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"Alpha Females": Feminist Transgressions in Industrial Music †

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Abstract: Recycled, re-engineered and transformed pornography has often been appropriated by many of the industrial music movement's female personalities who are invested in an anti-censorship discourse. This contrasts with the dominant form of feminism in the 1970s, which railed against the depiction of all aspects of sexuality. Artists Cosey Fanni Tutti, Lisa Carver, Diamanda Galás, Mïrka Lugosi, Antal Nemeth, Diana Rogerson and Jill Westwood challenged the codes of male domination by reconfiguring gender and overturning the violence perpetrated by men within the industrial movement. Following the artistic and cultural context of the 1970s and 1980s, such issues gave rise to the radical performances that are discussed throughout this article.

Keywords: art history; BDSM studies; counterculture; gender studies; industrial music; industrial culture; performance art; sex-positive feminism; subculture; trauma studies; xerox art

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1. Introduction

The word "industrial", theorized by English band Throbbing Gristle through the slogan "Industrial Music for Industrial People", characterizes the work of artists who attempted to develop a critique of the standardization of industry and mass media. By rebelling against the most conflicting aspects of the "societies of control"[1] identified by Gilles Deleuze through the theories of William S. Burroughs,[2] these artists developed out of a critique of a puritanical sexual repression that was "subverted by a consumer culture that offers instant, oral gratification and a return to adolescent, even infantile, fun—'social irresponsibility' with a vengeance" (Dery 1996). The recycling of soft and/or extreme pornographic imagery fed the movement's dissident stance in a struggle against all forms of taboo and censorship from a position that was rarely explored in the 1970s and '80s. As Californian performer Monte Cazazza said in 1989: "There's not much money spent on dedicated sexual research. You think of Masters & Johnson or *The Hite Report* (Hite 1976), but the amount of people and the amount of money spent is really quite insignificant. Yet it's one of the most basic forms of human activity. If sex had been researched more, probably half the pornography industry would be out of business, or different, because one reason pornography is so popular is because not that much is taught about sex."[3] Not long after Cazazza had bemoaned this lack of research, however, serious studies of pornography began to be conducted in the early 1990s—a phenomenon that began with the release of Linda Williams' seminal academic work, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Williams 1989). According to Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith, more recent researchers in this area: "Cultural, economic, political, feminist, artistic, psychological, medical and media discourses all contribute to the examination of pornography but often involve the deployment of specialist languages and concepts that carry with them their own implications, histories and problematics" (Attwood and Smith 2014). Industrial artists readily appropriated sexual material in their efforts to explore sexual oppression and censorship, feminism and violence and to investigate the relations between men and

women within the movement. A complicated relationship arises when male musicians belittle female musicians, who may have been victims of physical and verbal abuse. This aspect is reflected in the autobiography *Art Sex Music* of the English artist Cosey Fanni Tutti, describing her former partner Genesis P-Orridge as a manipulative, paternalistic and violent man who even endangered her life by dropping a "large cement breeze block" from a balcony near her.[4] Needless to say Cosey Fanni Tutti has been integral to the birth and development of industrial music, just as many other female performers have enriched the movement. Whilst rarely cited in the history of the industrial genre,[5] the work of certain female artists did nevertheless lead towards the development of a sex-positive, post-modern feminism through their adoption of what Joan Riviere termed "Womanliness as a masquerade." The intensification of femininity, which Riviere identified as a process intended to better counter the cultural power of the male gaze, is here replaced by the strident presentation of female performers who embodied a brutality that undermined any patriarchal commodification and domination of the female body. These industrial musicians have therefore embraced fetishistic/dominatrix costumes and visuals to subvert the male gaze which could otherwise leave their performances vulnerable to objectification.

2. Feminist Background in Industrial Music

> I don't see the equality at all. I still see chronic domination by white middle-aged men in positions of power who will remain there forever, because they decide who gets to decide. Nothing short of total war between the sexes is going to eliminate that!
>
> Lydia Lunch[6]

Since pornographic or sadomasochistic iconography plays a highly visible role in the visual culture of industrial music, it is essential to question the issues specific to the activities of women artists[7] in a movement largely dominated by heterosexual white men and in which the use of aural and visual aggression is an essential part. In his book *Mortality and Music*, Christopher Partridge discusses this phenomenon and extends it to popular culture, citing the article "A Feminist Analysis of Popular Music: Power Over, Objectification of, and Violence Against Women."[8] According to Partridge, "there is some evidence of a link between popular music discourses and behaviour. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that popular culture generally contributes 'to coerciveness and sexual assault toward women'" (Partridge 2015). The subversive use of pornographic conventions is therefore occasionally contradictory: in this type of iconography, there is an essentially male counter-culture and similarly an essentially female one, each using similar images in very different ways. Recycled, re-engineered and transformed, pornography was often appropriated by many of the industrial music movement's female personalities who were invested an anti-censorship discourse which, at that time, contrasted with the dominant form of feminism, one that railed against the depiction of all aspects of sexuality[9]. The pro-sex feminist trend—as well as sex-positive, sex-radical and sex work movements—presented an "anti-anti-pornography" (Vörös 2015) response led by the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce (FACT) as early as 1984, as well as by Club 90, notably featuring Annie Sprinkle. As a complex cultural form, pornography unmasks the conundrum of women's sexuality and how it is perceived in Western societies. The taboos relating to female sexuality generated radical artistic reactions in the struggle against the oppression that the codes of the patriarchal model were inflicting on women on a daily basis. Cosey Fanni Tutti's work bears witness to the emerging sex-positive feminist consciousness within the industrial current which would go so far as to infiltrate the sex industry of the early 1970s. Cosey's commitment shows an early awareness of a new form of feminism, one seeking behavioural and sexual freedom (Figure 1). To this end, she appeared in modelling work for erotic magazines (*Men Only*, *Penthouse* and *Partner*)—before acting in pornographic films—with the primary intention of developing subliminal performances[10] (the photographers were not informed of her concept). These pictures illustrated the sordid

stories of "glamor" magazines, in which Cosey Fanni Tutti played the role of fictitious and fantasized characters that she intended to subvert through *détournement*.



Figure 1. Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Ritual Awakening Part 2*, performance, "Bar Europa" Festival, Amsterdam, 1987.

