134). As Butler writes, "the site of a transvestite on stage can compel pleasure and applause, while the site of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence" ("Phenomenology" 398). So likewise, as Glam rock fan, we might realize that all gender is performative through theatrical performances like Bowie's, but we can also remind ourselves that "'this is just an act,' and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real… Because of this distinction, one can maintain one's sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge" (398). Yet within glam rock, many fans and performers (including Bowie) absorb this gender-bending performance into their identities, and this performance (like all gender performances) becomes

stable through repetition. Thus, this androgynous theatricality ceases to be solely performance, but also becomes a more 'naturalized' form of performativity, and the 'fantasy' becomes more "real". As Auslander writes, "If Bowie's public performances of bisexuality can be said to have emphasized the socially constructed status of gay sexual identities, then his framing of rock heterosexuality through that identity reveals the extent to which rock's normative sexuality is also constructed through and by the music itself" (138).

With this understanding of performativity and its relation to rock music, we can read the prohibition of certain sexualities in rock that underlies the theatricality of "gender-fuck" on stage. Bowie gives us a glimpse of this in his song "Lady Stardust," which refers to Marc Bolan (often thought of as the founder of glam rock): *"I smiled sadly for a love I could not obey, Lady stardust sang his songs of darkness and dismay."* Lou Reed, another glam rock artist along with Bowie and Bolan, also created an alter-ego identity, "the Phantom of Rock" that allowed him to be much more playful with his sexuality as well through acts like kissing Bowie on the lips with "studied deliberation" at a press conference (Bockris in Auslander 134). As Halberstam writes, "Queer uses of time and space develop in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction, and queer subcultures develop as alternatives to kin-ship based notions of community," and glam rock certainly became a queer popular culture/ subculture community and an alternative form of kinship (*Smell* 3).

Yet Ziggy Stardust was retired after about a year, as Bowie sings in "Ziggy Stardust": "*He took it all too far but boy could he play guitar, Making love with his ego Ziggy sucked up into his mind*" and did not appear on stage again, but still performs through his influence on other artists and the references made about him, such as Saul Williams recent album, "The Inevitable Rise and Liberation of Niggy Tardust," who also credits George Clinton's alter-ego of Starchild for his inspiration.

Even though glam rock was very subversive in regards to sexuality and gender norms in rock music, one cannot fail to notice that glam rock is predominantly white and male. It seems that Bowie himself references this after he retires Ziggy and turns himself into the Thin White Duke. Yet when we look more at Clinton's alter-ego of Starchild and Dr. Funkenstein, some interesting differences and similarities that emerge in the early 70's since both funk and glam rock came from similar influences such as psychedelic rock and certainly influenced each other. Furthermore, both glam and funk greatly impacted notions of hybridity, authenticity, theatricality, the focus on visual elements of costume and stage design, the subversion of mainstream values, and the "alien" in music and culture. As Halberstam and Livingston remark, "The human wanders, lost, into a maze of sex changes, wardrobe changes, make-overs, and cover versions that imbricate human reality into post-modern realness" (7). While the one book on funk that I could find defines the music/movement as "a natural release of the essence within," there are certainly many layers and different histories and influences on

funk that I will not be able to do justice to in this paper (Vincent 3). Vincent writes that "funk is at the extremes of everything," and there seems to be some truth to this statement when we look at the amazing blending and juxtaposition of different styles and traditions of music, beats and rhythms, cultural tropes and cosmic imageries (3). As Harris writes, "Funk is a style of music in which elements of jazz, pop rock, gospel and the Blues are fused to create a rhythmic, soulful sound. Funk thrives on rhythm, and the art of it depends on the level of togetherness between the performers" (in Vincent 15). While funk developed as "a deliberate reaction to—and rejection of—the traditional Western world's predilection for formality, pretense, and self-repression," it was also about performing a different form of black identity that moves away from the values of the black church and the counter-culture, while still appropriating aspects of both, as well as African rhythms, beats and religious cosmologies and redefining science fiction to form an "aesthetic of deliberate confusion" (5, 4). Funk combines all of these different 'traditions' "so that everyone on this earth and beyond can groove together… and [bring] the energies of the life force into the present" (264). As Stuart Hall remarks about bodily stylization:

> Selective appropriation, incorporation, and rearticulation of European ideologies, cultures, and institutions, alongside the African heritage…led to linguistic innovations in rhetorical stylization of the body, forms of occupying an alien social space, heightened expressions, hairstyles,

ways of walking, standing and talking, and a means of constituting and sustaining camaraderie and community (26).

