Hiding Your Present From You
Relating the Musical and Queer Contexts of Arthur Russell

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A Thesis submitted to the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance
at Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Performance Curation

Middletown, Connecticut May 2018
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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my mentors and advisors Sam Miller, Noémie Solomon, and Roger Grant for their generous guidance and support towards the completion of this project; the faculty and staff of the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance for their patience and understanding during my time in the program; and my cohort members for their friendship and trust. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to my partner Benjamin Robert Zender for his support and encouragement throughout my study.
Chapter One

Introduction

Queer, Music

What relation might music have to queerness?

My inquiry here is fashioned after the question posed by Fred Maus in “Masculine Discourse in Music Theory.” In asking what relation there might be between music and feminist thought, Maus shines light on the widespread reliance upon formalism in music theory that stems from the movement in music scholarship towards positivism and logical empiricism in the 1960s and 70s. He points to two particularly influential male musical scholars, Milton Babbitt and Heinrich Schenker, who preferred to apply the philosophical discussions of logical empiricism to music over other metatheoretical models and perpetuated a scientific image of music theory in doing so. In fact, Maus states that conventional music theorists since Babbitt and Schenker have in general neglected the metatheoretical speculations posited by subsequent epistemological theories; in a self-restrictive manner, they have largely disregarded these sources of theory and inquiry from which forms of “new musicology” now draw upon.

Maus expands on Babbitt, who had gained notoriety among music and mathematics scholars for his article “The Composer as Specialist”—later controversially re-titled “Who Cares if You Listen”—regarding a compositional methodology of twelve-tone serialism, which organizes the twelve tones of the chromatic scale into an organized series with which the composition’s melody, harmony, structural progressions, and variation are dictated and
manipulated. This rule-bound methodology of composition was also embraced by the celebrated serialist composer Theodor Adorno, who dramatically declares in “Philosophy of New Music” that the purpose of this new music is to “[abandon] the deception of harmony that has become unsustainable in the face of the catastrophe toward which reality is veering” (Adorno 101-102).

Reflecting upon the tendency between music and empirical logic, Maus cites feminist scholars Carol Gilligan and Lorraine Code to draw an association between this tendency and masculinity: “Feminist writers have suggested that men are more likely to cultivate, and to value, quantitative, impersonal, rule-bound, competitive thought, while women more easily think in qualitative, personal, empathetic, improvisatory, collaborative ways” (266). He concludes through the logics of feminist epistemological thought that the legitimated forms of the scholarly study of music, hinging upon issues of musical structure and syntax, compose a man’s game.

Furthermore, in a brief examination of the character and composition of musicological discourses, Maus concludes that the scholarly studies of music “have been, for the most part, a set of texts written by men, about music by men, and perhaps this has had some effect on the outcome” (265). Even a cursory investigation of this claim reveals the easy critiques that have been made by music scholars of feminist and queer bents upon just the relative lack of visible music theorists, musicologists, and musicians who are not male, cisgender, or heterosexual. So, in the midst of all this (straight) masculinity, what relation can there be between music and queerness?

Perhaps my question might be heard as a wish: a proposition, or rather a provocation, for an interaction to occur between two disparate fields: queer theory and musicology. There
is some truth to this, but it is certainly not a new proposal. Such a union between music and queer and feminist thought has been explored before in the work of scholars such as Philip Brett, Suzanne Cusick, John Gill, Nadine Hubbs, and Judith Peraino (just to name a few) to some exciting results. Indeed, more contemporarily-minded scholars of music theory and musicology are likely to be more receptive to these recent interventions, which have even introduced methods and lines of inquiry employed by disciplines outside of the arts. As I explore in this thesis, there are queer modes of thought regarding topics such as gender, sexuality, time, pleasure, and reproduction that have taken on present-day musicological methods of inquiry to produce queerly non-masculine results.

However, the intention of my question is not simply to propose different or more ways in which queer modes of thinking should lend themselves to the scholarly study of music. Such an unreciprocated relationship between the two may indeed unwittingly serve to intensify the ethically ambiguous demand for yet more queer labor. My question is more so asked in order to open up the possibility that music, as well as the multisensory experience of feeling and interpreting musical sounds and their extra-sonic contexts, is already and has always been related to queerness.

Though music’s discourses may have been demonstrated to be overwhelmingly dominated by heterosexual men who value positivist methods of analysis, music can be regarded as a queerly behaving subject in studying its interactions with the listener, the musician, and even the theorist. Maus gives the example of the music theorist’s masculine preference of studying musical scores and his aversion to the action of listening to music by conceptualizing the act of listening to be a sexual activity: “Music doesn’t just convey information or maintain sociability: with its pulsating rhythms, hypersensitive surfaces, and
elaborate patterning of climaxes, it can give a particularly intense, concentrated, sensuous pleasure… This sexualized conception of listening is… threatening to masculinity” (272-273). Maus extrapolates that “A man who is uncomfortable in the feminine role of listener might want to find a way to reverse the power relation, somehow giving the controlling role to his own discourse” (272).

Turning this masculine aversion to listening to music on its head reveals that any relationship to music and its “sensuous pleasures” can be understood as a queer or even a sexually deviant association. Suzanne Cusick asks us, for example, “If music IS sex, what on earth is going on in a concert hall during, say, a piano recital? When the pianist is on a raised stage, in a spotlight while we are in the dark… are we observers of a sexual act? Are we its object? Why, exactly, are we in the dark?” (79).

**Russell, Arthur**

The purpose of this thesis is, in part, to demonstrate the queer aspects of music through the examination of one particular artist. I lend my focus on the life, music, and archival ephemera of Arthur Russell, a contemporary musician and cross-genre composer of the downtown New York music scene who died of AIDS-related complications in 1992. In searching through these musical and extra-musical materials, I locate a queer pressure within, surrounding, and enacted by Arthur Russell’s oeuvre. The queer aspect within Russell’s music is not difficult to find. His deft lyrical skill allowed him to boldly imply gay sexual innuendo in disco singles such as “Go Bang #5”. As Russell’s own gay sexual identity is described in the 2009 biography *Hold On to Your Dreams* by Tim Lawrence:
For Arthur, the experience of coming out as a gay man was sexual, social, and political. If straights could write songs about love and sex, then gay men should be able to do the same without fear, and penning suggestive lyrics wasn’t so much an alternative to activist politics as a way of putting the liberationist goals of activist politics into practice. (169)

I locate the queer pressure that emanates from Russell’s music within the music’s inability to be contained by genre and time. I cover Russell’s refusal to be classified by genre in “Chapter Two: Genre”. In this chapter, I discuss the origins of genre and provide some descriptive prose regarding my own experience of hearing Arthur Russell’s music. I focus on the tracks “Go Bang #5,” “A Little Lost,” and “Living in the Light of a Miracle,” all of which are included on the 2004 compilation album by Soul Jazz Records, *The World of Arthur Russell*, which arguably launched his current-day popularity. I offer my descriptive prose in reflection of Marion Guck’s “Music Loving, Or the Relationship with the Piece,” in which Guck asks us to “understand the extreme sense of intimacy one can feel for a musical work—an intimacy akin to that one feels for a lover—as well as some of the powers of music, powers of attraction, engagement, the power to care for the listener” (Guck 5). In my experience of Russell’s music, I hear various disparate threads of musical influence. By amplifying these threads present in Russell’s oeuvre, I hypothesize that genre as a formal system of classification only serves to limit the opportunity for a deeper contextual hearing and understanding of his music.

In “Chapter Three: Time,” I explore how the queer pressure that Russell’s music exerts upon musicology destabilizes the concept of time. To demonstrate this, I comparatively analyze the reception of Russell’s music during his lifetime and his
commercial and popular failure with the success and critical adulation he is currently receiving. I especially focus on the reception to the only full-length solo album that Russell released during his lifetime called *World of Echo*.

*World of Echo* began as a performance that Russell premiered at the New York performance space The Kitchen. The nascent stages of this project included Russell on cello and harmonica as well as a five-piece accompaniment. A review of the performance in the *New York Times* mentioned that it “at best evoked such Americana as square dance, church sing-alongs, and one-chord garage bands” and that it was neither evocative nor concise. A second iteration of the project cut out the five-piece band and simply featured Russell on voice and cello, which he performed at the Experimental Intermedia Foundation in 1984. When the fourteen-track album was released by Upside Records, the final result was a “mournful, mysterious, intimate, understated, indeterminate and altogether beautiful” (Owen 36) masterpiece of infinitely layered electronic effects on Russell’s voice and cello.

Though *World of Echo* was a commercial failure during its first release, it has enjoyed a resurgence of reissues by Audika Records. Pitchfork Magazine glowingly reviewed the first of these releases in 2004 and opined that “Arthur Russell’s legacy has never been richer for it” (Macdonald 1). And though perhaps it is a curious measure of success, Kanye West notably sampled “Answers Me” from *World of Echo* for his track “30 Hours” as part of his effort to push past genre boundaries with his album *The Life of Pablo*. As *Stereogum* contributor Lindsey Rhoades wrote, “Pablo’s many iterations show West honing his craft in the same way [as Russell], sharing multiple versions of the album in the weeks leading up to its nebulous final release and sparking speculation that it would never be fully realized” (Rhoades 9).
In “Chapter Four: (Re)production,” I apply Arthur Russell’s music as a lens upon queer theory’s negative turn towards an antirelational conceptualization of queerness. Russell’s music refused, or queerly failed, to participate in the heteronormative edict of (re)production and as a result, his compositional and song-writing methodologies did not allow for him to make plentiful music. Instead, Russell was more concerned with enjoying the endless process of making his music sound exactly as what he imagined music could sound like. In discerning the pleasurable, sexual, and future-reaching aspects of Russell’s music, I hear Russell’s queer political motivation as one that emerges from hope. I demonstrate this hopefulness by describing two pieces of ephemera I encountered during my visit to his archive at the New York Public Library. I offer these ephemeral materials as evidence of a hope-filled queerness that can ethically work to dismantle heteronormativism through a relational stance.