3. Subversion through BDSM

> Anger is an emotion which must be reclaimed and legitimized as Woman's rightful, healthy expression—anger can be a source of power, strength and clarity as well as a creative force. [. . .] From the beginning of their lives, women have been conditioned to be (too) polite, compliant, helpful and "nice". Women are very uncomfortable with the idea of being a rebel, and men are very uncomfortable with women outsiders. When rebelliously critiquing society, women have never been cast as sexy or desirable (like a female James Dean)—but rather as a prime bitch: grim, humorless and non-sexual.
>
> (Vale and Juno 1991, p. 5)

In their 1991 work, *Angry Women*, Andrea Juno and V. Vale evoke the anger that some women artists express in their performance art by referring the myth of Medusa, whose face, based on a painting by Phoebe Gloeckner, appears on the cover of their book. Anger is perhaps a justifiable response to established normative systems that have the effect of limiting the actions of individuals according to their gender. Juno and Vale outline how the work of such artists represents an attempt to reverse the way in which only men can appropriate aggressive behaviour. However, their essay fails to consider the violent anger that female industrial performers have often expressed in their work: "Women have a different, less destructive relationship to anger than men—especially since it has been a taboo expression for them. Theirs is not the frozen rage of serial killers, which festers internally, but rage can be channelled creatively" (Vale and Juno 1991, p. 5). A direct relationship with destruction, however, is certainly apparent in the work of at least some

female performers from the industrial scene. Jill Westwood created radical performances with Fistfuck, a female duo she formed along with Diana "Chrystal" Rogerson (Figure 2), following performances with Antal Nemeth.



Figure 2. (**Left**) Jill Westwood, 1984. Photo by Derek Ridgers. (**Right**) Diana "Chrystal Belle Scrodd" Rogerson, c. 1981.

After training as an artist at Stourbridge Art College, Psalter Lane Art College in Sheffield and then at the Royal College of Art in London, where she became friends with Cerith Wyn Evans, Westwood developed a radical form of expression in her art with Chrystal, increasingly making use of visual and sonic aggression developed through the prism of BDSM subculture. This appropriation of a form of industrial-style violence was itself a project of identity reconstruction, highlighting the difference between male and female destruction in art. Kristine Stiles writes: "In destruction art, body—actual or extended in mechanical robots—is the principle territory for the demonstration of destruction and survival in both men and women's productions. While men have explored the relationship of that body to the objects and technologies of destruction and to the assertion and recuperation of identity, women have regularly confined their investigations to the reconstruction of identity in the decentered Self and, thus, intensify a gendered investigation of the material universe of bodily pain" (Stiles 1992). This process of gender reconfiguration manifested itself in the case of the exquisitely-named Fistfuck by overturning the violence perpetrated by men within the industrial movement. The concept of "Womanliness as a Masquerade", as defined by the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere in 1929, was here turned into an expression composed of violent images and aggressive attitudes: "Women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men" (Riviere 1929, p. 303). The term "masquerade" is an ideal label for the subversive strategies of Fistfuck, who aimed to subvert the model of the woman-object of Western societies and sweep away the misogynistic attitudes of the industrial scene of the 1970s and 1980s. The mask of womanliness—developed at the same time by certain filmmakers such as Ken Russell in *Crimes of Passion* (1984)—was replaced by that of the warrior in Fistfuck's case, adopting the opposite extreme of the masquerade as identified

by Riviere. The intent remained the same, however: to deceive the male gaze in order to better counter it. The adoption of extreme attitudes (acts of sadism, male humiliation, etc.), enabled Jill Westwood "to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods" (Riviere 1929, p. 306). The presence of men on stage, who allowed themselves to be publicly humiliated by Fistfuck, gave the lie to Bataille's claim that women "put themselves forward as objects for the aggressive desire of men" (Bataille 1986). Here, it was men who assumed the characteristics of the object-being, subjected to the desires of the two artists who "showed no hesitation, swathed in leather and backed by a very aggressive soundtrack of noise and saturated sounds, in delivering to a mesmerised audience violent, sadomasochistic performances, during which (consenting) men were tied to chairs and knocked to the floor, beaten or whipped by these two high-heeled female mistresses: Diana Rogerson, alias 'Chrystal', the future companion of Nurse With Wound's creative lead, Steven Stapleton and Jill Westwood, who had no compunction about urinating on the submissive males during these performances" (Duboys 2007).

Musician John Murphy, who worked with the female pairing and provided the sound for one of their performances, said: "The live Fistfuck thing was essentially fetish performance art, with both Diana and Jill doing some sort of SM ritual with various submissives and commenting on the whole affair while it was happening. The backing was a wall of unearthly noise, sub-Whitehouse with cut-up vocals and snippets from both Diana and Jill."[11] (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Fistfuck, performance, AIR Gallery, London, January 1982.

Male humiliation had been a focus of Diana Rogerson's research. At the time, she "became a locus for damaged young men who came to her in search of the kind of ritual situations denied them by modern society that would allow them to work through the complexes and structures that kept them locked up. In Rogerson's notorious short film, *Twisting The Black Threads Of My Mental Marionettes*, she functions as an initiatrix, with her and Matthew Bower [. . .] exposing a young man—Jonathan Peppe—to humiliation and genital torture in the pursuit of spiritual and psychological catharsis. Or maybe just masochistic joy" (Keenan 2003, p. xv). The Fistfuck duo extended their work into experimental film, which became a fixture of the career of Jill Westwood, who was to screen some of her works at the event organised at the Air Gallery in London (23–24 August 1983), the poster for which had been designed by Antal Nemeth. Nemeth also gave a performance with Fistfuck that same year (21 June 1983) as part of "The Equinox Event"

at the London Musician's Co-Op in Camden, which featured bands such as Club Moral, Dogs Blood Order, Operation Muzak and The Death and Beauty Foundation. The title of Westwood's performance, *Performance with chains and vocal* (Figure 4), sums up its content quite succinctly: "I was dressed in black leather and had my hands chained together—it involved some primal screaming followed by me holding a posture of my hands chained and raised above my head till the end of the piece" (Westwood 2016). The event, organised by Mary Dowd and John Murphy, who were accompanied by Roger Smith and the members of Produktion-HAIR, gave Fistfuck a platform to challenge the codes of male domination: "I think the influence of these industrial, subversive, male artists/musicians did inspire me to up the ante, and go further in the direction of exploring and creating works that focused on power, violence, fear and vulnerability. Perhaps I was competing with the boys? Thus it did lead Chrystal and I to thinking about being like a 'female Whitehouse'. Like 'alpha females'."[12]



Figure 4. Fistfuck (Jill Westwood), *Performance with chains and vocal*, 21 June 1983, "The Equinox Event", London Musician's Co-Op, Camden, London.