While Vincent attempts to describe funk as anti-integrationist and an "essential" and "pure" type of music with strong roots in "the African tradition" (unlike disco, which according to the author "denigrated" and "feminized" black popular music "into senseless…dance drivel"), I think funk music is more complex and less linear than this author implies (154). And while Auslander did neglect a through analysis of race in glam rock, Vincent did not just fail to look at gender and heteronormativity in Funk music, but actually promoted sexism (and heteronormativity) through quick dismissals of women artists and charges of sexism against some aspects of funk music. He writes, referring to the late 70's, "What was really needed at the time was funk radio, a format of black music with masculinity and consciousness that affirmed the values of the black community. What happened was disco radio, the death of rhythm and blues," while dismissing the Village People as "a gay macho spoof" and other important disco divas as the "deluge of disco bimbos" (210, 209,193). He continually invokes "the black community," which, for him, is almost always male and heterosexual. Furthermore, he uses parts of the lyrics of some rather sexist songs, yet fails to mention or critique them and even says that they are not sexist. He writes, "P-Funk ideals incorporate, and *celebrate*, the intensity of the sexual drive, and the absurd realties of sexual attractions…while affirming

the humanity of women in the process," yet makes no critique of songs such as "Handcuffs" that have lyrics like "*If I have to keep you barefoot and pregnant, oh, to keep you here in my world. (Lay down, girl) Lay down and take off-a your shoes cause I'm a-gonna do to you what it is I got to do"* (Parliament) and the song "No Head, No Backstage Pass" (Funkadelic) as well as some pretty sexist cartoons on their album covers (262).

However, this is not to say that funk music was sexist, and glam rock was not; after all, while perhaps Bowie had less overtly sexist lyrics, there was certainly an almost calculated exclusion of women (with the exception of Suzi Quatro, who fell toward the end of glam rock), even more so than in Funk which had a few token women throughout. "For all of glam rock's play with unconventional gender performances, virtually all glam rock performers and producers were male. In these respects, glam rock was entirely in line with the conventions of rock music as a traditionally male-dominated form" (195). Furthermore, while funk was certainly androcentric, much in line with the black nationalism of the day, much of glam's success is owed to women, but is rarely credited: "there is no question but that June Bolan and Angela Bowie were crucial in the development of their respective husbands' innovation—each served as a combined muse, social secretary, manager, and stylist (196). Perhaps my anger at this particular androcentric and essentialist book on funk is that it is the only academic book that I could find on funk, while there were a few good books on glam rock to choose from (which has everything to do with race).

This was really disappointing because funk made some amazing innovations to current notions of performativity and theatricality in music that needs a more thorough exploration.

Despite the failings of Vincent's book on funk, he does a great job at explaining the historical moment for a black underclass (even if it was male) that led to the development of the funk. Two of the greatest heroes in the civil rights movement and the black power movement had just been assassinated, the Black Panthers were labeled as the number one threat to U.S. security, and while the conditions for black inner city children (and adults) were deplorable, there was also strong rhetoric of black pride and a feeling like complete revolution could still happen, offering hope to younger generations of black children. In 1968, James Brown released his powerful and critical song, "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" that revolutionalized funk (and all) music. Brown affirmed: "Never before had black popular music explicitly reflected the bitterness of blacks towards the white man—and here it was done in ferocious funk" (78). Then in 1969, Sly and the Family Stone released their instrumental song, "Don't Call Me Nigger, Whitey," and both of these songs reflected a historical moment in the U.S. when blacks felt they could actually tell white people how they felt about the racism that permeates so much of American culture. Through black power, black nationalism and black pride rhetoric such as "Black is beautiful," "*Black* quickly become a word praise, a superlative, an icon" in the late 60's, and it opposed and enormously retired the use of the out-dated word "negro,"

that was created by white oppressors (55). Likewise, the word Funk, which is associated with a state of depression and/or a foul smell, was also professed as a word of celebration, often carrying sexual connotations. Hence, "Even the negative, offensive terms *funk* and *funky* were being reclaimed as something worthwhile, if only because—or especially because—of their centrality to the black experience" (56).