I conclude this thesis with further descriptions of my time in Russell’s archive as a reflection of this project and its possible futures. This moment of reflection is informed by the work of contemporary composer Joseph Dubiel, who writes in “Analysis, Description, and What Really Happens” that the experience of listening to music, even to the same music again and again, can be fundamentally changed by a different understanding of the surrounding extra-musical context. By spending more time in the archive, and by further, more deeply, and differently relating to Russell’s ephemera, I hope to feel the experiences of being in that space, listening to Russell’s music, and relating to the music, time, and space surrounding me differently, more intimately, and more ethically. I hope to collapse everything around me into the shape of a cello playing in a small closet, simply letting the
music swirl around and through my body until I lose the capacity to distinguish between myself and his music.
Chapter Two

Genre

Introduction

“Arthur wrote classical music, avant-garde dance music, rock and roll, R&B, and sometimes country, too” (Lawrence, *Hold* xv).

In this chapter, I present Arthur Russell’s body of music and demonstrate its conflict with the musicological principle of genre. Attempts at classifying Russell’s work, made by current listeners, music critics, as well as his contemporaries, have spanned a wide range of results. His music has been described with such genre labels as mutant disco, folk, minimalist avant-garde, and (in the words of Allen Ginsberg) “Buddhist bubble-gum pop” (*Wild* 00:17:42). In perceiving Russell’s oeuvre and comparing it to the confusing array of genres that try to capture its auditory essences, what becomes clear is that these attempts at classification fall drastically short of providing any meaningful description as to how his music actually sounds. As such, I contend that there are flaws in contemporary musicology’s conception of genre which demand for an analyzation and a complete reconfiguration of the principle as such in order to for a deeper contextual hearing and understanding of Russell’s music to occur.

I begin this chapter by identifying genre as it is deployed within contemporary musicology. Interestingly, the practice of categorizing music through this presumably shared set of musical understanding has only rarely been investigated in the scholarly studies of music outside of popular musicology. This lack of attention is in stark contrast to the heavy
emphasis made upon genre studies within the fields of literary, film, and other cultural theories as an area of scholarly research. I set the stage with the work of music theorist Franco Fabbri, whose pioneering work “A Theory of Musical Genres” in 1981 laid the foundation for a formalized structure of the contemporary understanding of musical genre.

Next, I will focus on an essay by musicologist Allan Moore titled “Categorical Conventions in Music Discourse: Style and Genre.” In this essay, Moore shines light on the fact that though genre is the preferred classification system in popular music studies, more classically-inclined conventional musicologists prefer to classify music through discourse revolving around the concept of style. As such, contemporary musicology is often confused in distinguishing between genre and style as the primary method of music classification, using the terms both interchangeably and in different contexts. Moore attempts to locate the differences between genre and style so as to allow for them to coexist without one holding a hierarchical importance over the other.

As a counterproposal to such a formalization of musical genre as proposed by Fabbri and Moore, I investigate the origins of genre in literary theory and offer newer, more radical re-conceptualizations of the principle that are being explored within literary studies by drawing upon the work of rhetorical scholars such as Carolyn Miller and Amy Devitt. In “Genre as Social Action,” Miller claims that genre is not simply a pattern of forms, but keys with which to interpret sociality. Devitt outlines in “Generalizing about Genre” what she calls new conceptions of the old concept. Devitt examines genre’s utilization in literary theory as a formal system of identifying and categorizing aesthetic properties present in literary works. In doing so, she illuminates the troubling resultant dichotomy “between the individual and the group” (85) that dangerously distances the reader from the work itself. She
concludes with the observation that genre is a result of the textual construction that can, in turn, further construct text.

Finally, I provide descriptive analyses of some individual musical pieces from the posthumous 2004 compilation album *The World of Arthur Russell*, released by Soul Jazz Records. In writing this “extra-musical” prose, I attempt to identify some different musical strains of influence that are present in his oeuvre. Though previous attempts at classifying Russell’s music have relied on elaborately hyphenated sub-genre categories, I demonstrate how such descriptive analyses can succeed at providing a deeper and more meaningful context to his music where the classification of formalized genre fails. Furthermore, I propose that the doubt that Russell’s music casts upon the very use, as well as the presumed necessity, of classifying music with genre labels is one aspect of the queer pressure he exerts upon musicological studies.

**Genre in Music**

In 1981, Franco Fabbri published a definition for the term “musical genre” in his paper “A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications” as such: “a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules” (52). Fabbri’s definition implicitly suggests that the application of set theory, a mathematical system of logic, is the defining apparatus of musical categorization. Fabbri further expounds that set theory’s governing rules allow for definitions of sub-sets within larger sets—or “sub-genres” of music and sub-cultures within larger genres and social communities. Moreover, if a “musical event” or a certain “socially accepted rule” may be situated within more than one set, it may belong to each of those corresponding genres at the same time. In other words,
Fabbri argues that a single piece of music may be identified as member of two separate genres by two different listeners.

There is an attractive quality in utilizing set theory to format genre which allows for the inclusion of all “musical events.” Fabbri draws on the work of Italian music semiologist Gino Stefani for a definition of music as “any type of activity performed around any type of event involving sound”. Therefore, he explains, genre can account for and may categorize all real and imaginable events in which there is a performance of sound—or perhaps an activity simply involving sound, or within sound, or in reference to sound. This capability of set theory is especially useful in regarding Fabbri’s explanation of the “socially accepted rules” that may define genre. Fabbri locates specific social acceptance as occurring in subsets of the musical community. Most easily recognized by musicians and music scholars are, of course, the formal and technical rules of musical composition. However, Fabbri’s understanding of “rules” also incorporates sets of rules that could be deemed tangential or even inconsequential in conventional discussions of music: namely semiotic, behavioral, social, ideological, economical, and juridical rules. The inclusion of these unconventionally “musical” sets of rules makes room for any community to determine any set of rules involving musical events as a musical genre of their own, even in the face of objectors who may not consider the contents of this genre to be music at all.

However, in relying upon the logic of set theory, Fabbri concedes that his definition of genre presents the problem of being too broad: it allows for the possibility “to call ‘genre’ any set of genres, and therefore some which usually go under other names” (53). As useful as this may be in some cases, Fabbri recognizes that calling all things in relation to music as existing within the auspices of genre can cause an obscurity of meaning. Because this
vagueness has the potential to stunt critical investigations of music that explore either outside the discursive practices of genre or without its specific analytical tools, Fabbri begrudgingly proposes an exception to the definition of musical genre: he defines the term “system” as any set of musical events that can only be considered in relation to its subsets rather than to opposing sets of musical events.

The challenge of Fabbri’s application of set theory in the formal systematization of genre is most readily apparent in what Johan Fornäs calls the “family” of rock music’s subgenres (112). Popular musical scholarship utilizes this formalist methodology in order to identify and categorize the aesthetic similarities and differences of musical objects. In rock music, this has resulted in an almost obsessive-compulsive myopia for infinitely differentiating between auditory experiences; the system of genre and sub-genre has led to a never-ending stream of identifying markers such as “rock” and “rock and roll,” but also “punk rock,” “post-punk,” “pop-punk,” “post-punk revival,” and so on.

Musicologist Allan Moore cites Fornäs in his essay “Categorical Convention in Music Discourse,” in which he points to a different challenge presented by genre. Moore claims that genre and style in contemporary musicology are either hierarchically situated against one another or used interchangeably to cover the same ground. For example, he points to Fornäs’ definition of genre, which hierarchically situates style against genre: “Fornäs suggests that ‘a genre is a set of rules for generating musical works’, while ‘a style is a particular formation of formal relations in one single work, in the total work of an artist, or in a group of works across many genres’” (440). Furthermore, Moore observes that musicological scholarship, outside of popular music studies, has largely preferred to locate aesthetic distinctions between different pieces of music through discussions of composition
and style rather than genre: “Until recently, the term ‘genre’ was somewhat under-theorized in musicology” (427). As a result, not only is genre under-utilized as a method of categorization, its meaning and usage as a categorical model are also often confused, undercutting the presumed shared understanding of genre systems, and calling out for further investigation.

**Literature in Genre**

Generally speaking, the notion of genre is deployed with an assumption of shared understanding: it is a (mostly) unspoken methodology of identifying aesthetic similarities and erecting categorical distinctions between different literary or cultural objects. As Moore mentions, this unspoken nature is perhaps more apparent in music than in literature. In literary theory, the study of genre has been well investigated and has been classically regarded as a formal concept. Literary genre studies have examined the semiotic elements of literary objects for shared patterns which encode inherent information. The effects of those common patterns found in the form and content of those literary objects become stereotypical conventions of certain genres. Miller writes that the development of genres is a “typified rhetorical action based in recurrent situations” (159). For example, a literary work that falls within the genre of realism is expected to contain characters who could pass as “real,” experiencing “real-life” challenges and life events; whereas a work within the genre of biography is expected to contain information that correspond to the actual experiences of a person who has lived.