Fistfuck's radical performances tended to reverse the focus of the aggression onto the usual proponents of violence—the men—while developing a female voice among industrial performers in an effort to recalibrate the usual sexual imbalance. According to Westwood, the group was inspired "by the force and impact of Whitehouse to arrest their audiences. We saw a gap with regard to any female contributions of this kind and we found ourselves drawn towards filling it. I went on to perform solo as well as collaborating with various combinations of people in galleries and nightclub venues, performing ritualistic and spontaneous displays involving actions and interactions between us as participants. These performances created heightened states and were enactments on themes of power, intimacy, physicality, pain and trust between people" (Westwood 2016). Jill Westwood and Chrystal's performances had the effect of reconfiguring the relationship of the industrial audience—and some artists themselves—towards women. In some respects, these performances—whose titles are suggestive of the pair's intentions (*Manifestation of the Will* and *World Without End*, for example)—offered a radical version of Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" and

"consisted of unrehearsed, ritualised actions where participants inhabited different roles connected to polarised power dynamics such as Mistress/Slave. This involved costume and dramatic interactions between people in a kind of real-theatre" (Westwood 2016). The phenomenon of violence against women was starkly highlighted in the composition "Rape", performed by Min Kent with the band Ake, during "The Equinox Event", in which the singer recounted a sexual assault she had suffered. This event was followed by the single of the same name, released by Zos Kia the following year. The overcoming of such trauma through transgression also featured a linguistic component. This is demonstrated by the choice of the term "fistfuck", which Antal Nemeth used to describe the band's first performance: "This name, coined by Jill Westwood, rolls perfectly off the tongue and was designed to incite a particular sense of horror and awe especially from a woman's lips and as conceived it did certainly awaken some to prick up their ears. The people loved it. We were confronting and convincing. [. . .] The name was designed to shock and inspire" (Nemeth 2016). Westwood added: "Antal seems to recall I came up with the name as a way to ignite a charge of shock and fear. I was interested in the power of language and of particular words. It wasn't the content of the word that was relevant it was more to do with the effects it created. In fact, I think I was appropriating it—or borrowing it—from the male gay scene I had become acquainted with through Cerith" (Westwood 2016). The power of the name, another manifestation of a Burroughsian heritage, reflected an exploration of alternative and marginalised behaviour: "We were part of a scene that was deeply interested and attracted to the idea of being underground—anti-mainstream—this is why we tapped into the hidden and forbidden taboos and fears of society—fear is the key—was a motto!" (Westwood 2016). Notably, it was under the influence of Cerith Wyn Evans that Jill Westwood became aware of the struggle for liberation from sexual practices, through the discovery of the compendium "Polysexuality", which was published by the magazine *Semiotext(e)* (Peraldi 1981) and which discussed crucial issues around multiple aspects of sexuality and the Western attitude towards the subject. The use of the term "fistfuck" is therefore charged with meaning in terms of the way Jill Westwood integrated the subject into her work: "I think the word Fistfuck conjured up a world of taboo, of some other wild and unknown physical, sexual, intimate, bodily, experiences between people—a way of exploding, confronting and questioning usual classifications. Maybe also a pursuit of heightened states of experience through the body" (Westwood 2016). The assault on the entrenched codes of masculinity, beginning with the very identity of the artists carrying out a series of extreme physical experiences, served as a radical deconstruction of attitudes towards gender. In this respect, Fistfuck's strategies anticipated the idea that art historian Kaja Silverman developed in her 1988 book, *The Acoustic Mirror* (Silverman 1988), as summarised by Liz Kotz: "Women artists must first assume masculine identities in order to dismantle or disperse them. [. . .] For male artists, intense identification with female characters or personas may challenge culturally enforced regimes of gender and sexuality, the female exploration of male subjectivity offers a potentially productive, if easily misunderstood, site for feminist art-making" (Kotz 1993). The author's perspectives build on Judith Butler's theories, seeing gender traits as reinforced through mechanisms of repetition and imitation that need to be deconstructed. Fistfuck's performances attempted both to undermine the male gaze on the female body and to deconstruct gender as conceived by normative patriarchal systems. Antal Nemeth and Jill Westwood went so far as to infiltrate the underground literature of the 1980s by posing as models in *The Black Leather Jacket* (Farren 1985), dressed in leather skirts and Perfecto's with other fetish fashion accessories (handcuffs and harnesses) to better subvert gender stereotypes (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Unknown, Antal Nemeth and Jill Westwood, posing for the book *The Black Leather Jacket* written by English journalist and author Mick Farren in 1985 (p. 65).

4. Authoritarian Fetishism

While Chrystal and Jill Westwood's initiative involved extreme acts based on the performative tradition of Cosey Fanni Tutti, other female performers explored BDSM practices in their work, such as the Master/Slave Relationship project, created by the American artist Debbie Jaffe in the 1980s, which experimentally questioned the relationship between the submissive and the dominant. Sadomasochistic subculture allowed Jaffe to reaffirm female sexual pleasure through her musical, visual and theoretical works. In the article "Sadomasochism: A Study of Control and Consent", published in the *Progress Report* fanzine, she writes: "Sadomasochism—particularly female dominant S/M—permits a more proper distribution of the perceived pleasure. It is essential that S/M video and straight pornography alike show strong women in control of their lives, in control of their bodies and in control of their pleasures in every way possible. Men believe their dicks are to be worshipped, their sauce to be begged for, their needs all-powerful. I'm there to give them the message that they were all wrong all these years" (Jaffe 1992b, p. 26). Here, sex would be about equality in the pleasure experienced, while undermining the assumed priority that men may be conditioned to expect for their own desires. Jaffe adds, "society—this conservative, no-risks-taken, white-male governed society we live in—must be turned inside out. The status quo must be revoked. [. . .] It is part of the whole picture that controls how we behave, what art we look at, what we wear, how women are viewed in society and how we choose to indulge in pleasure" (Jaffe 1992b, p. 27). The artist developed concepts similar to Fistfuck's to overturn patriarchal values through the use of a variety of art forms. Whereas the British duo appropriated masculine attitudes in order to turn these against men themselves, Debbie Jaffe explored the capacities of her own voice to imitate the male tone in order to short-circuit the male/female inequalities of dominant/submissive relationships.