Thus, as Stuart Hall wrote, "[Popular culture] is a theater of popular desires, a theatre of popular fantasies. It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented, not only to the audiences out there who do not get the message, but to ourselves for the first time," and in the late 60's and early 70's, this self-representation and stylization was happening on a revolutionary scale in black popular culture and having a revolutionary effect on U.S. culture (32). Perhaps the stylizations of hybridity and cultural subversions of funk (as well as glam rock) emerged from the civil rights movement and became the political performance of "othered" identities that it did in order to bring attention to the political nature of bodies and styles. To quote Hall again, "Think of how these cultures have used the body—as if it was, and it often was, the only cultural capital we had. We have worked on ourselves as the canvasses of representation" (27). It seems that Parliament did exactly this in their invocation of Washington D.C. as the "Chocolate City" in their 1975 hit. They sing:

They still call it the White House, but that's a temporary condition, too... Hey, uh, we didn't get our forty acres and a mule, but we did get you, CC, heh, yeah...And don't be surprised if Ali is in the White House, Reverend Ike, Secretary of the Treasure, Richard Pryor, Minister of Education, Stevie Wonder, Secretary of FINE arts, and Miss Aretha Franklin, the First Lady.

In this song, they invoke the (unfulfilled) promises made during the civil war along with current conditions for the people in the city (which they note is 80% black and suggest that these bodies contain power in themselves). Yet one cannot help but notice that all of the "theoretical" people in positions of power in the "Chocolate" House are male except for Aretha Franklin, the first lady, which hardly disturbs the gender status quo. As Butler writes, "This style is never fully self-styled, for styles have a history, and that history conditions and limits possibilities," and it seems that sexism was a limit not quite overcome in most music and much of the black power movements of the early 70's (likewise racism wasn't quite overcome in the feminist movements of the 70's) (*Performative* 273). So with the particular cultural significance that the body has had for so many people who have been defined, limited and enslaved through it, it is no surprise that "*style*—which mainstream cultural critics often believe to be mere husk, the wrapping, the sugar coating on the pill—has become *itself* the subject of what is going on" (Hall 27).

One way that P-Funk (the combination of Parliament and Funkadelic) created a subversive stylization of the

body is by taking tropes from science fiction and centering it around the lives of black people. After all, while *Star Trek* was breaking some ground having an inter-racial cast and casting Lt. Uhura with a position on the bridge, her role was also minimal (but important enough to have Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. convince her to stay to be a role model for young black girls, which she was for Mae Jamison, the first woman of color in space in 1991), that was far from enough, and Clinton took Sci-fi into his own hands and "articulated a new worldview" (254):

> We had put black people in situations nobody ever thought they would be in, like the White House. I figured another place you wouldn't think black people would be was in outer space. I was a big fan of Star Trek, so we did a thing with a pimp sitting in a spaceship shaped like a Cadillac, and we did all these James Brown-type grooves, but with street talk and ghetto slang. (Hicks 1)

Through P-Funk's use of different characters, costumes, and cosmologies that affirmed black existence in a racist world, they offered hope through escapism, while actually transforming realities on this earth through theatrical performance (which was certainly "absorbed" into Clinton's identity and ego as well). As Braidotti points out, "Science fiction becomes a vehicle for the reflection on our own limits, on the cultural, ideological and technical closures of our times" (184). And in P-Funk's science fiction became a vehicle for freedom and liberation, community and collective spirit, and allowed for reflection and reclamation of African "traditions" through post-modern

incorporations in a modern world. As Vincent puts it, "Clinton's use of operatic vocals and church-based funk chants were common, but they become subversive when the lyrics reprised well-known themes in black religion, while affirming present-day circumstances of blacks" (254).