Amy Devitt details the origins of this formalist method in her essay “Generalizing about Genre.” Devitt observes some challenges that stem from regarding genre as form. She
theorizes that a conceptualization of literary genre as form binds genre to a “product-based”
model that “seems to have more to do with reading” than with the content of the work (85).
She further states that a formalist view of genre “exaggerates one of the most troubling
current dichotomies, that between the individual and the group or society” (85). As such, she
critiques formalism and claims that “whether called genres, subgenres, or modes, whether
comprehensive or selective, whether generally accepted or disputed, these systems for
classifying text focus attention on static products” (86).

In response, Devitt offers newer conceptions of genre that shift focus away from the
structuralist tendencies of formal classification. Instead of relying upon “effects (formal
features, text classifications)”, it draws upon the “sources of those effects” (84). Furthermore,
Devitt argues that genre is not only a response to intertextual contexts and appropriate
patterns of response, but that it is also a construction and intensification of recurring
situations itself. She cites Carolyn Miller for this argument: “situations are social constructs
that are the result not of ‘perception’ but of ‘definition’” (Miller 156). Genre is not only a
descriptive practice, but one that can tyrannically prescribe the composition and content as
well.

In Russell’s Worlds

“Few artists have managed to co-exist in musical worlds as seemingly antithetical to
one another as Russell did” (Wray 2)

Due to his wide array of musical influences, there has been a lot of difficulty in trying
to classify Arthur Russell as a musician of any particular genre. His musical oeuvre spans a
wide range: he was a member of the bands The Flying Hearts and The Necessaries; recorded
cello performances with a number of collaborators such as Peter Zummo, Philip Glass, and The Talking Heads; and even produced and released singles in the disco and minimalist scenes of New York under pseudonyms such as Dinosaur L, Loose Joints, and Indian Ocean. Within each of these contexts, Russell crisscrossed his music between his Oskaloosa-inspired folk stylings, Buddhist and experimental cello compositions, and his own brand of “mutant disco.” He shadowed the beat-poet Allen Ginsburg with his cello, directed the musical programming at the avant-garde performance space The Kitchen, and even produced an incomprehensible yet entirely quirky hip-hop track for young rapper Mark Sinclair (who would later become famous as the action movie star Vin Diesel). As such, most music critics and academic scholars settle on loose categorizations, like “experimental cellist” or “American composer,” that seem hesitant to classify him definitely within genre.

Arthur Russell’s music enjoyed “a mass rediscovery and mythologization” (Macdonald 2) in 2004 when the record label Soul Jazz compiled and released a primer to his works titled The World of Arthur Russell. New Yorker music critic Andy Beta opines in his album review for Pitchfork magazine that “there appears to be a typo on the usually on-point Soul Jazz label, in that an ‘S’ is missing from the title of their attempted overview of the enigmatic New York scene cellist Arthur Russell” (1). He further went on to say that “if anything, there were many musical ‘worlds’ for Iowa-born Arthur Russell, and he floated between them effortlessly in a way that… no one else had” (Beta 1).

The World of Arthur Russell begins with French DJ Francois Kevorkian’s celebrated mix of one of Russell’s most commercially successful disco tracks titled “Go Bang #5.” The track was originally released under the pseudonym Dinosaur L by Sleeping Bag Records, founded by Russell with his friend and collaborator William Socolov. The single features
instrumentalists of a wide range of New York musical communities, which was typical of most of Russell’s collaborations. On vocals are Julius Eastman and Lola “Love” Blank. Eastman was a radically gay, black minimalist composer in the same circles as Russell and had previously served as the first ever male vocalist in Meredith Monk’s ensemble. Blank, on the other hand, had been recruited by Russell to join the ensemble when he found out that she was a gospel backing vocalist for James Brown. Other collaborators featured on the track include brothers James and Timmy Ingram, the established R&B rhythm section of the family band Ingram; Peter Zummo, the minimalist trombonist and frequent collaborator of Russell’s; and Russell himself on the cello.

“Go Bang #5” begins with a brassy, plaintiff trombone call from Zummo that echoes the ancient ceremonial court music of East Asia. We’re almost immediately brought back to the underground dance scene of the early 80s however when the Ingram brothers come in with a sparsely simple beat on the snare drum and high hat. After a pause, the trombone calls out again, and Russell’s cello responds with a peculiar, chromatic pizzicato line that reverberates and ends with the upwards inflection of a question mark. Here, Eastman’s nonsensically funky organ enters, seemingly struggling to hold steady chords while accidentally-on-purpose stumbling into the infectious rhythm provided by the congas and drum set. Then suddenly, almost forcefully, Eastman yells out a command: “Baaaaaaang!” It begins in a gravelly bass register, slides up about three octaves, and then faintly holds onto the glottal stop at the end of the word with a sustained, orgasmic whine, “ungh.”

The childlike vocal chirps of Lola Love devolve into a frenetic repeat of the lyrics “Go bang, go bang-bang, go bang, go! Bang, go bang-bang, go bang, get BANGED!” throughout the song. Layered into this chant is a group of male vocalists, probably Russell
and the other men in the studio, who blurt out “I wanna see all my friends at once (go bang)...; I’d do anything to get the chance to go bang; I wanna go bang.” The fadeout begins after a final command by Eastman to go “Baaaannya,” shaking on the -ng and ending with a squeal. The male chorus is cut off on their last line, “I wann...,” but you can almost hear the words “go bang” again and again in the echoes.

“Go Bang #5” would later be “feted as a textbook example of ‘mutant disco’” (Macdonald 2), a subgenre of disco created by “a small clubhouse of brash intellectuals, avant-garde crackpots, and underground flotsam” who were “calculatedly engineering a disco insurrection” (Linhardt 2). But more importantly, the track was also welcomed by the black, gay underground ball scene. Village Voice reporter Jim Feldman later gave an account of this underground scene that demonstrates exactly why “Go Bang #5” resonated with dancers in an interview with disco scholar Tim Lawrence, “Sex was subsumed to the music and was worked out in the dancing. It was like having sex with everyone. It was very unifying” (353 Love).

Also included in The World of Arthur Russell is Larry Levan’s mix of Russell’s other notable disco track “Is It All Over My Face?”, which sounded more popularly disco and was released two years before “Go Bang #5.” The original track contained similarly lascivious lyrics “Is it all over my face? I’m in love, dancing,” brusquely sung by a discordant chorus of all men. Lawrence writes that this barely innuendo-ed song about oral sex was an ode to “cruising, dancing, even coming” (“I Want” 156). Record World Magazine’s Brian Chin described it in his column Disco File as “strange and impossible to ignore” and a “much weirder, sloppier version of Instant Funk’s chanting” (Chin, April) upon its release in April. Levan’s mix of Russell’s original track was released in July with the substitution of a female
lead in place of the original mix’s male ensemble. Of this track, Chin wrote “Go ahead, take a chance” (Chin, July 21). Though “Is It All Over My Face?” managed to rise to the Disco File Top 50 and remained on the chart for 11 weeks, the single failed commercially and was only ever played by dancer request at the influential private parties at David Mancuso’s The Loft.

Although Russell’s deft lyrical skill is apparent in his bold handling of sexual innuendo in “Go Bang #5” and “Is It All Over My Face”—as well as in a third disco song included in the album curiously titled “Pop Your Funk”—his dexterous songwriting ability is most present in the mesmeric love song “A Little Lost,” the sixth track included in The World of Arthur Russell (Appendix A). The song features curious lyrical divisions that allow for a multiplicity of meanings to emerge. For example, the opening three lines “I’m a little lost; Without you; That could be an understatement” can be interpreted that Russell’s feeling of being a little lost is actually greater than he is expressing, or perhaps that the line “Without you” is the understatement. If so, what is Russell proposing as an appropriate intensity of “you” not being here?

“A Little Lost” features Russell’s shyly angelic singing, which veils the musical complexity of the song. Below Russell’s voice, there is the constant thrumming of his bowed cello that creates an insistent pulse of eighth notes. Within this seemingly seamless undercurrent reminiscent of a Philip Glass string quartet, there are surprising opportunities for complexly syncopated rhythms to be heard, creating patterns of three and seven against four/four time. Above this thrum, over and over again, Russell gracefully floats his voice from his soft, intricately folksy murmurings, up to the breathy sine waves of his tenor mixed-voice, and back down again to the gently graced ornaments in his lower registers. His
decisions for when to close or open his vowels makes for a mystifying effect. In lyrics describing his feeling of being lost, such as “Day go on by and not” and “Out on the ocean surf,” Russell strategically closes his vowels to produce a piercing, nasally quality, as if asking for the listener to find him within the sound. In more romantic moments, lyrics like “‘Cause I’m so, so busy thinkin’ ‘bout; Kissing you” are sung clearly with open vowels, in a crisply placed falsetto. Notably, Russell sings the entirety of “A Little Lost” without any added harmonies until the very last word. This decision reveals that Russell certainly did entertain “another thought.”

But the central track of The World of Arthur Russell is track five, “Living in the Light of a Miracle,” which brought together the many threads of musical genres that Russell vibrated between. There is a funky disco riff played on the electronic organ woven together with Russell’s breathy tenor voice, often belted in an almost muppet-y tone, all of which is overlaid upon the rippling percussion reminiscent of Indian Ocean. A choir of similarly ephemeral voices (including Eastman and Elodie Lauren) joins in, emerging from Russell’s shimmeringly bowed cello notes and sprinkles of brass from Zummo’s trombone and Mustafa Ahmed’s euphonium. “Living in the Light of a Miracle” most effectively demonstrates the inability of genre to capture Russell’s music. The track brings together seemingly disparate musical communities and their socially accepted rules in order to create a time and social space outside of formal classification’s ability to describe, let alone prescribe. “Miracle” lives up to its name in that it is purely musical, infinitely interpretable, and entirely a social experience.
In Overtones

One of the frequency components of a sound other than that of lowest frequency. Usually overtones are numbered consecutively in ascending order of frequency; they need not be harmonic. Grove Music Online

A simple tone of music is, in reality, not so simple. Every tone of music is actually composed of multiple frequencies of sound, which vibrate through the air at different intensities until they enter our ears and are translated by our brains into one heard tone. In music, pitches are frequently named, using the first seven letters of the alphabet, in relation to its “fundamental tone.” The fundamental of a tone is the slowest, loudest, and therefore most clearly heard frequency of vibration. The frequencies of higher intensity that accompany the fundamental are called partial tones, or overtones. Though they are mostly unheard, different combinations of overtones provide the characteristic colors of different instruments.