The album *This Lubricious Love* (Figure 6, 1987) exemplifies this initiative: "I think it was just angry about male and female roles and I just wanted to portray both roles and that's where a lot of misunderstanding comes in. Because people know it's my voice, even though I turned down the pitch and it sounds like a guy saying these things, presumably to a female character who's being submissive. [. . .] I think it's a really important statement about male/female relationships, not just in the sexual realm" (Jaffe 1992a, p. 10). The photocopied portrait of the artist on the album cover, as well as the many photographs in other Master/Slave Relationship productions, in which Debbie Jaffe appears as a dominatrix replete with riding crop and suspenders, as in *The Desire To Castrate Father* (1985) and *Darkness* (1986), underline this yearning for emancipation from a normative system that governs people's behaviour and capacities. These visual arrangements, modified by the action of reprography, attest to Debbie Jaffe's singular work around female emancipation and her relationship to the submissive male. Indeed, the performer suggests a radical deconstruction of gender and spirit:

> S/M is fear inspiring. It can take you to places you never thought you'd go to. It can challenge you. It can excite you. It can open your mind. These "side effects" of S/M are exactly what our Controlling Factors don't want to have happen to us. The government would prefer your intellect to be lazy. [. . .] Sadomasochism is one form of exercising your intellect sexually. I am of the ridiculously obvious belief that whatever consenting adults do in private quarters is absolutely their business and no one else's. Strange how this basic concept of personal freedom has been contorted and destroyed in our society.
>
> (Jaffe 1992b, p. 24)



Figure 6. Master/Slave Relationship, *This Lubricious Love*, RRRecords, 1987, vinyl, LP.

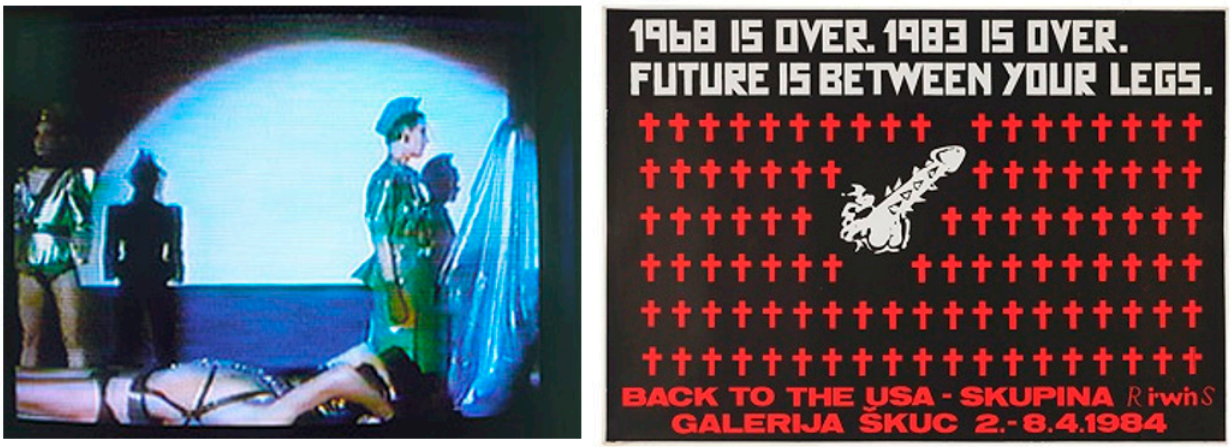
For Debbie Jaffe, S&M practices became another tool in the fight against all forms of conditioning, one that puts the body of the individual on the front line. Jaffe developed her ideas in video, notably with *MSR A To Z* (1993), in which she places herself in situations defined by such terms as: "autoeroticism", "blow job", "cum", "fetish", "gender fuck", "spanking", "slave" and "torture", all illustrated by acts of masturbation, fellatio, penetration and domination performed by the artist, with occasional assistance from a friend. Jaffe adopted authoritarian poses in police or sadomasochistic uniforms for the sequences entitled "authority", "questions and answers" and "latex", so as to further this analysis of power through sexuality. The meaning behind this approach is made more explicit in the

scene entitled "dominant", in which the artist simulates masturbating a strap-on dildo that she wears throughout the clip (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Master/Slave Relationship, *MSR A To Z*, Minus Habens Records, 1993, VHS.

In 1984, the members of the Slovenian band Borghesia performed the *Lustmörder* show held at the Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana. A poster designed by the artist Dušan Mandić was shown at the back of the stage and read: "1968 is over. 1983 is over. The future is between your legs" ("*1968 I prošla. 1983 I prošla. Budućnost je između vaših noga*"), expressing the desire of the members of Borghesia and their entourage to deepen their reflection on sexuality—its practices and modes of representation—in industrialised societies (Figure 8). According to the historian David Crowley, "the poster made it clear that Borghesia and other members of Ljubljana's subculture rejected the progressive and universalising rhetoric of sexual liberation which had been announced so boldly at the end of the 1960s. Sex in subcultural Ljubljana had to be freed not only from the petit-bourgeois morality of the League of Communists but also from the humanist libertarians" (Crowley 2015).



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 8. (**a**) Borghesia, *Lustmörder*, 1984, Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana. (**b**) Dušan Mandić, "1968 is over. 1983 is over. Future is between your legs", poster. Visual used for the poster of IRWIN's exhibition "Back to the USA", Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana, 1984.