Perhaps one of the most potent examples of P-Funks subversive "rituals" is the song "Mothership Connection (Star Child)," in which each character had ritualistic lines and chants (including the audience), before they would call the (very expensive) "mothership" to swing down through the use of a chant from a traditional black spiritual. In this song, they would also refer to Sci-Fi myths about the origins of the Egyptian pyramids and "the controversies surrounding historical accounts of the African origins of civilization" (254). They sing: "*We have returned to claim the Pyramids...Swing down, sweet chariot Stop, and let me ride... Starchild here, citizens of the universe, Time to move on, Light years in time Ahead of our time*" (Parliament). As Vincent acknowledges, "What Clinton and his funky tribe did was create an alternate worldview, complete with creation myths, funky superheros, and a framework for black fantasy and spiritual cultivation that could withstand the pressures of living in a white world" (263). One of the songs in which Parliament refers to the "white" world's jealously of black freedom of expression (or funk) is the song "Unfunky Kind of UFO", which tells of space aliens who are attempting to steal his funk. They sing: *You've got the groove and we want some We're unfunky and we're obsolete (and out of*

time) And we're out of time Gonna take your funk and make it mine.

While this paper does not explore in length, I do want to note that women were also an important part of glam rock and funk even if they were marginalized and did not receive the attention they deserved. Labelle, or "the silver suited space divas" who merged glam, funk and disco, might have only had one chart-topping hit, "Lady Marmalade," in 1975, but they nonetheless brought the realities of sexism to the forefront through their costumes, lyrics, and amazing performances. As Vincent rightfully credited them: "Lady Marmalade" blew the lid off of the standards of sexual innuendo and skyrocketed the group's star status" (192). Likewsie, there were other influential women in Funk as well such as Chaka Khan from Rufus, Yvonne Fair, and The Brides of Funkenstien. Furthermore, as much as glam rock was about challenging conventional notions of masculinity and heterosexuality in rock music, it did not do much to open up the doors for women in this field with the exception of Suzi Quartro. As Auslander writes, "Glam rock's gender-bending did open a space for unconventional performances of female gender… even if only one musician claimed that space" (192). Even though I disagree his minimization of the absence of women in glam rock, Quartro's performance of a glamorized female masculinity and her stage persona transformed the identities of women in rock. "Like all rock musicians' performance personae, Quartro's masculine image was carefully constructed and maintained… Like Bowie, Quatro performed her persona offstage as well as on" (200).

Quatro herself was quite aware of the masculinity of rock (even glam rock) and made use of it: "Yeah, it's phallic… the guitar is for the head, but the bass gets you right between the legs" (in Auslander 203).

Part of the reason that the alter-egos of Mercury, Bowie, Quartro, Clinton and others interest me so much is because of the early exclusions of the theatrical in constructions of the performative utterance, which has had some residual affects on notions of performativity. As Derrida writes, "For, ultimately, isn't it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exceptions, 'non-serious' citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability—without which there would be not even a 'successful' performative?" (17). This exclusion led me to question how certain artists have challenged this assertion through the overt theatricality of their performances and alter-ego creations that are absorbed into their identities through repetition and iterability. As Braidotti explains, "'Becoming' is about repetition, but also about memories of the non-dominant kind. It is about affinities and the capacity both to sustain and generate inter-connectedness" (8). It becomes clear through the appropriation of different cultural cues of glam rock and funk that these artists prove that the "non-serious," the fantasy, and the theatrical are just as "real" or "authentic" as anything else, and are likewise very much a construction of other "acts" and historical conditions, and by revealing this, these artists turn these terms around on themselves, displacing them completely. In other

words, "By drawing on the fantastical, at least improbable, possibility of alien existence, such artists actively subvert and negate notions of authenticity…By employing metaphors of space, alien being or futurism, metaphors that are by definition unknowable, such artists and works constantly 'differ' the notion of 'authentic' identity" (McLeod in Auslander 132). And when the notion of the "authentic" has been so damaging to queers, women, and people of color, turning the "authentic" human against itself is as subversive as one gets.

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