For example, the first violinist at a symphonic concert will likely begin an evening of performance by playing a “concert A.” The fundamental frequency of this tone is 440 Hertz, or four hundred forty reverberations emitted from the violin string and sent through the air per second. But the violin string’s complex vibration pattern also emits quieter reverberations that travel at 880 Hz, 1320 Hz, 1760 Hz and so on. Within this elegantly composed overtone series are frequencies that sound pleasingly harmonic to the fundamental tone, as well as ones that sound bracingly dissonant, both of which dance above the concert A, magnifying its presence with depth and clarity, until finally dissipating into the pitch.

Most overtones are admittedly un-hearable under most circumstances and the exact intensities of the reverberations that tremor around our heads are unknowable unless
perceived with complicated, technological measurements, I introduce this concept here as a model to understand how Arthur Russell’s music can be understood outside of genre. Russell’s body of music, with all its quirky influences, colors, and moods, contains a queer combination of sounds with different intensities, harmonies, and dissonances. Genre as a formal system of classification has attempted to carve away these dancing resonances in order to name a simple, “fundamental” aspect of Russell’s music. But it fails with Arthur Russell’s music, which only ever vibrated between different musical frequencies: disco, folk, avant-garde, and “Buddhist bubble-gum pop.”

Miller proposes a conceptualization of genre that is not simply responsive to the situations upon which it is applied, but one in which the application of genre creates situations and content as well. Her retooling of genre is a dynamic, not static, relationship between works, their forms, their writers, and their readers. I can see an application of Miller’s genre in the case of Russell’s music. Dancers and disco reviewers in his lifetime who listened to his music could hear this thrilling characteristic between his works, even though he produced those tracks under different pseudonyms. Furthermore, his collaborators remained faithful friends, though Russell utilized their instruments outside the boundaries of the genres they were best known for or specialized in. I propose that the ability of Russell’s music to vibrate between its different frequencies gives Russell his “defining” characteristic.
Chapter Three

Time

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the rising posthumous popularity of Arthur Russell’s music. Borrowing from Muñoz’s conceptualization of queerness as horizon, I argue that the asynchrony between Arthur Russell’s music and its temporal settings is a queer relationship of “preappearance” that has allowed Russell to eerily resonate past his life and create tremors of growing potentiality in the future. I further argue that Russell’s music not only steps out of “temporal stranglehold” (Muñoz 32), but also essentially destabilizes the temporal linearity of music reception, history, and canon. As with the previous chapter, my argument here is hinged upon a critique against the structural formalizations of contemporary musicology, and an assertion that we may more deeply hear and relate to music upon analyzing a de-structured arrangement of the field.

For this destabilization to occur, I first identify the ways in which time is presumed to be stable in musicology. To lay this groundwork, I introduce an overview of some theories of time that originate from philosophy, science, and mathematics, upon which conventional musicology has built its understanding of temporality and history. I demonstrate how these positivist inquiries into the nature of time and temporality have become the crystalized foundation upon which history is constructed. I argue against the supposedly unbiased and general nature of this “objective” history that has persisted throughout the construction of music history and canon in particular, and instead gesture towards more subjectively biased
and nuanced historiographical methods that utilize methodologies of memory and unempirical knowledges. I further argue that the formalization of time in conventional music history has subjected other interpretations of temporality to remain within the “margins of the center” or otherwise peripheral and alternative, though they may lend valuable insight in the practice of more deeply hearing music. I focus attention on one such marginal interpretation of time by exploring queer theory’s reactions to the objectification of time and history, especially in regard to the queer project of destabilizing time as a structured form and history as a structural force.

Next, I will identify the temporally queering pressure of Arthur Russell’s music that has pushed back against the conventional models of time and history relied upon by mainstream musicology. I contend that the preapparent nature of Russell’s music allows him to reach past his time towards an unknown future. To demonstrate, I first explore the historiographical elements of the reception towards Arthur Russell’s music contemporaneous to his life. Though Russell was undoubtedly admired by the small population of his frequent musical collaborators in the New York minimalist, avant-garde, and disco scenes, I argue that Russell failed to find the widespread listenership he desired during his lifetime who could acknowledge and appreciate the wild combination of his musical influences. I contrast this failed aspiration to the contemporary reception of his music more than two decades after his death, which has garnered Russell a universal acknowledgement of his musical genius. I observe a queer challenge presented by the still-growing posthumous success that Russell’s music is finding, catalyzed by the release of Soul Jazz label’s primer album *The World of Arthur Russell* and the subsequent releases of his previously unheard music by Audika Records in the 2000s.
Time Enlightened

In 1726, Sir Isaac Newton wrote a foundational text towards the conceptualization of his calculus titled *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. In *Principia*, Newton proposes a definition for *tempus*, or time, as a natural principle of the universe to be considered alongside three others: *spatium*, *locus*, and *motus*.

Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time: such as an hour, a day, a month, a year. (1)

Newton’s metaphysical imagination of time in *Principia* differentiates between a durationally flowing and absolute *tempus* from “relative time,” which is measurable through the external principle of *motus* (motion). Newton is specific in defining absolute *tempus* as an immeasurable and unperceivable universal force that exists simply as a backdrop upon which all physical phenomena of bodies and objects in the universe occur. His model of the universe—which similarly differentiates between absolute *spatium*, a principle without relation to any real physical object, in opposition to relative space, which is measurable in *locus* (location)—rejects Descartes’ imagination of objects, bodies, and their movements as necessary components of time and space.

An absolute and infinite conceptualization of time that flows with no relation to the body is a frightening metaphysical proposition from which emerges a number of philosophical repercussions that Newton explores in *Principia*. But aside from the philosophical, Newtonian *tempus* holds great mathematical value in that it can find usage in
many branches of mathematics and science, resulting in this conceptualization of time being theorized and experimented upon endlessly within other objective and scientific fields. A 1997 publication in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* by neuroscientist Ernst Pöppel, for example, argues that “in a strict sense, ‘time perception’ should not occur because receptors for what we refer to as ‘time’ do not exist” (56). Pöppel’s argument contrasts time’s inaccessibility to the body against the other bodily mechanisms for receiving sensory stimulus from physical motus: ears that receive sound to hear, eyes that receive light to see, and so on. He further hypothesizes that because “time” is not a sense-able thing to the body, the body’s understanding of time is a completely constructed illusion derived from a complex hierarchy of neurological processes that relies upon mechanical receptors for the senses that do exist.

To demonstrate this construction, Pöppel illustrates a neuro-cognitive machinery that rapidly processes successive sensory stimuli in order to construct the perception of *successiveness* as a stand-in for directly experiencing the flow of time, or *continuity*. Pöppel grounds his model on scientific experimentation by pointing to previously conducted neurological experiments that have measured the human brain to only be capable of receiving sensory data from the body’s surroundings in 30 millisecond intervals; this series of data input is automatically bound together into perceptual units of 3 second durations, creating a sense of successiveness. As a neuroscientist, Pöppel does not care to investigate the human body’s experience of time’s flow any further than modeling this neurological flowchart of the senses. But because of this automatic, pre-semantic series of functions within the brain, Pöppel “proves” that human bodies are unable to perceive the passage of time, and that we are only able to perceive moments in time strung together into a semblance of time’s passage.
He is simply one of many in the fields of mathematics and the sciences who have demonstrated that time flows immeasurably with no relation to the body, and that the perception of time’s passage is a mere mental construction.

**History on Time**

“History is the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now [Jetztzeit]” (Benjamin 7).

In his often cited and controversial *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin offers twenty observations in critique of historicism. The theses cover a wide range and lay criticism upon the objectivity of Marx’s historical materialism, the imagination of a historical continuum of progress, and the depiction of an “eternal” picture of the past. In his fourteenth thesis, Benjamin begins with the conclusion that there can be no objective history gleaned from the inaccessible past, and that all historiographical attempts at such an ensnarement are subject to the biases of the here-and-now. To give an example of the here-and-now intruding upon the past, he cites Robespierre, who “exploded [Roman antiquity] out of the continuum of history” by likening the political aspirations of the French revolution to latter day Rome. Furthermore, Benjamin theorizes that these biases are instituted by those in power: “it takes place in an arena in which the ruling classes are in control”.

Benjamin’s theses on the concept of history are clear rejections of a formal and objective historicism of causality. His critique points to history’s failed attempts to overcome the personal biases of individual historians in the pursuit of capturing the factual past. But more importantly, Benjamin brings attention to the method of historiography as an active construction of history: “no state of affairs is, as a cause, already a historical one. It becomes
this, posthumously, through eventualities which may be separated from it by millennia”
(Benjamin 9).