The theorist Marina Gržinić and the costume designer Lidija Bernik appeared in transparent latex uniforms for a performance that was described as fascist by the Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulić-Iliž in her article "Fašizam na alternativnoj sceni:"[13]

> One of the female protagonists placed bloody pieces of liver on the nude chest of a man lying on an elevated part of the stage (an altar?). The man was wearing only a leather helmet, leather briefs, and chains. Another man, equally half-naked, with a made-up face, crushed the liver in his hands and smeared it over the supine man. In the end this man held a knife high above the bloody chest of the other man. It recalled a ceremonial killing or a sexual ritual . . . The themes of the video projected on the screens in the background were sadomasochism, violence, fascism, war, army, parade, socialist realism. The music was in the function of atmosphere, of suspense, while two girls in sadomasochist costumes moved about the stage, with whips in their hands and military hats on their heads. [. . .] The expression of violence, of deviant forms of sexuality, transvestism, perversity, indicate, in the view of the group, the process of a metaphysical discovery of the concealed essence of repression.[14]

While Borghesia's performance looked to Drakulić-Iliž like an enactment of "ceremonial killing", the collective's real intent was above all a reflection on the repressive mechanisms that condition the sexual life of individuals. The group is generally distrustful of the popularised notion of sexual liberation inherited from the 1960s, which is seen as exercising a new form of control over the body. Thus, the conceptual and formal issues addressed by Borghesia introduce a reflection on the total emancipation of sexual practices within the industrial movement, as evidenced in the video *The Mud* (1988). Directed for the group by Neven Korda, this work features a performer (Irena Zagajšek) dominating a man in a game of seduction, filmed on a set designed by Rok Sieberer (murals) and Dragan Čolaković-Šilja (slides). The video *On*, by Zemira Alajbegović (ZANK) and Neven Korda (Borghesia), had already addressed this aspect in 1985, with a BDSM scene that was captured for the cover of the album *Ljubav Je Hladnija Od Smrti* (Figure 9, 1985).



Figure 9. Borghesia, Ljubav Je Hladnija Od Smrti, FV Založba, Totò Alle Prese Coi Dischi, 1985, vinyl, LP.

Borghesia's postmodern theories made use of pornography to question the representations of women's bodies within the mass media. To this end, the Slovenian artists revisited

Cindy Sherman's representations of the role assigned to middle-class American women in the 1960s and 1970s. This homage took the form of a video made by Dušan Mandić, *Hysteria's Production Presents the Reconstruction of the Photographs of Cindy Sherman* (1984), which consists of a selection of works created by the American photographer. Sherman's sets, stylistic elements and poses are reproduced on screen by Marina Gržinić, transforming the artist's photographs into veritable *tableaux vivants* (Figure 10): "The act of taking possession of the photographs, which Cindy Sherman herself exercised in the production of female types, stereotypes and prototypes, takes the form of a double misappropriation. Images of women are constructed from faces and identities that have, in turn, already been 'stolen' by Sherman from cinema and the mass media. These images are thus pushed to another level. The video becomes a double negation of identities—a negation of Cindy Sherman's own pre-recycled images" (Gržinić 2002).



Figure 10. (**Left**) Dušan Mandić, Marina Gržinić, Hysteria's Production Presents the Reconstruction of the Photographs of Cindy Sherman, 1984, video, color, sound, 3′. (**Right**) Cindy Sherman, Untitled #90, 1981, chromogenic print, 61 × 121.9 cm, Des Moines Art Center.

The different female stereotypes presented by the moving images in the work—realised in the context of the exhibition "Back to the USA", organised by the members of IRWIN in 1984 at Galerija Škuc in Ljubljana—broadened the group's commitment to art promoting gender equality through the readaptation of the photographs of a representative of the contemporary art scene. Borghesia thus played on two fronts in order to spread their message: infiltration of the media through the production of video clips and the transgression of norms established by the performance *Lustmörder*. This latter aspect is reflected in the attitude of artists who see violence as a means of subverting the clichés conveyed by the (male) standards of the time.

5. Inversion of Gender

In her visual art and work with the Club Moral project, Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven adopts an authoritarian attitude intended to assert her uniqueness as an artist and as an individual, in order to better counter the male stereotype:

> The manifesto *Public Enemy Number 1* that I wrote in 1979 for my first exhibition—the first text I designed on the computer—presented my face in the background and in a very authoritarian way. It was a way of taking back control, of being the master and also of being able to express oneself in a direct and clear way. Perhaps it was also a response to everything that was being seen on television in the early 1960s, about the Second World War and the trauma caused by the Third Reich. In 1987, there was James Bond and everything was permeated by this misogynistic attitude, like Serge Gainsbourg: all those males who treated women badly. We had to manifest ourselves in a very authoritarian way. It gradually became a

> struggle to be able to remain oneself: to be radical in authority in order to be independent.[15]

With her series "Violence & The Sacred" (Figure 11, 1995)—a direct reference to René Girard's book (Girard 1977)—van Kerckhoven presented "woman as the new Christ"[16] in drawings viewed through fluorescent Plexiglas. Although Diamanda Galás had already embodied the feminine aspect of Christ in a series of photographs by Annie Leibovitz in 1991, here, AMVK's work is accompanied by explicit biblical references even in the titles of her works: e.g., *Way of the Cross and Crucifixion*. Mïrka Lugosi carried out a similar process of gender reversal with Le Syndicat and Entre Vifs: "Not wanting to be a girl, I behaved with boys as if I were one. When you see the photos from that time, my head is almost shaved (Figure 12), I'm shirtless on stage like Ruelgo and Zorïn. [. . .] I was in an ideal environment for me, because I could create things that a woman wasn't 'supposed' to do."[17] Mïrka Lugosi exercised her creative freedom by creating distorted and saturated soundscapes using industrial tools and metalware as musical instruments and via the mediums of confrontational performance art, bondage photography sessions and collage-work through which she pursued an artistic spirit that permeated her own daily life. In this respect, the artist maintains that: "It was extremely stimulating for me to be in a world where one was not afraid of violent things, but on the contrary: to be in a field where one was confronted with the unbearable and the violent. In fact, being a girl and being interested in this kind of thing was extremely exciting and liberating for me."[18] This relationship to violence created an emancipatory space, which can also constitute one of the great pitfalls of the industrial genre since these confrontational performances, consolidating attitudes of opposition to existing authority and oppressive forces, can be misread by the unnuanced audience member not fully conversant with industrial culture's appropriation of violent tropes and visuals for whom these tactics could, conversely, lead to an engendering of authoritarian and reactionary sentiment.



Figure 11. Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven, Violence & The Sacred: Way of the Cross and Crucifixion, 1995, felt pen on paper, plexiglass on wood, 101 × 155 × 6.5 cm.