**History and Canon**

In his broadly reaching essay “The Historiography of Music,” musicologist Leo Treitler describes history as “the narrative of what happened in the past” (361); it is a story of the past actively told in temporal relation to the moment of its telling. Treitler declares that music has the particular ability to enact or mirror the societal and cultural patterns and prevailing ideologies of its creation “through its institutions, its function, its traditions and conditions of performance and transmission, its technologies, [and] its relationships with the other arts” (366). As such, he claims that music can be interpreted not only as an object from history, but also that history and meaning can be interpreted from music.

Treitler identifies formalism as one of many musicological conceptions for interpreting meaning from music. He proposes a definition for formalism:

the doctrine that music’s content and meaning are contained within or comprised by its musical elements alone… out of any sort of reference outside the music itself, out of the relation to a listener, or out of music’s ‘connection to the ordinary world of concrete significance.’ (373)

Treitler points to music theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Milton Babbitt, whose theoretical works in the latter half of the twentieth century more closely tied formalism to a positivist and scientifically-styled method of musical interpretation. He further identifies the particular influence of positivism on music historiography and its seductive bearing in “the determinist and linear-diachronic emphases of scientific music history (schools, styles, and
genres of composition linked through chronologically paced chains of implicit causal relations)” (376). In observation of formalism’s dominance in the field of music theory, Treitler asks “to return [music] to the world of signification wherein we can plumb its meaning” (377). He further calls for a rejection of positivist standards for music analysis and “the re-aestheticization as well as the re-historicization of music” as the primary “means to assure interpretations that are rich and have depth” (377).

Mark Everist writes that “the study of music has always been rooted in the study of history” (378). In “Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses, and Musical Value”, Everist analyzes the conceptualization of a musical “canon” and critiques the historical methods of its construction by considering the nature of canon and examining a theory of music reception. Notably, he proposes a very different endeavor of music history than Carl Dahlhaus, who envisioned separate spheres for music history and reception history, in which an overlap of a theory of reception with canonic discourse. Everist points to literary critic Barbara Herrnstein Smith: “What is commonly referred to as ‘the test of time’… is not, as the figure implies, an impersonal and impartial mechanism” (Smith 51). In doing so, he reveals that a musical canon of great works of the past is not one that simply emerges from time but is actually intensified by time by institutions of cultural power. Weber puts this in a more musically historical context: “it had become established in repertories throughout concert life, dominating many programmes, and was legitimated in critical and ideological terms in which the society as a whole participated” (336).
Queer Time

Is there such a thing as “queer time?” Arguably, queer theory possesses a post-structuralist tendency that that counteracts established, normative concepts in favor of non-normative ones. This tendency has served to not only oppose heteronormative institutions such as family, heterosexuality, and reproduction, but has also radically anticipated a world becoming in order to further create the “potentiality of a life unscripted by the convention of family, inheritance, and child-rearing” (Halberstam 2). While the concept of time has been demonstrably objectified and formally structured by the “hard” sciences, queer scholars have theorized methods of queerly disentangling time from these constraints. If such a thing as queer time has been found in this process, it has created new ways to queerly relate to time as well.

Halberstam argues that queer time emerges from queer ways of life, which include “subcultural practices, alternative methods of alliance, forms of transgender embodiment, and those forms of representation dedicated to capturing these willfully eccentric modes of being” (1). Their working definition of queer time includes “specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal focus of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (6). Halberstam’s imagination of queer life gestures towards an existence outside of (hetero) normative space and time that presents a dangerous opposition to the stability of those normative forces, as imagining and developing alternative ways of social engagement through personal or sexual contact, economics, and even life schedules can lead to willfully disastrous and riotously destabilizing queer results. But from the embers, queer self-identification and queer ways of
being have bloomed the potential for creating new narratives of life and alternative relationships to time and space.

Halberstam uses the especially poignant example of the AIDS epidemic to demonstrate queer relations to time: “Queer time perhaps emerges most spectacularly, at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose horizons of possibilities have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic” (5). The constantly diminishing but never vanishing future that the AIDS epidemic presented to the gay population of the end of the twentieth century “squeeze[d] new possibilities out of the time at hand” (2). By tying the emergence of a queer time together with an epidemic in which physical bodies were temporally affected by viral infection, Halberstam dismisses the conceptualization of a time that objectively and absolutely flows, and instead puts an emphasis on embodied temporality, which can be measured, shortened, and deleted.

Other queer scholars have also rejected the notion of a time that is displaced from the body. Elizabeth Freeman invokes Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to not only once again relate time to the body, but further, to give time a body itself.

Let us go in together;

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint—O cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!

Nay, come, let’s go together. (*Hamlet* 1.5.186-190)

When Prince Hamlet of Denmark observes that “the time is out of joint”, he describes the moment and state of his kingdom as resembling a skeletally dislocated articulation that he is destined to set right. The ghost of his dead father, the previous King of Denmark, imparts
upon Prince Hamlet the knowledge that his uncle, now stepfather, Claudius had committed cold murder in order to take the throne and marry the Queen Gertrude. This treacherous knowledge burdens the prince with the duty to seek revenge, both for the death of his father and the fracturing of the royal lineage. But it is the ghostly visitation itself that excises the prince of Denmark from “normal time”—one of marriage, children, and reproductive future—and the heteronormative trajectory of his life. From the vantagepoint of this displacement, Hamlet is able to observe the madness of those surrounding him and goes mad himself in his attempts to relocate his time set back the joint.

Freeman analyzes from this moment that “the disruption of present by past and the resulting disunity of the present seem visceral” (14). By queerly reimagining an absolute, immeasurable, and formless flow of time as a somatic body that contains joints, Prince Hamlet disturbingly equates temporality to the formations of a royal body and lineage. That is to say, time is compared to the state-regulated processes of legitimizing the authority of an heir through the “fleshly bonds of marriage and parentage” (14)—hetero-political and religiously endowed rites performed for the purpose of merging and transferring authority—thereby normalizing and extending what Luciano names “chronobiopolitics,” or “the sexual arrangement of the time of life.” In doing so, Hamlet literally describes the entity of time as something that is no longer a chronological or homogenous absolute, but an unsettlingly somatic body that can be dislocated, and perhaps even broken away at its joint with the legitimacy of his royal kingdom’s authority.
Russell’s Reach

“There’s a lot of great art that never finds a huge audience during the artist’s lifetime. Some of his stuff was just out of its time, ahead of its time, behind its time. It just existed as itself” (Wild 01:05:26).

Arthur Russell’s music flows disjointedly from his time to now. I amplify this reach through time by contrasting the lackluster contemporaneous reception to his music to the success and admiration it is receiving from current music critics and audiences today. Like the inability of genre to formally classify Russell or systematize his music, I argue that his body of work also rejects temporal bounds of reception, audience, and canonization. Russell’s music continues to resonate past his life with a disregard to the cultural institution that failed to acknowledge and canonize him during his lifetime. I draw upon Everist’s assertion that reception and canon are intertwined in this contrasting analysis of current and historical examples of reception. Furthermore, because the enjoyment of listening to music is an intimately relational experience, I offer my own reception and interpretation of his work here as well.

Arthur Russell’s music has frequently been analyzed as being “beyond his time,” and colleagues and current music critics alike usually mention that his work was under-appreciated and misunderstood. That being said, Russell was by no means an uninfluential musician during his lifetime: he held the title of Music Director at The Kitchen from 1974 to 1975; he played the cello and provided vocals in his bands The Flying Hearts and The Necessaries: he charted a few disco singles that were played often in the underground scenes; and he even collaborated with prominent choreographers and (though only briefly) with the theatre director Robert Wilson on his production of Medea.
Perhaps the most illuminating or poignant example of Russell’s temporal reach is his album *World of Echo*, which was first released in 1986 by Upside Records in the United States and on Rough Trade Records in the United Kingdom. *World of Echo* is a notable collection of work as it was the only full-length solo album that Russell released during his lifetime. All fourteen tracks on the album were recorded, produced, compiled, and released by himself and studio engineer Eric Liljestrand. The solo album featured Russell on vocals and cello, which he heavily produced with a variety of electronic effects.

At the time of its release, *Billboard* declared the album to be “one of the finest avant-garde pop albums in some time,” while music critic for *Melody Maker* David Stubbs lauded the record as “an orbit of resonance, a giant, subterranean repository of Dub.” Stubbs further praised the album:

> It *works*, as a fuzz, a blur, a rich, throbbing pulse, a signal in space… I imagine that, at some point in the future, it will be possible to dance quickly and furiously to ‘World of Echo,’ once the rust-marks of the beat-grid have made a sufficiently indelible mark on the folk-memory, enabling the listener to refer to his ancient instincts to know what to do with his feet. (33)

Despite the laudation from high-minded music critics, whose ears were attuned to avant-garde listening and were somehow able to hear the extraordinariness of *World of Echo*, the general public did not agree. The album was a commercial failure at the time, and the director of Upside Records Barry Feldman later remember selling only about 900 copies of the original 1,200 presses. Russell himself seemed to understand why: at one point, after sales had slowed down, he asked Feldman if he could place a sticker on the cover of the album that read “Unintelligible” as a way of acknowledging that the album would be difficult
Lee 39
to comprehend during a listener’s first pass. Even still, Russell was not discouraged about the work. In an interview a few months after the album’s release, Russell mused about future directions the project might take:

*World Of Echo* isn’t a complete version of echo, it’s a sketch version of echo. I want to do the full version which will have brass bands and orchestras playing outdoors in parks with those bandstands that project echo. I also want to have Casio keyboards on sail boats. Have you ever been on a sail boat? It’s so quiet, all you hear is wind and sea. (Owen 12)

Although Russell never had the opportunity to rework *World of Echo* as he passed away from AIDS-related complications a few years later, the album did enjoy a surprising number of re-releases and represses, in 2004 with a bonus DVD, 2005, an expanded version in 2006, 2011, 2013, and 2014. Notably, Pitchfork Magazine glowingly reviewed the 2004 limited edition, stating that his legacy had “never been richer for it”. Meanwhile, Dusted Magazine called the album “easily the most significant, compelling, beautiful and monumental piece of work Russell ever committed to record” (1).

Though this high praise of *World of Echo*’s reissue may seem related to its contemporaneous reviews by *Billboard* and *Melody Maker*, one key difference is that this string of re-releases came after Russell had already enjoyed his “mass rediscovery and mythologization” (Beta 1) following the Soul Jazz compilation. This mass rediscovery and mythologization had actually been conducted by the very institutions such as Soul Jazz Records, *Pitchfork*, The New Yorker, and so on. Prior to these widespread institutional efforts for canonization, specific listeners seem to have agreed that Russell’s music was indeed valuable and worth a listen. Stylus Magazine’s review of *The World of Arthur Russell*
begins with the admission: “The music of Arthur Russell happens to be one of those obscure
gems limited to whomever can afford a murderous bidding war on e-Bay or are privy to
exceptional file sharing sites” (1). The mystery of why and how a record company had finally
“caught on to the importance of re-releasing music from this important artist” is evidence of
Russell’s temporal reach. His influence and the amplification of his musical importance has
subsequently led to the massive undertaking of Audika Records to release previously unheard
music in the 2000s.
Chapter Four

(Re)production

Introduction

In this chapter, I apply Arthur Russell’s music as a lens upon queer theory, especially focusing on queer theory’s negative turn towards an antirelational conceptualization of queerness which counteracts as an ethical polemic against heteronormative ideologies of futurism. I imagine Russell’s music as a hope-filled reach towards the future—brimming with a potentiality for a more widespread reception and a warmer appreciation than it received during his lifetime—that can provide an affect or an insight upon this queer negativity. In witnessing Russell’s hopeful reach, I also attempt to demonstrate that there is a queer hope that can come from a rejection of heteronormativism, and that the future belongs in the realm of queerness.

The first section of this chapter will be an overview of the antirelational turn in queer theory. The most powerful and controversial recent contribution of this antirelational stance in the field has been *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* by Lee Edelman, published in 2004. *No Future* is informed by the notable work of Leo Bersani, who theorizes sex as a destructive force that coincides with the psychological concept of the death drive in his provocatively titled book *Homos* and his influential 1987 essay “Is the Rectum a Grave?”. Jack Halberstam further explores antirelational queer theory in his 2008 essay “The Anti-Social Turn in Queer Studies,” in which he proposes a queer alternative to the “the comfort zone of polite exchange”—a polite way itself, perhaps, of accusing the assimilationist
tendency of contemporary mainstream queerness—that instead has the ability “to fail, to make a mess, to fuck shit up, to be loud, unruly, impolite, to breed resentment, to bash back, to speak up and out, to disrupt, assassinate, shock and annihilate, and, to quote Jamaica Kincaid, to make everyone a little less happy!” (Halberstam, “Anti-Social” 154).

As a counter to this fierce battle-cry for a more socially resistant and oppositionally queer vanguard, I cautiously offer a queer possibility for pleasure, relationality, and hope by regarding music as a queer subject. I present the theses of various music scholars of queer and feminist bents who identify in music the potential for generating pleasurable and sexual possibilities. In “Music as Queer Ethical Practice,” Judith Peraino identifies music “as the endpoint ethical assertion of self, which produces pleasure as well as pain” (461). Suzanne Cusick goes further in asking “What if music IS sex? (30)” in “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight.”

Finally, I will reflect on Arthur Russell’s peculiar methods of composing and recording music in relation to these theoretical models. Russell valued the process and practice of ceaselessly making music more than he was concerned with the capitalist and heteronormative preoccupation of producing and profiting from his art. He languished in the excessively pleasurable possibilities found in spare pieces of staff paper, the recording studio, and his community of musical collaborators. As such, I read Russell’s musical methodology as a celebration of jouissance—a sustained orgasmic bliss—and a queer rejection of (re)production. However, I argue that Arthur Russell’s refusal to (re)produce was not situated in the antirelationally queer stance that Edelman calls for in No Future; his disinterest in (re)producing (through) his music instead resulted from, as Muñoz describes in Cruising
Utopia, a queerness of “futurity and hope. That is to say that queerness is always in the horizon” (11).

To demonstrate Russell’s reach towards the “warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality” (Muñoz 1), I will detail two pieces of ephemera I encountered in his archival materials at the New York Public Library of Performing Arts: one is a sheet of tracing paper containing two verses of song lyrics, which I refer to as “Lying side by side”; and the other is a set of five paper-clipped clusters of staff paper cut-outs containing fragments of music notation, which I refer to as “Arch Drive.” Neither of these two musical works have ever resulted in a hearable product to be recorded or sold, but each present in their horizons uniquely complex opportunities for a hopeful and socially binding queer futurism.

The Child

In No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive, Edelman identifies the figure of the Child which embodies a societal presumption of “reproductive futurism.” Edelman theorizes this “fantasmatic Child” (11) as an insidiously oppressive tool of heteronormative societal control: “the fantasy subtending the image of the Child invariably shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought.” Edelman further argues that society’s impulse to protect the Child in an effort to sustain reproductive futurism serves to also impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations. (2)
Edelman claims that this conception of the political precedes partisan ideology, insofar as steering the entire political discourse away from queer possibilities and towards the affirmation and authentication of a heteronormative structure of social order.

Edelman sharply critiques the method with which reproductive futurism curbs the “the actuality of freedom,” while simultaneously propping up a neutered, “notional freedom” that may never put the Child at risk. He deduces from the rationale for this notional freedom that any threat to the continual reproduction and static innocence of the Child will be read as a threat to the organization of a given social order, “but also, and far more ominously, to social order as such, insofar as it threatens the logic of futurism on which meaning always depends” (11). In making this critique, Edelman implicates a contemporary queer culture’s aspiration for political assimilation within this notional freedom and disdains the ethical ambiguity of the “lesbians and gay men by the thousands [who] work for the right to marry, to serve in the military, to adopt and raise children of their own” (19). He instead calls for a queer politics that gains its ethical purchase in a space outside of this heteronormative social order.

Edelman’s radical stance in queer politics is grounded on the assertion that queerness is not a collectivity, and that it “can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one.” This antirelational conception of queerness can be “located less in the assertion of an oppositional political identity than in opposition to politics as the governing fantasy of realizing … Imaginary identities foreclosed by our constitutive subjection to the signifier” (17). Furthermore, Edelman proposes that queerness’ only possibility of being is to make every oppositional effort to not fight for the children, “to insist intransitively” (31), and instead to throw the course of politics and relation towards annihilation.
Music and Sex

Suzanne Cusick asks us to imagine a radical possibility: “What if music IS sex?” (78). In her essay “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music,” Cusick describes “the transcendent joy of being alive, not dead, and aware of the difference” (69) and its possibility that stems from her lesbian relationship with music. From her lesbianism, Cusick finds an ability to truly love music through her sexuality, and further divines from this love the thrill of sex and the pleasure of emotion. In asking her question of whether or not music is sex, Cusick proposes a definition of sex as “a way of expressing and/or enacting relationships of intimacy through physical pleasure shared, accepted, or given.” Her conceptualization of sex as a non-genital relationship of physical pleasure frees the action from its heteronormative association with reproduction and the phallic economy. Furthermore, Cusick defines sexualities as positional means of performing this pleasurable action, delicately laced with negotiations of power. As such, she proposes that “for some of us… our ‘sexual identity’ might be ‘musician’ more than it is ‘lesbian,’ ‘gay,’ or ‘straight’” (70).

From within this imagination of music and sex as both pleasurable experiences that exist outside of reproduction, Cusick calls for us to remember “that music (like sex, which it might be) is first of all something we do, we human beings, as a way of explaining, replicating, and reinforcing our relationship to the world, or our imagined notions of what possible relationships might exist” (80). In other words, music is an action that affects individual’s relationships to others in deeply intimate and pleasurable ways.

The conceptualization of music as sex opens an avenue to Judith Peraino’s essay “Music as Queer Ethical Practice,” in which she examines sexually charged moments in music history in order to apply music as an ethical strategy for configuring queer
subjectivity. Peraino claims that “music is notoriously resistant to legibility, let alone monolithic signification” (434). Her assessment calls upon the work of Eve Sedgewick, who describes the concept of queerness in *Tendencies* as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (8).

Peraino argues that there is a time and space within the open mesh of music in which subjectivity, gender, and sexuality lose definition. Furthermore, she sees the possibility within music’s detached time and space for instigations of “ethical questions of individual conduct and self-definition in or against in-place social and symbolic structures in the individual’s effort to be otherwise” (436). Peraino’s conceptualization of music, which “invites individuals to question subjectivity as is composed according the structure of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’” (433), is one that is keenly relational while still retaining a critically ethical stance; it is an anticipatory sound that is heard before it is played, calling out for individuals to seek their ethical purchase in relation to others.

**Practice Pleasure**

Russell’s love affair with music was one of constant engagement and experimentation. It was a peculiar obsession that manifested in quirky behaviors, tempestuous relationships, and otherworldly music. The 23 boxes, large folder, and cardboard tube that compose the housing for his archival materials reveal his endless habit of jotting down notes and song lyrics, composing fragments of musical ideas, and sketching out chord progressions on scrap pieces of staff paper. Musical collaborators recount that Russell
often lost himself for entire full-moon evenings in the recording studio in trying to perfectly conjure up the sounds that whorled from his imagination. The studio engineer for *World of Echo* especially remembers trying to fend off panic attacks while working with Russell, who would regularly record over or splice together seemingly random takes to create ghostly tracks that leaked into each other.