Figure 12. Le Syndicat, performance, "Divergences/Divisions" Festival, Bordeaux, March 1985.

The exploration of violence may also manifest itself in a form of aggression against the male form. As an example of this phenomenon, the claims of Diamanda Galás are unassailable. Galás developed the concept of "Black Leather Beavers" in 1981, consisting of "a group of feminist diesel dykes who went around committing revenge on rapists. We had a veterinarian to perform the castrations, a tattoo artist to engrave "BLB" on the rapists' foreheads, and arsonist to burn their houses down—we'd tie 'em to a tree and castrate 'em. It would be immaculate. A girlfriend has formed a West Coast chapter in San Francisco, and I would encourage more women to do the same across America. [...] Women need to think of themselves as predators rather than prey."[19] The incitement to revenge, romanticised by Diamanda Galás, demonstrated a willingness to end patriarchal society at a stroke. The performer added that we should "use *kill* energy on our enemies, not ignore them."[20] Through the use of violence during her performances, Galás explored the potential of her own body and the idea of surpassing oneself through the notion of an "extroversion of energy." The artist explained: "The way I sing embodies the concept that diffraction of the personality provides essential liberation from the *self*, thus extroverting the *insanity*. And when you extrovert the insanity, you can live most of the time as a real person, yet be able to change your self and commit actions that your real self would not be capable of. Training to be a singer is like training in the martial arts."[21]

According to Galás, the use of the voice as "*kill* energy" has the effect of transforming the artist's body into a weapon. This aspect also appears in the artist's consideration of the relationship between men and women: "I like violent men; I like the idea that I can terrorize them and they can take it. I don't want 'em to knock me across the room unless I hit them first—and can hit 'em back. [. . .] With regard to relations with men, SM reality has been the only reality that has ever interested me on a psychic level."[22] Galás' work developed out of a reflection on the radical use of "womanliness as a masquerade", following the artist's immersion in the American drag queen scene of the 1970s: "I learned a lot about *being a woman* from these black drag queens—the power behind the role, and how you can use it. [. . .] A lot of men think they have to go to war to be a man. Well, for me as a woman in those days: 'You're not going to know anything about sex unless you work the street . . . not until you've done that and lived through the whole violent trip.' That is not a suggestion to anyone; it was my trip in '74."[23] This phenomenon of engaging brutality as a masquerade in the field of queer dissidence, as part of the process of deconstructing gender within the industrial movement, could also be found in the Los Angeles punk scene at the end of the 1970s and the performances of the genderqueer artist Vaginal Davis and her band, The Afro Sisters. Associated with the appearance of Queercore 'zines, the concept of "terrorist drag", as performed by Davis and theorized by the queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz, can be thought of in terms of industrial masquerade.

In this respect, Vaginal Davis, in the later performance *The White to Be Angry* conceived with the speed metal thrash band Pedro, Muriel and Esther (Figure 13), completely recon-

figured the codes of white supremacism to raise the notions of gender and community identity. Similarly, her appropriation of a military and survivalist look supplanted the form of brutality that had occupied certain industrial bands. José Esteban Muñoz argues that in this regard:

> Davis's drag, this reconfigured cross-sex [. . .] can best be understood as terrorist drag—terrorist insofar as she is performing the nation's internal terrors around race, gender, and sexuality. It is also an aesthetic terrorism: Davis uses ground-level guerrilla representational strategies to portray some of the nation's most salient popular fantasies. The fantasies she acts out involve cultural anxieties around miscegenation, communities color, and the queer body. Her dress does not attempt to index outmoded ideals of female glamour. She instead dresses like white supremacist militiamen and black welfare queen hookers. In other words, her drag mimesis is not concerned with the masquerade of womanliness, but instead with conjuring the nation's most dangerous citizens. She is literally in "terrorist drag".
>
> (Muñoz 1997)



Figure 13. Vaginal Davis in drag king performance mode as Lt. Sargeant Clarence Norbert, leader of Idaho Paramilitary Unit PME – White to be Angry Division @ Empty Bottle, Chicago 1995 photo by tag team Bibbe Hansen/Sean Carillo.

Davis's work upturned the usual queer approach through a process Muñoz calls "disidentification", which has the aim of forging new gender formulations. This work of identity reconstruction also appears in the feminist work of the artist Lisa "Suckdog" Carver, an emblematic figure of the American underground scene (Figure 14). Carver's performances, although different from most industrial groups of the time, challenge misogyny through the singular use of a femininity that permeates her chaotic performances. These contrast with the serious poses undertaken by some performers of the same period: "I didn't know why musicians got so glum in taking themselves seriously, like Sleep Chamber with their explicit master-and-servant lyrics and the woman is always beautiful and young and wearing lingerie and the man observes from his shadowy corner of power. The atmosphere in the underground in the '80s was male dominated, self-important, and so-o-o ominous. [. . .] I'd get so mad at these men in black. Dude! Life is really dark; you don't have to try" (Carver 2017). Carver's work manifests itself in particular through

the "porno-social operas" she conceived with Jean-Louis Costes as early as 1988. Carver's actions include many female participants:

> I tried to picture a couple of men making this kind of music. I think it would have been impossible. Suckdog had to be female. It sprang from an unrepentant Weltanschauung weaved together over no-sleep sleepovers. I went on to collaborate with men I admired, but Suckdog—the creation of it, the spirit—was all female. Teenage girls stuck in this town, guys calling us stupid and pigs and sluts and teases and poseurs and ugly. Even the weirdo guys from Massachusetts and Maine, who idolized all the same serial killers and televangelists and effects pedals—they would get us high or sleep with us, but not let us in their bands. (We asked.) They thought we were a joke. We weren't. We were just really female. [. . .] Of course I don't mean we were feminine as it's traditionally thought of—soft or receptive or dainty, which are all descriptors from the outside by men. We were feminine from the inside, what it feels like to US. We lived in a patriarchy, so when we asserted our beliefs, our being, AS IS, raw and without context, it looked unusual. Looked not VALID. We weren't TRYING to make it in a man's world. We had no interest.[24]



Figure 14. Lisa "Suckdog" Carver, 1987. Photo by Rachel Suckhorse.