Russell’s dedication to the practice and process of making music above all other considerations arose from his time at Ali Akbar College of Music, during which he developed a rigorous commitment to the Indian musical concept of *riaż*, or “practice.” His friend Jeff Whittier, a flautist with whom Russell often practiced, would later recall,

Arthur would talk about the process being as important as the goal. I didn’t entirely agree, because as a musician you are defined by how you play at any given time, and the product is the measure of the riaż. But Arthur would say that the process was more important than the end product. (Lawrence, *Hold 40*)

One particularly poignant story of Russell’s love of music comes from his time at the controversial Kailas Shugendo commune in San Francisco. Russell joined the Tibetan Buddhist commune after being arrested as a minor for marijuana possession. There, he was strictly banned from using drugs, was required to meditate often, and was asked to perform the more mundane logistical tasks required to maintain the commune. After a while, Russell began his liturgical training in Tibetan Buddhism at Kailas Shugendo and became a devoted disciple of the commune’s spiritual lama, Dr. “Ajari” Warwick. In his eulogy for Russell, Allen Ginsberg told the story that “apparently [Ajari] would banish Arthur to the closet to practice cello for hours and days on end. So apparently, that’s where Arthur sharpened his ax” (*Wild* 00:10:42–00:10:54). Lawrence describes the moment differently: “he loved the
acoustics of the confined space. As the sound swirled around and through his body, he lost
the capacity to distinguish between himself and music, and playing became a form of
meditation” (*Hold 23*).

Russell’s endless musical methodology was often the most frustrating aspect of his
compositional practice to his collaborators. He had an especial distaste for record labels,
which by necessity required him to instead operate within the logics of plentiful production:
to make final cuts of his most popularly and financially capable music under the duress of
deadlines. This distaste spread to other collaborators who rigidly stuck to their schedules.
Russell became notorious for his inability to meet deadlines for his projects and was often
mistaken for simultaneously being a procrastinator and a perfectionist.

One especially disastrous example of this was Russell’s theatrical collaboration on
*Medea* with director Robert Wilson, who had previously worked with Philip Glass on the
production of *Einstein on the Beach*. It had been Glass himself who had referred the director
to Russell after deflecting the original offer made to him in order to write the opera
*Satyagraha*: “Arthur would be brilliant” (*Lawrence, Hold* 191). Russell regarded the job as a
potentially life-changing opportunity to become as high-profile a composer as Glass, and
knowing his usual tendencies to explore and deflect, tackled the *Medea* project with an
uncharacteristically systematic and organized approach. But this methodology predictably
devolved into his usual perfectionist mess of multiple re-compositions, and the relationship
between Wilson and Russell quickly deteriorated.

Within a mere three months, after Russell had composed “reams and reams of this
music,” he fell back to his own ways and began missing deadlines. It became clear that not
only couldn’t he keep his schedules, but he also refused or take criticism or direction.
Whenever Wilson asked Russell to edit to some of the music that didn’t quite suit his vision for *Medea*, Russell would only stubbornly refuse. “Arthur felt the project would be better if the music was the way he thought is should be. They couldn’t negotiate the future of the music” (Lawrence, *Hold* 191). Friend and collaborator Ernie Brooks remembers that once Russell was done composing, Wilson tried to ban him from ever setting foot in rehearsals, but that Russell “somehow went and was in the building and was, like, crawling around in the rafters of the theater, watching the rehearsal and getting crazy about it… making sure it was done the way he wanted it to be done” (*Wild* 00:40:51). Completely fed up, Wilson eventually fired Russell after only one workshop performance and hired minimalist composer Gavin Bryars as his replacement.

**Lying side by side**

Judging from the materials in his archive, Russell often worked out his nascent ideas for songs and compositions on hundreds of sheets of loose scrap paper. The pages come from different sources: some are seemingly nicked from studio offices and random typewriters; others are spiral-bound or three-hole punched sheets of staff paper ripped from their books; there are even sheets of tracing paper, flimsily thin yet retaining their stark whiteness despite the yellowed edges of their neighbors. These archival materials often only hold tidbits of notation, half-sketched chord progressions, or scrawls of barely legible notes detailing how an unnamed piece should sound. Every once in a while, there is a completed thought: lines of song lyrics written out in a verse, or a full four-bar phrase of music.

The example below is a thin, almost transparent piece of tracing paper. It holds an untitled song that is voiced in the present, though it invokes melancholic remnants of the
past. Though there is, of course, a likelihood that Russell made a recording of some sort that may have included traces of these lyrics, it is unclear if Russell ever recorded these lyrics on his many hundreds of audio recordings, let alone if there was ever a written-out composition or even a tune imagined for the text to be set to. What is certain, however, is that these lyrics do not correspond to any song that Russell released, or even any that were released subsequent to his death.

Figure 1. Lyric sheet for “Lying side by side” written by Arthur Russell.
These two verses are densely packed with temporal flashes to the past and glimpses towards the future. The first verse sets the scene of a pensive, almost somber post-coital moment with a lover. The voice, presumably Russell himself, and the lover clearly have nurtured an affection for each other (“we think”) over time, which has culminated in “what happened tonight”. Though an enthusiastic romp in the sack may have immediately preceded this moment, the lover seems now more eager to “say goodbye; and turn on the light.”

Russell, however, is afraid of the “danger” of it all being over—of he and his lover cruelly forgetting this moment after they have said their goodbyes and the light has been turned on. In longing for something more, he stills time and lingers on in the moment, clinging to an incomplete sentence: “but before we say goodbye […] and turn on the light […]” The lyrical phrasing here trails off and leaves us guessing as to what is on the horizon. What is Russell proposing will, or could, or should happen next?

Before we are given an answer, there is a temporal failure, a moment of distraction: Russell glimpses a picture of “you”, the lover who has just turned on that light, perhaps, and is about to leave. This photograph—the memory of a time and space that has had the privilege of physically manifesting, not to be forgotten—illuminates Russell to the possibility of this night together also becoming a lasting memory. And suddenly, “hey”! A strong sense of urgency comes with this realization, catalyzed by a different, more hopeful light that emanates from the horizon. Russell understands that “the moment is on [him] now” to rid of this danger and “t’ be with you at last”. Though what will happen next is still unclear, Russell reassures you that it is “not so hard” to live in this hope and “to leave behind the past,” if only this night can remain in their memories and be remembered in the future.
When Russell catches sight of the “picture of you,” he invokes an image of the past that is not his and should be beyond his grasp. He applies a temporal twist upon this picture by recognizing a time “before I met you” and positions himself in relation to that version of “you.” But the word “before” plays a different role in the line “before we say goodbye,” which reaches forward to the future instead. Though there is an acknowledgment in this lyric that this moment too will soon be a memory, an echo of the past, further attention is given to hope and potential future when he states his desire “t’ be with you at last”. There is a warmth that emanates from the horizon. The angel finally turns his face towards that light, and away from the wreckage of the past.

Though there is no recording of this song or accompanying notation to these lyrics, you can almost hear it sung in Russell’s ethereal tenor voice. It sounds comfortable and folk-y, like “A Little Lost” or Russell’s music from when he was home in Oskaloosa. But it also retains his quirky cello thrums with which he accompanied the Buddhist fire-walking ceremonies at Kailas Shugendo, as well as the ventricular pulse of pizzicato notes, played in the New York disco studios. From some other time, he sings in soaring, sustained high notes on phrases like “Lying side by side” or “on me now” with slightly closed vowels. He sings tender, gentle grace notes on ends of phrases, “I met you,” and “you at last” with muppet-y, overreaching scoops. He sings with clearly enunciated syllables sometimes but prefers to carefully mumble a whisper in your ear instead, charmingly applying sforzandi to first syllables and dropping ending consonants.
Arch Dive

In a folder titled “Music, 1970s/1980s,” there is a collection of small, cut-out rectangles of staff paper that have been paper-clipped into five mysterious clusters. Though it is unclear, judging from the penciled words on one of the clusters, this fragmented musical material is presumably titled “Arch Drive.” I also do not know if this was a song with intended lyrics or if it was fully instrumental. Furthermore, there are no instructions for instrumentation. But like “Lying side by side,” it does not matter if Russell ever completed a full composition for “Arch Drive,” or whether it was ever meant to sound anything resembling a recorded piece of music at all. What does matter for certain is that “Arch Drive” is not a track that was ever released by Russell, or his pseudonyms, during or after his lifetime. But it has still reached past its normal time to arrive here and now.

Figure 2. Fragments of notation for “Arch Drive” by Arthur Russell.
The first of these clusters is tucked away into a makeshift paper pouch, which has been folded snugly and written on in pencil, “Rhythm for Arch Drive.” Once unclipped and opened up, the “Rhythm for Arch Drive” pouch reveals more than a dozen differently shaped pieces of staff paper that have been haphazardly cut. The slightest distraction, and they might all fall off of the archival table and float away like leaves. There are penciled marks on each leaf that read “6,” “6 + x + 6,” “9,” and so on, with no explanation as to how these numbers might indicate a rhythm. The snippets of paper are organized by a small, circled number in the corners, written in blue ink. The nature of this rhythm seems to elude all attempts at understanding, even when the leaves are arranged in order according to the blue ink.