For Carver, it is not a question of reproducing the same musical and performative patterns established by male artists since the 1960s but of offering an alternative creative space for women in sound and visual experimentation. The pieces that Lisa Carver developed with Costes are also based on an instrumentalization of their own fears and traumas. The exploration of these psychologising mechanisms reveals a desire to understand human activities and reactions in their entirety, which leads the duo to tackle themes similar to those of the industrial genre: "The first show we did together was called *Murderer from Venus*. We had both been abused children, and our shows replayed those scenes, drunk with our dreams of revenge. Jean-Louis associated more class consciousness, more hierarchy, and my contribution probably made it more unstable, both personally and mentally. We

both ended up, in this show, and in all those that followed, naked and almost always wounded" (Carver 2012, p. 206).

The violence used in performances by Lisa Carver and Jean-Louis Costes—which are in fact "a reflection of the chaos of [their] intimate lives" (Carver 2012, p. 207)—serves both as a catharsis and as a kick against widespread hypocrisy (Figure 15). This sonic and visual dissidence is not so much a struggle against the influence of the mass media as a desire to confront all forms of social and moral taboo, in a sense extending the views of industrial artists playing with extreme transgression:

> I don't feel like I was acting against any decay of industry or power of information. I do believe my work came out of trauma. I had some rage. I don't believe Whitehouse or Boyd Rice or Costes or Psycodrama or any "bad guys" were any worse than any good guys—they were just more honest, and I think we were all fighting against hypocrisy, and one way to do that is to take on the worst figure, the bogeyman, whether that's a murderer or a rapist or a child molester. Everyone says they're not these things, yet our entire economy is based on slave labor, kidnapping, torture. Not even mentioning how women are treated! So by taking on the villain in performance or lyrics, maybe we were holding a mirror up.[25]



Figure 15. Lisa "Suckdog" Carver and Jean-Louis Costes, *La Guerre Civile*, performance, 1990.

During performances with Suckdog, Costes and Carver would invite women to take to the stage, in chaotic and dynamic interventions, while displaying an unfiltered reality through their treatment of violent and conceptual themes. These artists would subvert the aggressive codes traditionally employed by male performers, in particular when American cartoonist and actress Dame Darcy joined Suckdog for the 1992 "Freak Show" tour; a photograph of the event was used to illustrate the cover of an issue of the *Rollerderby* fanzine published by Carver (Figure 16) at the time[26].

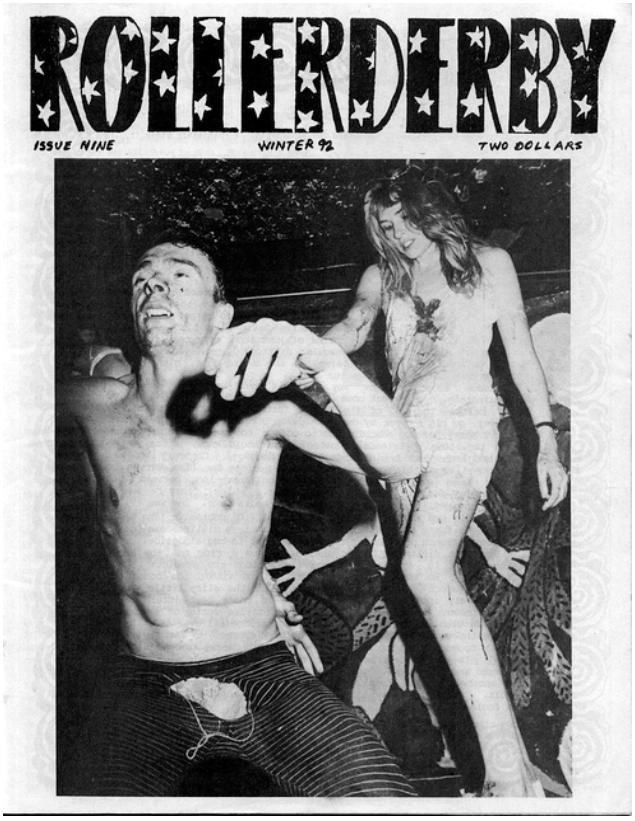


Figure 16. Jean-Louis Costes and Dame Darcy, on the cover of *Rollerderby*, n° 9, winter 1992.



Figure 17. Lisa Carver drawn by Dame Darcy, on the cover of *Rollerderby*, n° 6, spring 1992.

The author Dave McGurgan, who attended the Philadelphia performance, said: "The girls launched into a song that had the chorus of 'If you like me, why don't you just fuck me right now?!' and Darcy and Lisa flung themselves on every man in sight. [. . .] It was amazing to see a group of voyeuristic males turn into chickenshit wimps who couldn't handle an aggressive woman. With this sex role reversal taking place right before my eyes, I suddenly knew, or had an inkling as to, what it must be like to be a woman in an aggressive-male-dominated society, forced by males to engage in sexual acts or even have to put effort into how to get out of it when you don't want to" (McGurgan 2017). These performances challenged any form of status quo maintained by the contemporary patriarchal model and constituted a form of dissent that was echoed in Kembra Pfahler's performance for Richard Kern's short film, *Sewing Circle* (1992). Pfahler, wearing a T-shirt with the words "Young Republicans" on it, decides to have her vagina sewn up, a task which is entrusted to Lisa Resurreccion. While this performance is reminiscent of David Wojnarowicz sewing up his mouth for the documentary *Silence=Death* (1990), Pfahler's intention was to denounce the repression inflicted upon women's bodies in American society. This led her to the concept of "Availabilism", using found objects in her performances to express attitudes and feelings usually repressed by normative, male-dominated systems. For this reason, she regularly attached bowling balls to her feet in her performances in a manner reminiscent of the *Nude Walking on Balls* (1514) by Hans Baldung. Pfahler discovered Baldung's drawing in 1981 during a trip to Austria and incorporated the work into performances, revisiting it in *The Bowling Ball Piece* (Figure 18).



Figure 18. (**Left**) Kembra Pfahler, *The Bowling Ball Piece*, 1993. Photo by Annie Sprinkle (from *Annie Sprinkle's Post-Modern Pin-Ups: Pleasure Activist Playing Cards*. Richmond, VA: Gates of Heck, 1995). (**Right**) Hans Baldung, *Nude Walking on Balls*, 1514, pen, washed and heightened in white, on brown paper, 27 × 19.5 cm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

The struggle of industrial women musicians can be seen as an attempt to curb the generalised "hypocrisy" of the mass media through a militant art that ultimately transforms male behaviour within the movement itself. Some are sufficiently transformed to take part in the feminist struggles of the industrial genre, through the use of similar artistic endeavours. John Duncan has been involved in sexual politics since the late 1970s, notably

for his performance *Every Woman* (Figure 19, 1978), which involved him taking to the streets of Hollywood dressed as a man one night and then as a woman the next. This performance, filmed by Paul McCarthy for the "Connecting Myths" series of events, sought to reveal the potential danger women are exposed to in their daily lives. *For Women Only* (1979) addressed the hypothesis of the male gaze constituting a form of abuse directed towards female sex workers and consisted of Duncan asking women to attack him physically after having viewed a montage of S&M porn films. Duncan's performances challenge an assumed sexuality in the face of dominant systems of control, against which he rebels through performance combined with moving images. References to unbridled sexuality through the representations of a bondage subculture are intended to challenge Western models governed by men. Contemporary physical standards—determined, in particular, by the manipulation of psychological mechanisms studied by Klaus Theweleit in *Male Fantasies* (Theweleit 1978)—are undermined by Duncan's experimental format, building on ideas that were raised by Cosey Fanni Tutti and then by an entire industrial generation through the radicalism of brutality represented as a masquerade.



Figure 19. John Duncan, *Every Woman*, 1978, performance in the streets of Hollywood, Los Angeles.

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Notes

1 "The *societies of control* [. . .] are in the process of replacing the disciplinary societies. 'Control' is the name Burroughs proposes as a term for the new monster, one that Foucault recognizes as our immediate future." (Deleuze 1992).

2 See "Révolution bioélectronique. Les musiques industrielles sous influence burroughsienne" (Ballet 2017).

3 Monte Cazazza as quoted in *RE/Search #12: Modern Primitives* (Vale and Juno 1989).

4 "I was on my own in the garden one day, lying on my front on a blanket in only a red G-string, all oiled up, feeling the sun on my body and half-asleep. Suddenly there was a great thud at my side. I sprang up to see that a large cement breeze block had landed about six inches from my head. I looked behind me to see where it had come from. Gen [Genesis P-Orridge] had thrown it from Monte [Cazazza]'s balcony and was stood there staring down at me in silence. I was momentarily speechless. He could have killed me. I shouted at him and Monte came out to see what was going on. He was horrified and took Gen inside. The incident wasn't addressed. Gen carried on like nothing had happened. In hindsight, it's unbelievable that Gen wasn't brought to account. Maybe Monte made Gen realise what a narrow escape he (and I) had had." (Tutti 2017, pp. 254–55).

5 The fields of feminism and post-feminism within the industrial movement have not yet been the subject of in-depth studies and have for the moment been confined to the punk and/or electronic genre. The books *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (McClary 1991), *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* (Leblanc 1999), *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk* (Raha 2004), *Women of the Underground: Music. Cultural Innovators Speak for Themselves* (von Burden 2008), *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Rodgers 2010), *Women Make Noise: Girl Bands from the Motown to the Modern* (Downes 2012) and *Women, Music, Creativity: from Hildegard to Cosey Fanni Tutti* (Jonssonová 2017) provide insights into several female (and feminist) artistic expressions in specific underground scenes. These initiatives, still too isolated, often orient themselves towards the punk scene. This is evidenced by the investigative work carried out by the French association Rosa Vertov since 2011 around women in the punk and post-punk current, from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s. The valuation of research here takes the form of video installations, fanzines and other curatorial proposals. Finally, the recent emergence of the Parisian multimedia project, Music Herstory, is dedicated to exploring the intersection of musical cultures and gender through feminist issues.

6 Lydia Lunch as quoted in *RE/Search #13: Angry Women* (Vale and Juno 1991, p. 105).

7 The industrial scene features many female artists whose work is often overlooked. The female presence at the heart of the French scene offers plenty of examples: notably Manon Anne Gillis, Mïrka Lugosi of Le Syndicat and Entre Vifs, Éliane P. of Die Form, Mithra of Vox Populi!, Cécile Babiole of NOX, Marie Cardenne of Minamata, and Sylvie Fée of DDAA. It is equally necessary to note the contributions of such international stars as Cosey Fanni Tutti, Lisa Carver, Rose McDowall, Diamanda Galás, Johanna Went, Diana Rogerson, Jill Westwood, Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven, Paula P-Orridge, as well as Sinan Leong of SPK, Min Kent of Zos Kia and Ake, Nadine Bal of Bene Gesserit, and Ruby Ray and Tana Emmolo-Smith of the band Factrix.

8 See "A Feminist Analysis of Popular Music: Power Over, Objectification of, and Violence Against Women" (Bretthauer et al. 2007).

9 This protest component constitutes an anti-pornographic feminist movement that emerged in the United States in the 1970s, following violence against women and sexist representations in the mass media. This movement is notably supported by the group Women Against Pornography, actress Linda Boreman, as well as theorists Andrea Dworkin, Rae Langton, Robin Morgan and Catharine MacKinnon.

10 On Cosey Fanni Tutti's performances see *Wreckers of Civilization: The Story of Coum Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (Ford 1999); *Cosey Complex* (Birkett and Fusco 2012); *Art Sex Music* (Tutti 2017).

11 John Murphy as quoted in *England's Hidden Reverse: A Secret History of the Esoteric Underground* (Keenan 2003, p. 148).

12 Jill Westwood, correspondence with the author, 11 November 2016.

13 See "Fašizam na alternativnoj sceni" (Drakulić-Ilić 1984).

14 Slavenka Drakulić-Ilić as quoted in "Ljubezen je hladnejša od smrti. Dokumenti" (Alajbegović 1999).

15 Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven, interview with the author, Paris, 12 September 2015.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Mïrka Lugosi, interview with the author, Clamart, 20 December 2016.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Diamanda Galás as quoted in *RE/Search #13: Angry Women* (Vale and Juno 1991, pp. 7–8).

20 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

24 Lisa Carver, correspondence with the author, 10 December 2016.

25 See note 24.

[26] *Rollerderby* issue 6 features a portrait of Lisa Carver drawn by Dame Darcy (Figure 17).

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