Then, there are two clusters that look almost identical to each other. One of them is titled “Second Melody,” but they are not visibly differentiable in any other way except by their notational content and their respective paper clips. A fourth cluster is also labeled “Second Melody”—there is no first melody—but the snippets of staff paper in this cluster are about twice the length of those in the other. These three examples contain about a dozen snippets of notation each: un-stemmed black dots, carefully colored in with pencil on a single staff, and marked with the practiced loops of a hurried treble clef. No two melodies are the same, and none of them are signed with a time or key signature. The final cluster is the largest, containing snippets of composition on a double staff. Still, there are no time or key signatures, but these, like the cluster of rhythms, are organized with circled numbers on the corners of each.

The experience of sorting through the fragments of “Arch Drive” is incredibly confusing and frustrating at first. But soon enough, it becomes immensely pleasurable and feels like playing a game or solving a puzzle with no solution. Because there is no “correct”
way for the piece to sound, there are an infinite number of ways to interpret Russell’s proposed melodies and rhythmic structures. “Arch Drive” is an adamant and joyful refusal of (re)production: the illegibility of its vague notation and (lack of) textual context prohibit it from ever crystallizing into a static, final product to ever be performed or audibly consumed. But the piece’s refusal to be gestated into an audible piece of music is not made in a wish to remain anti-social. In fact, its very nature invites curiosity, generosity, and community. The fragmented segments of “Arch Drive” are not leaves at all, but colorful seeds that sing out for constant rearrangement so as to be infinitely related to each other.
Chapter Five

Conclusion

Light Ballad

In a recording titled “Ballad of the Lights,” one of his many collaborations with beat poet Allen Ginsberg, Russell sings and plays his cello while Ginsberg narrates the story of a man looking upon the lights across the Hudson River. In this ballad, Russell’splaintiff folksy voice rings out, reminiscent to my ear of Buddhist or Georgian chant. Meanwhile, Ginsberg speaks slowly and carefully in gentle rumbling tones. Sometimes, it sounds as though Russell is reaching for Ginsberg’s register, attempting to sing notes that are clearly beyond his tenor range. All the while, Russell bows the cello in an uninterrupted hum that sounds like water flowing down the river without ever touching the shore. About halfway through the song, the cello’s slow, pensive hum makes way for a slowly energetic pop-rock tune played by Russell’s band at the time, The Flying Hearts. The inclusion of an electric organ, soft guitar pop, and simple drumming reveal the chanting to have been a simple melodic line all along, and the result sounds like a song by the Beatles, or perhaps a popular contemporary indie-folk band.

When I first encountered Arthur Russell’s music, I, like many others, was immediately taken aback by the range of styles and colors his work encompassed. His body of music sounded as though he (as a composer, producer, and musical experimenter) vibrated between too many genres and too many time periods. Upon hearing “Ballad of the Lights,” for example, I could not understand the song’s appeal. The opening half sounded too strange,
too spare, and too unrelated to the latter half’s rhythmic structure. I let the song go and left it alone for a few years, but it somehow remained in my memory. After learning about Arthur Russell’s influence in the gay disco scene, the faint recollection of “Ballad of the Lights” called me back, to the listen to the track and give it another chance.

**Boy List**

My first day at Arthur Russell’s archive, I was incorrectly told by an attending librarian that the *Arthur Russell Papers* collection was kept in a total of five boxes. I had done my homework, so I knew that the collection was actually housed in 23 boxes, an oversized folder, and a cardboard tube. But in my nervousness (or excitement?) from having to get my coat and bag checked twice, of being in a labyrinthinely beautiful library building with a complicated new system to make a library card, and in finally getting to handle Russell’s archival ephemera, I stopped myself from asking for the other boxes. Instead, I made a note to ask for the rest of Russell’s materials after getting through the first five boxes. “I’ll go through those boxes to find what I needed for my thesis,” I told myself, “and then move onto the rest of the 20 containers.”

After that entire day at the library had passed however, I had yet to sift through even three of those first five boxes they handed me, and I knew that there would be absolutely no way for me to find any particular piece of paper I was hoping to find during my three-day trip to New York. I did not let myself become discouraged, and instead embraced the enormity of the task ahead of me: I would let the materials speak their meaning to me, rather than trying to uncover evidence for the arguments of my thesis from them.
Of all the photographs, letters, invoices, and magazine clippings, I was most interested in sifting through the piles and piles of short, small passages of musical composition. I had expected for them all to be haphazard scribbles, littered with notes, and abused with edits and retries. But the photocopied sheet music for “List of Boys,” for example, seemed a lot more cleanly jotted down than I had been led to believe by the accounts of his collaborators (Appendix B). Long-time collaborator and studio engineer Bob Blank, for instance, had spoken of Russell’s peculiar tendency of playing “five different songs going at once,” his penchant for working “laterally,” and his ability to “hear across all this different material” (Lawrence, Hold 239). This was what I expected to see visually represented in Russell’s archive, not a simple melodic sketch.

So, curious to hear what “List of Boys” might sound like (and never having heard of the track), I searched for a recording of the song. But the only commercially available version I could find was a recording by Arthur’s Landing, a collective of musicians who had originally worked with Russell, led by another one of Russell’s longtime musical partners Steven Hall, who now paid tribute to him by performing new arrangements of his music. The collective had released a newly arranged recording of “List of Boys” in 2011, which is available to listen for free on their SoundCloud page.

I was fascinated and, I admit, disappointed by the fact that this was the only version of “List of Boys” I could find, but I gave Arthur’s Landing’s version a listen. Simply put, I was amazed by their new arrangement of the simple melody line I found in the archive. The track sounds otherworldly. There are aspects of the recording that sound quintessentially “Arthur Russell,” from the gradual fade-in of a disco beat to the breathy swooning of a high tenor falsetto. But the lead vocalist here interprets Russell’s lyrical puzzles with his own
stylish flair, creating entirely different meanings in the liberal emphases and omissions he gives and takes from the lyrics: “I see a life of my own by leaving the last part.” By the end of the track, the guitarist and vocalist thickly overlay effect after effect upon each other, creating a dense, echoing atmosphere of sound. You can just imagine Russell recognizing himself in the track and wanting to endlessly edit and rework it in the studio.

What Actually Happened

In each of these cases, the new conception of what the music was doing was to some degree a new conception of what music could do. It was a conception that I was not quick to find on my own, because something about it seemed contrary or illogical or perverse, at least at first. I wouldn’t have imagined that music could go that way. But once the idea was offered to me, by someone better attuned to the piece than I was, I could recognize that the piece went that way, and that I liked it just fine; and the peculiar new idea was thereby validated. Whenever something like this happens, my world becomes larger and better: inclusive of more sources of pleasure, and specifically more intellectually interesting as well, insofar as it comes to encompass a greater variety of distinct musical logics. (Dubiel 2)

The above paragraph is a quotation from “Analysis, Description, and What Really Happens” by composer Joseph Dubiel. In this essay, Dubiel describes two instances during his life when different extra-musical context startlingly changed his very own experience of that music. He takes care to emphasize that this new context did not merely trigger an epiphany of how the pieces were supposed to feel, but that he could tell that the music sounded differently to him. In other words, he didn’t come around to an unsatisfactory music
experience to find that it was he suddenly liked the music within a different context; it was the very experience that had changed.

Dubiel’s description of how learning this aspect of his relationship to music changed his outlook on all things musical is something I can relate to. In the many encounters of different musical works, artists, and cultures I have experienced as a musician, the ones in which I depart the concurrence feeling changed are almost always the ones in which I feel like I have learned something new about music itself.

In the introduction to this thesis, I stated my goal for allowing Arthur Russell’s music, life, and ephemera to shape a different, deeper, and more ethical context for the understanding of and between music, musicology, and queerness. In having created a space for these contextual threads to emerge and connect, I am committed to the care of these relationships in the many future situations that will undoubtedly arise when such care will be necessary. I hope that by committing to this practice of always learning and growing from context, I will also continually find different, deeper, and more ethical methods of engaging with the relationships around me.
Appendix A

I’m a little lost
Without you,
Oh, that could be
An understatement, oh

Now I hope that I have paid the cost
To let a
Day go on by and not
Call on you

‘Cause I’m so, so busy thinkin’ ‘bout
Kissing you,
Now I want to do that
Without entertaining
Another thought

Out on the ocean surf
I’ll have to
Pull my-
Self together

Now it’s harder I’m not on my turf
Just me and
Me and those big old waves
Rollin’ in

‘Cause I’m so, so busy thinkin’ ‘bout
Kissing you,
Now I want to do that
Without entertaining
Another thought

It’s so unfinished
Our love affair
A voice in me
Is telling me to
Run away

I hope your feelings isn’t diminished
I hope you
Need someone in your life
Someone like me

‘Cause I’m so, so busy thinkin’ ‘bout
Kissing you,
Now I want to do that
Without entertaining
Another thought

I’m a little lost
Without you,
Oh, that could be
An understatement, oh

Now I hope that I have paid the cost
To let a
Day go on by and not
Call on you

‘Cause I’m so, so busy thinkin’ ‘bout
Kissing you,
Now I want to do that
Without entertaining
Another thought
Appendix B

Figure 3 Library scan of sheet music for “List of Boys” by Arthur Russell
Figure 4 A Record World Magazine review of a track by Arthur Russell titled “Kiss Me Again” released under the pseudonym Dinosaur.
Figure 5 Composition titled “If a Cockroach Comes…” by Arthur Russell.
Figure 6 Chart depicting chord progression and beat structure for unreleased track “I want to change my life” by Arthur Russell, later arranged and recorded by Arthur’s Landing.


http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.96.2.2/mto.96.2.2.guck.html.


Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*.


